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**Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms**

## **Rights of internally displaced persons**

### **Note by the Secretary-General**

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution [72/182](#) and Human Rights Council resolution 41/15.

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\* [A/74/150](#).



## **Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons**

### *Summary*

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution [72/182](#) and Human Rights Council resolution 41/15.

In the present report, the Special Rapporteur seeks to highlight the situation of internally displaced children who are suffering and dying because of the lack of rapid and appropriate responses to their specific needs and protection concerns and the lack of capacity and resources to fill protection gaps on the part of humanitarian actors. She calls for renewed attention on improving the protection of internally displaced children, with a focus on concrete outcomes.

## I. Protection of internally displaced children

### A. Introduction

1. Although the exact number of children living in internal displacement worldwide is unknown, at least 17 million<sup>1</sup> were estimated to have been displaced worldwide by conflict and violence within their own countries by the end of 2018. Countless more had been displaced by disasters. Five million youth between the ages of 18 and 24 were also estimated to be living in internal displacement. Research has pointed to how forced displacement disproportionately affects children, with the aim of better addressing the needs and protection challenges faced by “children on the move”, which was the theme of the ninth dialogue of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The phrase “children on the move”, however, does not signify a homogeneous group and includes migrant and refugee children. The specific plight and vulnerabilities of internally displaced children tend to disappear among the varied groups considered under that umbrella.

2. The present report is aimed at bringing increased attention to the intersectionality between being a child and being internally displaced. Being a child shapes how the child experiences internal displacement, and being displaced shapes a child’s experience of living through armed conflict or violence. On the other hand, internally displaced children may share the same challenges as other displaced people but, because of their age, may be affected in different ways. Internally displaced children also often experience human rights challenges owing to interlinked forms of discrimination based on other factors, such as gender, group affiliation, disability and displacement itself. Certain groups or categories of internally displaced children can be especially at risk, such as unaccompanied, separated and orphaned children, street children, children with physical and mental disabilities, those who suffered severe trauma and children associated with armed forces or armed groups. The particular risks encountered also vary depending on the displacement context.

3. The anniversaries of instruments that are important for internally displaced persons and the rights of the child are observed in 2019, namely, the tenth anniversary of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the seventieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions and the tenth anniversary of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. Moreover, the high-level political forum held in July 2019 on the theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality” reviewed six Sustainable Development Goals, most of them relevant to internally displaced children as a particularly vulnerable group prone to be left behind. The tenth anniversary of the Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons and the twentieth anniversary of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, will be observed in 2020.

4. While the present report is focused on displacement due to conflict, generalized violence and human rights violations, the Special Rapporteur acknowledges that many of the issues facing internally displaced children and their needs would be similar in situations of disaster brought on by natural hazards and the adverse effects of climate change.

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<sup>1</sup> A child is defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child as every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

5. The present report builds on the paper entitled “The rights and guarantees of internally displaced children in armed conflict”.<sup>2</sup> It also benefited from extensive consultations with other partners, including the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and experts from the Child Protection Area of Responsibility, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Joint Internally Displaced Person Profiling Service, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Global Protection Cluster, the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Assistance and non-governmental organizations, including through their participation in an expert meeting held in Geneva in March and in a side event in June during the forty-first session of the Human Rights Council, and written feedback. The Special Rapporteur would like to thank all who contributed, including Member States and in particular internally displaced children themselves, for sharing their views.

## **B. Applicable legal frameworks**

6. The rights of internally displaced persons, including children, are neither diminished nor curtailed by their situation of displacement. The rights of the child as established in international and national law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, apply equally to children experiencing internal displacement. Displaced children enjoy the same rights as those not displaced. Indeed, under conditions of heightened vulnerability, including in the context of conflict and internal displacement, the duty of the State to protect and care for vulnerable children is enhanced to ensure that their special needs are taken into account and addressed effectively. International human rights law and international humanitarian law provide extensive legal protection frameworks for internally displaced children.

7. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely ratified human rights convention. Importantly, in the context of internal displacement, it does not allow for any derogation in times of emergency. The Convention’s preamble recognizes children who live in exceptionally difficult conditions and that such children need special consideration. In view of the heightened vulnerability of children experiencing internal displacement and the ensuing challenges to protection and the fulfilment of their human rights in displacement situations, the Convention is consequently the most important international standard for their protection.

8. Based on the core principles of consideration of the best interests of the child and non-discrimination, the Convention elaborates the fundamental rights of children, including the right to life, survival and development, the right to be registered at birth and have a legal identity, the right to education and health care, the right to protection against all forms of violence, the right to protection from recruitment into armed forces, the right to protection from economic and sexual exploitation and trafficking, the right to be provided with measures to promote their physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration and the right not to be arbitrarily detained, as well as measures to preserve family unity and ensure family reunification. Furthermore, the Convention calls for children to be recognized and respected as rights holders rather than as passive objects of protection and care, including the right of children to express their views and to be heard in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

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<sup>2</sup> Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Working Paper, No. 2 (New York, United Nations, 2010).

9. In situations of armed conflict, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict is particularly relevant to internally displaced children. States parties should take all possible measures to prevent the unlawful recruitment and use of children in hostilities by armed forces and armed groups. In addition, the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography prohibits all forms of sexual violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect, including the sale and trafficking of children for any purpose. To build on and extend the protection given to conflict-affected children, such political initiatives as the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers have been introduced in recent years.

10. The 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which reflect international human rights law and international humanitarian law, include explicit guarantees to protect internally displaced persons, focusing specifically on internally displaced children. In particular, they address the right of families wishing to remain together to do so or to be reunited rapidly; the right to dignity and physical, mental and moral integrity, including the protection of children from sale into marriage, exploitation and forced labour; the protection of displaced children from being recruited, required or permitted to take part in hostilities; the right to recognition before the law, requiring authorities to issue documentation; and the right to education, with the equal participation of girls.

11. Critical for the protection of civilians, including children, in all situations of armed conflict and applying to all parties to a conflict, the Geneva Conventions, the Additional Protocols thereto and customary international humanitarian law require all parties to a conflict to respect the principle of distinction and to provide protection for civilians. Under customary international humanitarian law, children are entitled to special respect and protection, including age-appropriate treatment in detention, access to essential goods, health care and education, and reunification with their families. In addition, the Additional Protocols and customary international humanitarian law prohibit the recruitment and use in hostilities of children under the age of 15.

