



Social protection for forcibly displaced children: a call to action

The right to social protection applies to everyone at every stage of life and is clearly recognized in numerous human rights instruments as in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art.22) and in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (art. 9); further, under Target 1.3, of SDG 1 (End Poverty) Member States explicitly commit to increasing social protection coverage, including for children.

That children live in poverty is not only a moral concern and human rights violation: it also has adverse implications for societies in general. This twin imperative underscores the urgency of extending child-responsive social protection, as a long-term investment.

For displaced families and their children, social protection takes on a special significance, since the negative effects of poverty and deprivation in childhood have ramifications that can last a lifetime and can be intergenerational. The global refugee population has more than doubled in the last decade, with children making up almost half of the total.

Short-term humanitarian programming cannot effectively protect them against the threats they face in protracted contexts; these programs may also leave host communities feeling neglected, since they are not always the principal focus of the humanitarian response.

Developing stronger, inclusive long-term social protection systems that support both host and displaced children and families can play an important role in improving the outcomes of both communities and in establishing a more effective, sustainable displacement response.

There is strong evidence from around the world that a comprehensive social protection package including affordable, free, quality Early Childhood Education

and Care (ECEC), is crucial to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability throughout the life cycle. Additionally, social protection has the potential to foster resilience, as well as support social cohesion by reducing tensions that may exist between displaced and host communities, facilitating the achievement of the SDGs.

Some countries worldwide are making progress in supporting displaced and host communities; unfortunately, these efforts are often ad hoc and lack continuity, in addition to being underfunded.

With unprecedented burdens on the humanitarian system, and likely long-term poverty challenges, Member States must urgently invest in comprehensive, and human-rights-sensitive social protection for children from birth and their families.