12. At the regional level, the Kampala Convention reaffirms the commitment of African States to implement international human rights law and international humanitarian law and includes specific provisions reaffirming the rights to personal documentation; education; protection against recruitment, participation in hostilities, kidnapping, abduction, sexual slavery and trafficking; and protection that addresses the special needs of separated and unaccompanied children, as well as mothers of young children. Similar provisions are also included in the 2006 Protocol on the Protection of and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons adopted by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. The 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child emphasizes the responsibility of States to ensure that internally displaced children receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance, paying special attention to the importance of reuniting families separated by displacement. The Council of Europe has adopted a number of recommendations concerning internal displacement, including on the right of internally displaced children to education. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has developed significant jurisprudence on the applicability of the American Convention on Human Rights to the situation of internally displaced persons and has looked at States' obligations with respect to the increased vulnerability of certain displaced groups, including children and young people, due to conflict and displacement.

13. At the national level, several countries<sup>3</sup> have developed laws, policies or strategies relating to internal displacement, which include provisions to address the particular needs and rights of internally displaced children.

### C. Participation and consideration of the best interests of the child

14. Internal displacement often threatens the physical, mental and social aspects of a child's life, which can be broadly referred to as a child's well-being or best interests. The Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly states that in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private institutions, courts of law or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. This concept is particularly relevant when considering the care and safety of the most vulnerable internally displaced children.<sup>4</sup>

15. In order to implement the best interests principle in displacement-related procedures, guidelines have been developed by UNHCR in coordination with UNICEF, ICRC, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and several non-governmental partners.<sup>5</sup> Although States have the primary responsibility for determining a child's best interests, the guidelines highlight the situations in which such determination is required and the need for procedures for determining best interests, whether carried out by Governments, UNHCR or partners, to be integrated into broader child protection systems, especially national child protection systems, rather than established as parallel structures.

16. The assessment of best interests must include respect for children's right to express their views freely, with due consideration given to those views in all matters affecting the children, according to their age and level of maturity. The concept of "participation" is widely used to describe such ongoing processes as information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect (CRC/C/GC/12, para. 3).

17. While there is greater understanding of the need to give children and youth a voice and to support their empowerment and resilience, as well as increased appreciation for the unique agency of children and young people, little is happening in practice to ensure their meaningful participation in decisions that affect them. The Special Rapporteur and others have called for a "participation revolution" (A/72/202, para. 42) and urged participatory approaches to ensure the full inclusion of internally displaced children and young people at all times in the planning and management of durable solutions<sup>6</sup> and the development of local strategies for recovery and reintegration and for peace processes (A/HRC/39/28, para. 60). All actors, including the internally displaced children themselves, should understand that children not only have much of value to contribute but that they also have the right to contribute. Displaced children should be encouraged and enabled to participate in analysing their situations and future prospects. Their participation helps them to regain control over

<sup>3</sup> Afghanistan, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Colombia, Georgia, Iraq, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mexico (Chiapas), Montenegro, Nepal, Peru, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, Vanuatu, Yemen and Zambia. See: <http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/global-database-on-idp-laws-and-policies/>.

<sup>4</sup> Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR, "Guidelines on assessing and determining the best interests of the child: 2018 provisional release".

<sup>6</sup> For example, participation of "go and see" visits; see Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 2010.

their lives, contributes to their rehabilitation, develops their organizational skills and strengthens their sense of identity.

18. Numerous pragmatic, ethical and sociocultural barriers to children's participation exist, however. In humanitarian situations, the participation of displaced children is rarely prioritized for a variety of practical reasons, which are compounded by prevailing traditions and sociocultural attitudes that may not be conducive to children's participation. The value of listening to children's priorities and opinions may not be entrenched in the society concerned, and humanitarian response staff may not be adequately trained regarding the right of children to participate.<sup>7</sup> Feedback mechanisms too often focus on adults and material aid.

19. Nonetheless, there are efforts on the part of various agencies to set up more child-friendly feedback mechanisms that allow children's voices to be heard.<sup>8</sup> Plan International, for example, has trained youth reporters to report on issues affecting children.<sup>9</sup>

20. It is important to note that when deciding whether and in what format to involve internally displaced children in decision-making, the principles of doing no harm and considering the best interests of the child should be applied consistently. Internally displaced children may avoid speaking up because of the fear of stigma, trauma or perceived consequences for themselves and their families. For some displaced children, threats or abuse may exist within host communities, or even in their own families. Safety, security and risk implications must always be taken into account when encouraging children to speak.<sup>10</sup>

21. Participatory processes involving children, be they consultative, collaborative or child-led, must comply with certain basic requirements. Children's participation should be safe, transparent, informative, voluntary, respectful, child-friendly and inclusive. Children's participation should always be aimed at reaching and including the most marginalized groups of children, including adolescent girls, children with disabilities and those belonging to minorities. Adequate care should be taken to ensure that boys and girls are equally included and that various age groups, socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds are represented. For example, World Vision International developed an interactive methodology that works within a child protection and "do no harm" approach, engaging children to discuss challenges and threats associated with forced displacement and identifying and mapping child-led solutions linked to national, regional and global processes. It is vital that youth leaders be identified and that safe spaces for young people be established.

22. Much can be learned from successful efforts to better engage and empower women and girls. In many displacement contexts, for example, safe spaces for women and girls are perhaps the first areas available to them after stepping out of the home that are conducive to their participation and where they are listened to as individuals; those spaces also provide linkages to other participation structures in a community.<sup>11</sup> In the same way, child-friendly spaces are conducive to children's well-being and participation in the community, as the children tend to come together on a regular

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<sup>7</sup> Save the Children, "Guidelines for children's participation in humanitarian programming" (London, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Anna Wood, *Interagency Study on Child-Friendly Feedback and Complaint Mechanisms Within NGO Programmes* (Educo Plan International, Save the Children UK, War Child UK and World Vision International, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Plan International, *Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanisms: Guide and Toolkit* (United Kingdom, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Save the Children, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR, "Tearing Down the Walls: Confronting the Barriers to Internally Displaced Women and Girls' Participation in Humanitarian Settings" (2019).

basis with staff and volunteers trained to work with them. It is critical to note, however, which children have access to them and which do not.

23. While valuable child participation tools are already available,<sup>12</sup> securing the participation of internally displaced children requires that such participation be clearly mandated and that governments and the international community take a clear directional approach, with adequate resources, in programming and policy development. Consequently, taking into consideration specific challenges, risks and barriers to the participation of children, every effort should be made to provide children and youth with meaningful opportunities to express themselves, reveal their needs or protection concerns and contribute to their families and communities.

#### **D. Data and evidence**

24. Data on internally displaced children are collected by different actors for various purposes. Sources of data can vary significantly depending on country or context and may include those managed by governments and humanitarian and development actors. For the purpose of official national statistics, the main data sources include population censuses, listings, general or internally displaced person-specific sample surveys and administrative registers.<sup>13</sup>

25. Multi-indicator cluster surveys are the largest source of statistically sound and internationally comparable data on women and children worldwide, although the data collected through them rarely are disaggregated by displacement status. The disaggregation of data in this way in countries affected by internal displacement would represent a significant opportunity to increase the visibility and understanding of the ways in which internal displacement affects children and to facilitate monitoring of the situation of internally displaced children in comparison with non-displaced children. Such data could also furnish critical information on displaced children for inclusion in relevant policy initiatives, with a view to improving the situation of all children and supporting States' reporting on progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals for this specific group.

26. The Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics is working under the auspices of the Statistical Commission to develop international recommendations, including guidance for national statistical authorities and United Nations entities, on improving the quality of official statistics on forcibly displaced populations and on the disaggregation of existing data, including those emanating from multi-indicator cluster surveys.

27. The evidence base relating to internally displaced persons in conflict situations is derived primarily from humanitarian operational data collected from various sources to inform strategic decision-making and programming, including better targeting of protection and assistance. Different methodologies, such as needs assessments, population movement tracking systems and protection monitoring, cover child-specific issues as well. Often, however, data are not adequately disaggregated by age group, thus limiting their usefulness.

28. Profiling is another collaborative data collection and analysis process used by governments and humanitarian and development partners that provides disaggregated data about displacement situations<sup>14</sup> and offers a comparative analysis between displaced and non-displaced age-disaggregated data on key indicators. In urban

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<sup>12</sup> Save the Children, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> European Union and United Nations, *Technical Report on Statistics of Internally Displaced Persons: Current Practice and Recommendations for Improvement* (Luxembourg, 2018).

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., <https://jet.jips.org/>.



contexts, it can be a useful methodology for identifying the specific needs and capacities of internally displaced persons in order to inform area-based approaches.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, an evidence-based understanding of how displacement affects children and how child protection issues affecting displaced children can be more effectively prevented or addressed remains necessary.

29. While disaggregated quantitative data are vital, and even when operational data are disaggregated to the extent possible by age, sex and other factors, most data are collected from heads of household or community leaders and therefore, more often than not, portray children through an adult lens. While this can be sufficient for certain purposes (e.g. enrolment rates), direct engagement with children is necessary for understanding their experiences and perspectives (e.g. experience of discrimination or future intentions regarding durable solutions).

30. Qualitative data collection methods, therefore, bring much added value through participatory processes and tools, but still represent the exception rather than the rule. For example, War Child invited internally displaced children and youth in South Sudan to participate in group discussions on their perceived protection issues and key needs. Save the Children in Iraq and Yemen worked with displaced adolescent girls and boys using methods such as forum theatre to explore their experiences of conflict. Those methods allowed children to voice their views and propose their own solutions in an age-appropriate way, on their own terms.<sup>16</sup> With adolescent girls, the Women's Refugee Commission has successfully used a participatory ranking methodology, the results of which informed safe space content with operational partners in Iraq, Mali, the Niger and South Sudan. ICRC has carried out community-based protection workshops in different armed conflict settings to enable communities to take an active role in the analysis and design of responses aimed at improving their situation, for example, in Nigeria and South Sudan. A government-led profiling exercise in the general context of displacement due to violence in Honduras included a participatory assessment workshop with young people exploring gender-based violence and the forced recruitment of children, which often leads to the displacement of households. Safety and security were perceived differently by children and adults, where children disagreed with adults' assessment that things had gotten better over time.<sup>17</sup>

31. Those examples show that while the disaggregation of quantitative data on age, gender and diversity is important, it is not sufficient. Despite the many challenges that collecting data from children and adolescents involves, increased effort must be made to use qualitative data collection methods and to integrate the meaningful participation of internally displaced children in processes where appropriate and feasible. This should be done through enhanced collaboration between child protection experts and collectors of data.

32. The Security Council, in its resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#), established the monitoring and reporting mechanism mandating the systematic gathering of information on six grave violations<sup>18</sup> committed against children in situations of armed conflict. The data collected under the mechanism are not disaggregated by the displacement status of children subjected to grave violations, however, the adoption of a flexible approach to the monitoring of other child protection concerns that are not necessarily reported to the Council was identified as an example of good practice, as it helps to enhance

<sup>15</sup> Global Alliance for Urban Crises, "Urban profiling for better responses to humanitarian crises" (2019).

<sup>16</sup> Save the Children, "I wish tomorrow will not come: adolescents and the impact of conflict on their experiences: an exploratory study in Iraq, Egypt, Jordan and Yemen" (2019).

<sup>17</sup> See [www.jips.org/jips-country/honduras/](http://www.jips.org/jips-country/honduras/).

<sup>18</sup> Recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abductions, attacks on schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access.

the local relevance of monitoring. As a result, analysis of the link between forced displacement and specific grave violations has been enhanced, for example, in the case of Colombia.<sup>19</sup>

33. As demonstrated, data on internally displaced children do exist, but they are neither collected systematically nor consolidated. Moreover, given the need to prioritize analysis, including the analysis of comparative data on displaced versus non-displaced populations, final results often omit data related to internally displaced children. Unfortunately, because of limited data-sharing practices, it is not always possible to access those data even when they do exist, which limits their use in the formulation of child-sensitive strategies for and responses to displacement.

## **E. Addressing child protection issues**

34. Child protection refers to all efforts to prevent and respond to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect against children during and after displacement caused by conflict and generalized violence. Governments have the primary responsibility for ensuring that internally displaced boys and girls are protected at all times and that services and assistance are available to them at the national and local levels, especially during conflict situations. The prevention of and response to violations against children must go hand-in-hand, and the life-saving aspects of child protection need to be prioritized by all actors, including through the establishment of and provision of support to child protection systems. The Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action constitute an essential inter-agency reference tool in this sector.

35. When internal displacement occurs, family and community structures are likely to break down and traditional institutions tend to disintegrate, placing displaced children at greater risk of various forms of exploitation, abuse and neglect. This includes exposing them to such dangers as mines and other unexploded ordnance, the threat of violence and death and severe physical and mental trauma. Displacement affects all aspects of the lives, development and well-being of children, who are facing such issues as family separation, arbitrary detention, trafficking, child labour and sexual violence. Girls and young women are at greater risk of serious sexual assault, abduction, rape, early and forced marriage and murder, while boys are more at risk of recruitment, exploitation and violence. Separated, orphaned and unaccompanied children are more likely to face neglect, abuse and forced, dangerous or exploitative forms of labour. In some urban centres, an increase in street children has also been noted after displacement. Internally displaced children often endure malnutrition and ill health. Instead of being safe places, camps and settlements for internally displaced persons may come under attack, be caught in crossfire or be places of recruitment, with boys in particular being coerced into joining parties to conflict, including in exchange for money, food or protection. Poverty and hunger among internally displaced persons may lead to families adopting harmful coping mechanisms to survive, such as sending children to beg or work rather than to school or exposing them to risks of exploitation or trafficking. There is also an immediate risk of domestic abuse and exploitation. In protracted displacement situations, families' lack of hope can lead to abuse within the family. Protracted displacement situations may also lead over time to the depletion of resources, putting additional pressure on families and increasing protection risks for children.

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<sup>19</sup> Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, United Nations Children's Fund and United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, *Global Good Practices Study: Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on Grave Violations against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict* (2012).

36. Displacement is a process of loss, and internally displaced children lose the protective environment around them. Strengthening child protection systems requires national and local solutions that fully respect the rights of children and put their best interests at the heart of decisions. Effective prevention, response and accountability approaches should reach children in the most challenging contexts. Good practices include safe and child-friendly counselling, complaint, reporting and accountability mechanisms.

37. Protected safe places for internally displaced children, where children can find respite from the psychological stresses of war or violence, are essential. Child-friendly spaces are used widely to protect and provide psychosocial support to children in emergencies. The nature, intensity and quality of the activities, their fitness to local circumstances and the relationships established between facilitators and children appear to be crucial in determining their impact. However, in displacement settings, the notion of “safe spaces” for children and youth must always be tested and monitored closely to ensure that they do not become venues for abuse; assumptions that such environments are always safe should be challenged. There is a certain automatism about the establishment of child-friendly spaces as the main – or only – means of protecting children, while insufficient attention is devoted to preventing protection risks and addressing their root causes.

38. As with overall humanitarian funding, the estimated funding for child protection activities increased between 2010 and 2018. Such funding remains minimal, however, having an average share of only 0.5 per cent of total humanitarian funding.<sup>20</sup> Child protection is underfunded and is often mentioned only within a broader protection context. The gap in funding for child protection activities is alarming when considering the scale of needs and costs of quality interventions. Donors and those who provide or support child protection interventions, as well as States providing budget allocations, have a joint responsibility to increase child protection funding substantially and urgently.<sup>21</sup>

### **Community-based child protection**

39. In situations of humanitarian crisis and displacement, the capacity of communities and parents is often undermined. It is therefore paramount that States and their humanitarian and development partners support and strengthen the protective capacity of families and communities, who are the first layers of support when it comes to the protection of children affected by internal displacement. Working in a coordinated way through community-based child protection mechanisms is an approach that has proven to be effective and appropriate in achieving child protection goals, including for internally displaced children.<sup>22</sup>

40. Involving families, communities and children themselves when identifying issues that affect them and designing and implementing child protection activities that are sensitive to local cultures will contribute to increasing the acceptance and impact of the interventions, reaching a larger number of affected children and promoting the sustainability of the activities that are carried out. Community-based mechanisms take different forms. Their functions include the identification of both protection concerns and children at risk, informal tracing, awareness-raising, the referral and accompaniment of children to appropriate services, the provision of psychosocial

<sup>20</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Financial Tracking Service database.

<sup>21</sup> Save the Children, “Unprotected: crisis in humanitarian funding for child protection” (2019).

<sup>22</sup> Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, “*Adapting to Learn, Learning to Adapt*”: *Overview of and Considerations for Child Protection Systems Strengthening in Emergencies* (2016).

support, the establishment of girls' and boys' clubs and the promotion of birth registration.<sup>23</sup>

41. Internally displaced children will often share experiences with or seek support from their parents, relatives, guardians and friends. Information on children's rights and channels through which to seek support should be provided in order to equip them adequately to guide children and protect them from harm. Important resources already exist to empower children by putting them at the centre of initiatives and promoting their resilience, such as the UNICEF "Adolescent Kit" and War Child's "DEAL" methodology.

42. Traditional systems and networks of community and child support likewise exist, and it should be ensured that they function in the best interests of the child. The interventions of others in the community, such as social workers, teachers, youth and traditional or religious leaders, with appropriate training and sufficient monitoring to mitigate any risk of abuse, help to ensure multilayered child protection initiatives. The role of faith-based actors is recognized as essential in many displacement contexts,<sup>24</sup> for example, in Honduras and the Syrian Arab Republic.

### **Protection issues**

43. Family separation has a great impact on the experience of displacement for children and varies with age, sex and other factors. Family separation can happen during displacement or during screening, upon arrival in camps or during settlement. Special consideration should be given to child-headed households where a child's responsibility to care for younger siblings goes hand-in-hand with securing safety, food, water, health, education and shelter.

44. Investing in preparedness and holistic approaches to prevent family separation are needed. The importance of sharing basic information on what family members should do if separated should not be underestimated. For example, in South Sudan, ICRC is working with children at risk of displacement through theatre play to help them to remember names and how their village looks in order to facilitate future family reunification.

45. The link between internal displacement and the recruitment of children by parties to conflict is well established. Displacement can also occur as a means of avoiding children's recruitment by armed groups or criminal gangs, such as in Colombia, El Salvador and Honduras, where children's refusal to be recruited can lead to violence or even loss of life. Recruitment into non-State armed groups often affects children who are already internally displaced, particularly boys, occurring in and around camps and settlements for internally displaced persons. The variation in the percentage of children recruited by parties to conflict across 19 African countries was reflected by the extent to which the government and other actors provided protection against abduction and forced recruitment in camps for internally displaced persons.<sup>25</sup> When girls are recruited it is often as child brides, cooks or sex slaves, and when they are eventually demobilized or rescued, they frequently have babies or small children.

46. States and international organizations have an important role to play in safeguarding children, including those internally displaced, from recruitment and

<sup>23</sup> UNHCR, Child Protection Issue Brief, "Community-based child protection mechanisms" (September 2013).

<sup>24</sup> World Vision South Sudan, annual campaign report 2018; Global Partners Forum report, "Faith action for children on the move" (2018).

<sup>25</sup> Vera Achvarina and Simon F. Reich, "No place to hide: refugees, displaced persons, and the recruitment of child soldiers", *International Security*, vol. 31, No. 1 (summer 2006).

ensuring the accountability of the perpetrators. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict is working on a guidance note to provide practitioners with conceptual clarity and tools in that regard. A Global Coalition for the Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers was launched in September 2018 by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF to bring attention to and encourage action to sustainably support child reintegration programmes. Progress has already been achieved in certain countries, including Afghanistan, South Sudan and the Sudan.

47. In many cases, children associated with parties to conflict are perceived as perpetrators rather than as victims. Sustained and comprehensive reintegration support to break the cycle of violence and avoid social stigmatization and re-recruitment is vital. Children, including internally displaced children who are associated with parties to conflict, are often revictimized through detention for their association with armed groups or exclusion from their communities and denial of access to services. Children should be treated first and foremost as victims, and their treatment must be determined with their best interests as the primary consideration. They should be detained only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, while alternatives to detention should be prioritized, as detention conditions can seriously threaten children's cognitive, emotional and social development.

48. Internally displaced children are especially vulnerable to gender-based violence. In the context of armed conflict and displacement, sexual violence, which can be used either randomly or systematically as a weapon of war, is the most immediate danger. The breakdown of families can expose children to sexual violence within the home and community. Other forms of gender-based violence, including enforced prostitution, trafficking and domestic abuse, are common. The forced early marriage of internally displaced girls as a harmful coping strategy has been documented across several internal displacement contexts, occurring in part because of the economic pressures faced by families that are deprived of their usual sources of income.<sup>26</sup> Sexual violence also affects internally displaced boys and young men, for example during military operations in civilian areas, military conscription, abduction and detention. In conflicts where sexual violence against men and boys has been investigated, male sexual violence has been recognized as "regular and unexceptional, pervasive and widespread".<sup>27</sup>

49. Internally displaced children living in camps can be especially vulnerable to targeting by traffickers and other opportunists. The presence of armed men, including security forces, in proximity to camps also poses risks. Gender-based violence can cause debilitating psychological harm, including depression, post-traumatic disorder and suicide, to internally displaced children. Victims of gender-based violence may experience stigmatization and rejection by their families or serious physical consequences, such as early pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases that can cause disability or death.<sup>28</sup>

50. Adequate attention is essential for mitigating gender-based violence risks in displacement settings and requires collective action and comprehensive cross-sectoral approaches. Humanitarian actors have a responsibility to ensure that strategies to reduce or mitigate such risks, such as ensuring safe access to schools, illuminating

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<sup>26</sup> Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 2010.

<sup>27</sup> UNHCR, "Sexual violence against men and boys in the Syria crisis" (2017); see also Women's Refugee Commission, *It's Happening to Our Men as Well: Sexual Violence against Rohingya Men and Boys* (New York, 2018).

<sup>28</sup> Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 2010.

dark areas, providing separate latrines and locating services where they are most needed, are built into their programme design and implementation. Safety-mapping exercises give internally displaced girls the opportunity to identify where and when they perceive themselves to be at risk and guide humanitarian practitioners on possible risk mitigation strategies. If those types of actions are not taken at the outset, some of the resulting harm is irreversible.<sup>29</sup>

51. Community-based programmes using awareness-raising techniques – as stand-alone interventions aimed at changing attitudes and behaviour or included as part of a broader programme, such as economic intervention – have reduced the incidence and mitigated the impact of gender-based violence and changed attitudes, perceptions, knowledge and (some) behaviour.<sup>30</sup> To be successful, services aimed at combating gender-based violence should ensure confidentiality and anonymity in gaining access to services, reduce stigma, be culturally sensitive and utilize local expertise.<sup>31</sup> Strengthening coordination mechanisms between sectors and programmes is essential for gender-based violence programming but remains a challenge, particularly when it comes to internally displaced children. The Child Protection Area of Responsibility, the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility and some of their members have launched an initiative aimed at countering some of those challenges and improving support for child and adolescent survivors of sexual abuse.<sup>32</sup>

## **F. Supporting durable solutions for displaced children and their families**

52. The need to find a durable solution to their displacement distinguishes internally displaced persons from other civilians affected by armed conflict. Considering the risks and vulnerabilities that displacement can entail and the disproportionate impact on the lives of children, the search for solutions should begin as soon as conditions permit. States have the primary responsibility for creating the conditions and providing the means to enable internally displaced children and their families to return voluntarily, integrate locally or settle elsewhere in the country in safety and dignity and in a sustainable manner. The risks linked to premature return or relocation to areas that are not safe should therefore be considered carefully.

53. In order to understand the challenges and potential opportunities children may have when returning to their places of origin, durable solutions for forcibly displaced children, for example in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic, require better data and evidence based on child-sensitive indicators. The same can be said in many contexts in relation to children's local integration or settlement elsewhere. It is also essential to embed the principles of child-sensitive programming in all durable solution contexts and establish minimum standards for guiding rights-based processes towards solutions for children and their families.<sup>33</sup> In that sense, the best interests of the child remain a primary consideration in the preparation of solutions for internally displaced children, including by identifying and building on their coping mechanisms and self-protection capacities.

<sup>29</sup> Dale Buscher, "Preventing gender-based violence: getting it right", *Humanitarian Exchange*, No. 60 (February 2014).

<sup>30</sup> World Vision South Sudan, 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Humanitarian Practice Network, "Preventing and responding to gender-based violence in humanitarian crises", Network Paper, No. 77 (January 2014).

<sup>32</sup> See [www.nrc.no/expert-deployment/2016/2019/improved-support-for-sexually-abused-children/](http://www.nrc.no/expert-deployment/2016/2019/improved-support-for-sexually-abused-children/).

<sup>33</sup> Save the Children/Samuel Hall, *Achieving Durable Solutions for Returnee Children: What Do We Know?* (London, 2019).

54. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee, in its 2010 Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, identifies the core principles for durable solutions and emphasizes the need for a rights-based process to enable internally displaced persons to make informed and voluntary decisions on and participate in the planning and management of durable solutions. This of course also applies to all children. A number of criteria as to what constitutes a durable solution are identified in the Framework, which must be viewed through a child-focused lens.

55. Internally displaced children have a right to be informed in a child-appropriate and age-appropriate way. Children's perspectives on preferences for durable solutions may differ significantly from those of older people. When children grow up in different contexts, resulting in an increasingly weaker historical and cultural attachment to their places of origin, they may want to pursue different options. When young people are displaced from rural to urban areas, they often prefer to stay on account of the better educational and employment opportunities found in cities.<sup>34</sup> Special efforts should therefore be made to ensure the full participation of displaced children and youth in planning for durable solutions.

### **Documentation**

56. During the course of displacement, people often lose or leave behind their documents, or the documents may be destroyed or confiscated or may not be recognized. Internally displaced persons may never have had documents at all. Without identity documents, internally displaced children are effectively rendered invisible to authorities, bound to face difficulties in asserting a wide range of rights and risking increased rights violations. Displacement may at times also increase the risk of becoming stateless. In some displacement contexts, unaccompanied minors may not possess documents or be unaware of them and therefore lack proof of their identity or nationality. Without any evidence of parentage or place of birth, they risk becoming stateless.<sup>35</sup> The risk of statelessness increases in countries with nationality laws that discriminate on the basis of gender when internally displaced children are separated from their fathers or lack documentation proving a legal link to them. Documentation issues affect children in a variety of contexts worldwide and for other reasons, including the status of displaced parents suspected or accused of terrorism.<sup>36</sup>

57. It is the responsibility of States to take all measures necessary to ensure that children are able to obtain a legal identity as swiftly as possible by replacing lost or issuing new documentation, as has been done in Colombia, for instance, by deploying mobile registration teams to reach internally displaced persons in remote areas<sup>37</sup> or in Côte d'Ivoire by using witness statements to establish the identity of internally displaced persons for a civil registration exercise.<sup>38</sup> Where gender-discriminatory nationality laws persist, States should enact reforms to uphold gender-equal nationality laws in line with international conventions.

### **Mental health and psychosocial safety**

58. Mental health and psychosocial safety are increasingly viewed as a key dimension of child safety, as traumatic incidents in childhood can lead to poor mental health throughout life. The harmful effects of armed conflict and violence on children's

<sup>34</sup> Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, 2010.

<sup>35</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council, "Statelessness and displacement" (2016).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., "Barriers from birth: undocumented children in Iraq sentenced to a life on the margins" (2019).

<sup>37</sup> Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Brookings, *Protecting Internally Displaced Persons: A Manual for Law and Policymakers* (2008).

psychological and physical well-being are exacerbated by the experience of displacement. Some of them are at higher risk for psychological problems or trauma.<sup>39</sup>

59. Young people in Iraq and South Sudan consulted by War Child highlighted how trauma can affect their ability to communicate and stressed their need for support in dealing with and processing their experiences and for more active listening in the context of programming. Frequently, stigmatization prevents those affected from seeking support and local decision makers from seeking solutions. Some children with mental and physical disabilities are considered “shameful” and are hidden away, making their inclusion difficult. The lack of wheelchairs for most disabled children may cause depression and have a psychological impact on their lives, as they are, as War Child put it, “just captive inside their tents”.

60. Although there is widespread agreement that psychosocial support for internally displaced children is essential and should be integrated at the earliest possible point in the humanitarian response, there is still an alarming lack of focus on children’s mental health. While in many countries access to psychosocial support may be similarly difficult for both displaced and non-displaced children, those who are displaced may have faced trauma in their lives that their peers have not, making those professional services all the more necessary for them.<sup>40</sup>

61. Displaced children are also more likely than non-displaced children to have difficulties in gaining access to a nurturing environment and a safe place to play and may lack social connections compared with peers in host communities, which are conditions crucial for child development. In one situation, a large proportion of displaced children who were interviewed rarely or never felt safe playing, even next to their home, while older children did not feel safe without their parents. One in four children said they rarely or never had a place to go or someone to talk to when they were scared, sad or upset.<sup>41</sup>

62. Appropriate mental health and psychosocial support that is locally based and promotes self-help, coping skills and resilience among affected people, including internally displaced children, is essential and should be developed and delivered as part of a comprehensive programme using sustainable and community-based approaches to mental health, including by providing child-friendly spaces and expanding young people’s access to leisure activities, such as through clubs. Life skills training helps children to build the confidence to withstand pressure and protest inappropriate decisions made for them, such as decisions regarding recruitment.

## Education

63. The right to education does not stop because of displacement, and displaced families often view the education of their children as a priority. In situations of armed conflict, access to education is disrupted not only by general insecurity, but also by targeted attacks on students, teachers and educational facilities and the use of those facilities for military purposes. In situations of generalized violence, there often arises the need to protect teachers, pupils and their parents from the violence, as highlighted by the Special Rapporteur, the Special Representative on Violence against Children<sup>42</sup> and other partners.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, 2010.

<sup>40</sup> Save the Children/Samuel Hall (2019).

<sup>41</sup> Save the Children, “Invisible wounds: the impact of six years of war on the mental health of Syria’s children” (2017).

<sup>42</sup> Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, *Protecting Children Affected by Armed Violence in the Community* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.I.15).

<sup>43</sup> See, e.g., UNHCR, “Impacto de la violencia en 220 centros educativos de Tegucigalpa” (2018).



64. In many displacement situations, parents choose to keep their children home from school because of safety or economic considerations. Poverty often dictates that earning sufficient income to feed and clothe a family takes precedence over education. Other challenges may arise, such as the need to learn a new language. Easing the documentation required for internally displaced children to attend school, which can be onerous in many States, can enormously ease displaced children's access to education. Social tensions and discrimination against or stigmatization of internally displaced persons may also have an impact; at times, children are not sent to school or refuse to go for fear of being bullied by their classmates on account of their displacement.

65. In addition to focusing on access, due attention should be given to the ability of internally displaced children to remain in school and complete their studies. A good practice for countering high dropout rates is the inclusion of educational allowances, school fees and school supply kits in the family packages given to displaced families, followed by monitoring and attendance sheets from the schools themselves.

66. Despite the growing awareness in recent years of the humanitarian imperative to ensure access to education during crises<sup>44</sup> and in protracted displacement situations, there is still a significant lack of global data and information on the education of internally displaced persons that could help to illuminate the scope of needs and the appropriate policy response. Moreover, tracking the educational trajectories of the internally displaced is difficult.<sup>45</sup> There is a gap in the operational response too, with the overriding priority being to identify solutions and the resources needed to provide standard education to millions of children affected by displacement. Despite significant evidence demonstrating that access to a quality education is crucial in providing internally displaced children with physical, psychosocial and cognitive life-sustaining protection, child protection and education remain among the least funded humanitarian sectors.<sup>46</sup>

67. Education provided in the best interests of the child may differ according to the given displacement situation, and educational needs have to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Any psychosocial care provided to displaced children must address both past traumas and ongoing stress and fear and be aimed at building a sense of safety and teaching coping skills. Supplementary classroom-based programmes aimed at addressing the acute psychosocial needs of children affected by conflict-induced trauma can be effective. One programme helps students to identify their reactions to stress and learn calming techniques, be able to talk to teachers and family, be aware of risks in their communities and identify measures to keep themselves safe, such as walking to school in groups or finding alternative routes.<sup>47</sup>

68. Moreover, the provision of education in emergencies should take into account gender issues. Conflict and displacement may change gender dynamics and affect boys and girls differently, although barriers to education are often maintained and gender disparities reinforced. Those factors must be taken adequately into account in the development of educational programmes for internally displaced children.

<sup>44</sup> Manuel Bessler, "Foreword: education – a humanitarian and development imperative", *Forced Migration Review*, issue No. 60 (March 2019).

<sup>45</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education – Building Bridges, Not Walls* (Paris, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> Global Protection Cluster and Global Education Cluster, "Child protection and education in emergencies" (2015).

<sup>47</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council, *Education in Emergencies: Children in Distress – A Child Protection Risk Analysis for NRC Afghanistan's Education Programme* (Kabul, 2018).

69. Despite the fact that internal displacement places a huge strain on the already inadequate educational infrastructure, it is important that the needs of the host communities be taken fully into account, particularly in protracted displacement situations. Adequate financial and technical support, such as additional teachers and school facilities, are essential in order for communities to better implement their obligations towards displaced children. This may necessitate the establishment of additional school locations and simplified admission procedures, the coverage of tuition fees and loans and the provision of textbooks for displaced children, as has been done in Ukraine.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, access to quality inclusive education brings significant economic, social and health benefits to displaced and host communities alike, helps to foster cohesive societies and is a vital tool in fighting prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination.<sup>49</sup>

### **Housing, land and property**

70. In displacement contexts, risks faced by displaced communities include forced eviction, lack of access to land and other barriers to housing, land and property rights. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to the risk of forced eviction and homelessness (A/HRC/25/54, para. 65) and should receive priority consideration for emergency shelter until more durable housing solutions are established. Children can be particularly vulnerable when they have to participate in harmful coping mechanisms, such as child labour or early marriage, to meet the cost of rent or owing to exploitation.

71. Children are usually dependent on a parent's or guardian's ability to obtain adequate housing and establish a home free from the fear of forced eviction. In displacement contexts, the ability to find and sustain a safe home can be particularly difficult. Access to adequate housing and land is important at all phases of displacement. Displaced women's experiences of gaining access to housing, land and property rights may be limited owing to challenges in connection with gaps in laws and customary practices, leading to the loss of inheritance rights, exacerbated discrimination and barriers resulting from socioeconomic disadvantages. These can have a significant effect on their children's ability to obtain security of tenure (ibid., para. 64).

### **Preserving and strengthening national child protection systems in internal displacement contexts**

72. During emergencies, and the longer a displacement situation lasts, the more imperative it is for national and local governments and the international community to support efforts to put in place laws, policies, systems and public services that are inclusive of internally displaced children. There is too often a disconnect between the informal and formal elements of national child protection systems, and there is a need for the two levels to collaborate and for the central government body dedicated to child welfare and the social welfare workforce to be sufficiently equipped and resourced to address protection issues and violations against children in situations of displacement.<sup>50</sup> Within the framework of a system-strengthening approach, children's displacement-specific vulnerabilities should be identified and addressed.

73. UNICEF has worked with national child protection authorities to ensure that child protection systems incorporate the specific needs of internally displaced children, for example in case management systems. The establishment of case management systems has, for example, demonstrated increases in the number of

<sup>48</sup> UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019*.

<sup>49</sup> UNICEF and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, "Equitable access to quality education for internally displaced children" (July 2019).

<sup>50</sup> UNHCR, "Community-based child protection mechanisms" (2013).

children gaining access to case management services, which include individual counselling, family tracing and reunification, victim assistance, reintegration, response to gender-based violence, education and legal support. The establishment and strengthening of birth registration systems, including electronic systems to avoid duplication, have led to significant increases in birth registration rates.

74. Local governments play an increasingly important role in displacement settings. Systems and services that have the greatest impact on children's daily lives are often provided locally. The international community should support area-based approaches and engage with local governments, which are uniquely placed to make a difference in the lives of internally displaced children. This can mean adapting national policies to local needs or filling gaps within national systems through municipal services.

75. Humanitarian actors have increasingly recognized the value of and need for collaborative, integrated and intersectoral programming to tackle the root causes of child protection concerns and respond to child protection needs, with child protection and education professionals as natural allies. Economic strengthening initiatives for families – through microcredit, skills transfers or cash transfers, for example – implemented by child protection, education and livelihoods programme staff have been increasingly used as a form of cooperative action among governments, United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations to prevent child separation, improve foster and parental care and reduce the incidence of child labour.<sup>51</sup> Challenges linked to the coordination of efforts and competition among agencies for resources unfortunately remain in various contexts. The ongoing United Nations reform process provides an opportunity to increase coherence in the international response on behalf of internally displaced children.

#### IV. Conclusions and recommendations

**76. With the present report, the Special Rapporteur hopes to revitalize and enhance a needed conversation among a range of actors, including governments, United Nations agencies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and internally displaced persons, with the ultimate goal of moving from discussion to improved practice for the strengthened protection of internally displaced children.**

**77. This is a year of opportunity, as 2019 marks important anniversaries, including the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in which the signatories called upon all nations to ensure that every child would be brought up in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity. Children must be respected as “zones of peace”, and their rights must be safeguarded at all times. Internally displaced children are children first and foremost.**

**78. The Special Rapporteur therefore calls upon States and other actors, as relevant to:**

*On law and policy*

**(a) Urgently and unequivocally respect international humanitarian and human rights law, particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocols and Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict, and to end impunity by holding perpetrators of violations against internally displaced children to account;**

<sup>51</sup> Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, “*Adapting to Learn, Learning to Adapt*”.

(b) Put in place laws, policies, systems and public services that are inclusive of internally displaced children without discrimination and ensure that national laws that are not specific to internally displaced persons do not discriminate against them or restrict their rights;

(c) Ensure that the priorities of internally displaced children and child protection and gender-related concerns are integrated in the development and implementation of national laws and policies on internal displacement;

(d) Adopt or reinforce legislation that criminalizes the six grave violations against children in armed conflict, strengthen monitoring and reporting mechanisms, including through the active participation of all relevant United Nations entities, and ensure the implementation of action plans to end and prevent violations by parties to conflict listed in the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict;

(e) Raise awareness through public statements and public-awareness campaigns to sensitize the general public and public officials to the impact of internal displacement, including on the particular protection risks faced by internally displaced children;

(f) Train public officials, including social workers, police officers, judges, prosecutors, lawyers, guardians, teachers and local civil society organizations, in child rights, child protection case management, best interests assessment and determination processes, and child-friendly procedures;

*On participation*

(g) Take special measures to ensure that the views and concerns of internally displaced girls and boys are taken into account in the design and delivery of protection and assistance programmes, as well as in the development of relevant laws and policies, the planning and management of durable solutions and peace processes;

(h) Facilitate coordination between those working in public institutions with those responding to internal displacement in order to promote child participation activities during recovery and reintegration;

(i) Ensure that children are provided with information about options, their consequences and conditions concerning durable solutions in a format and language they can understand so that they can make their voices heard;

*On data and evidence*

(j) Integrate a “displacement lens” into data exercises and information management systems focused on or including children in line with the forthcoming international recommendations on statistics related to internally displaced persons and appropriately implement the multi-indicator cluster surveys in States seriously affected by displacement, initiatives that require close collaboration between child protection and statistical experts;

(k) Integrate a “children’s lens” into data collection systems and processes that focus on or include displacement, as appropriate and feasible, including data adequately disaggregated by age, sex and specific vulnerabilities, and also speaking to the use of qualitative and innovative data collection methods that allow for the participation of and effective engagement with children and adolescents; such initiatives require close collaboration between child protection and information management experts;

(l) Make better and greater use of existing data on internally displaced children through enhanced data-sharing practices within appropriate data protection standards and protocols; for this purpose, data anonymization software and other technological solutions for sharing sensitive data should be further supported and explored; the increased use of collaborative approaches to the collection of new data on children in internal displacement situations is encouraged;

*On prevention and response programming*

(m) Recognize and address child-specific drivers of internal displacement within conflict and generalized violence settings through the strengthening of community systems and the development of capacity to influence changes in social behaviour;

(n) Strengthen the child protection capacities of national authorities, as the primary duty bearers responsible for protecting and providing assistance to internally displaced children and their communities;

(o) Support and strengthen the protective capacity of families and communities for the protection of children affected by internal displacement, including through community-based initiatives and programmes, and support the mainstreaming of the child protection element across the humanitarian response, including in the context of educational and health services;

(p) Select safe and adequately accessible locations for displacement sites, undertake child and gender-sensitive protection-based site-planning and undertake demining and the removal of cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war as a priority in places where internally displaced children and their families take refuge and in their areas of origin and potential return, and carry out mine risk awareness activities with children and their parents;

(q) Take action to criminalize attacks against internally displaced persons sites and hold accountable those who recruit or use children or commit other grave violations; ensure the creation of legal support services for internally displaced children and train and sensitize military and police forces involved in providing security for internally displaced persons sites and settlements to the obligation to protect children from recruitment, use and other grave violations;

(r) Establish confidential, accessible, child- and gender-friendly complaint and referral systems to address all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation of internally displaced children, who should be adequately informed about those mechanisms, as well as their families and communities;

(s) Prioritize the prevention of family separation, notably by helping communities to prepare for any eventual displacement and mitigate the risks associated with it, as well as by raising awareness on the part of authorities of the importance of preserving family unity, and support family tracing and reunification during displacement and in the return and reintegration process;

(t) Offer counselling to help families and communities to understand the experiences and needs of children and, in the absence of parental care, promote other care and guardianship arrangements in line with the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children;

(u) Ensure long-term, reliable and comprehensive support, including funding and engagement, for internally displaced boys and girls associated with armed forces or groups, taking into account their specific needs, especially

rehabilitation and reintegration, including catch-up education, vocational programmes and livelihood projects, as well as psychosocial support;

(v) Take the steps necessary to implement a coordinated prevention and response plan to combat gender-based violence, such as ensuring the identification of internally displaced children who are victims or are at risk, creating accessible, safe and confidential reporting mechanisms, setting up community-based committees to coordinate, monitor and follow up on responses to gender-based violence, training local authorities in preventing and responding to gender-based violence and promoting the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy for the sexual abuse and exploitation of children by peacekeepers, other United Nations staff and non-governmental organizations, while at the same time prioritizing and supporting the functioning of formal justice systems as a primary channel for addressing incidents of sexual violence;

*On durable solutions*

(w) Ensure that conditions are conducive to durable solutions for internally displaced children and their families, with particular regard to the education and psychosocial care of internally displaced children;

(x) Provide all internally displaced children with appropriate legal documentation and ensure that birth registration services include all children;

(y) Take all possible steps to provide adequate medical and psychosocial care for internally displaced children and their families through coordinated intersectoral community-based programmes with trained staff members, plan for and implement arrangements for longer-term assistance for severely traumatized children with the assistance of trained mental health experts and assist children affected by long-term mental illness and their families;

(z) Ensure immediate and effective access to free, quality and inclusive education and essential services for all boys and girls, regardless of whether they are displaced or possess documentation, recognize and tackle the specific gender- and disability-related barriers, in both emergency and non-emergency displacement settings, at all levels and in vocational training, strengthen educational systems so that they are able to provide high-quality learning opportunities for children in host communities and absorb displaced children and cater to their specific needs;

(aa) Strengthen social safety nets and expand opportunities for family income and youth employment, including for internally displaced persons;

(bb) Provide affordable, safe and adequate housing for internally displaced children and their families, ensuring that families are housed together;

*On funding*

(cc) Increase multi-year collaborative and flexible funding in support of children, including those internally displaced and, in particular, increase funding for child protection interventions from 0.5 per cent to a minimum of 4 per cent of total humanitarian funding and identify new sources of funding to fill the gap and ensure adequate State budget allocations for the rights of internally displaced children;

(dd) Increase support for the strengthening of national and local child protection systems to address and cope with the additional needs of internally displaced children, including in urban areas, through area-based approaches that take into account the needs and situation of host communities.