

Hungry and unprotected children:

The forgotten refugees



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A Venezuelan girl crossing the border to Colombia.

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- Nour, a Syrian refugee, in the camp she lives in.

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Acronyms

DRC – Democratic Republic of the Congo

FDP – forcibly displaced people

IDP – internally displaced person

IPC - Integrated [Food Security] Phase Classification

NGO – non-governmental organisation

OCHA – United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UN – United Nations

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

WFP – World Food Programme



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3-year-old Eliana and 6-year-old Jeiber spent nearly fifty days walking to cross the border from Colombia to Venezuela with their family.

Executive summary

Forcibly displaced children – both refugees and those who are internally displaced – are amongst the world’s most vulnerable people. Displacement interrupts every aspect of life that other children take for granted – school, home, nutritious food and health care, physical and emotional safety, and protection from violence . . . the list goes on. Unprecedented crises in recent years – conflict, climate change, and COVID-19 – highlight the interconnectedness and interdependence of global society and the disproportionate impacts on the most vulnerable populations.

Driven by the economic impacts of COVID-19, climate change, and entrenched conflict, the world is now experiencing a global hunger crisis. Conflict displaces populations – internally and externally – affecting safety, finances, households, and further putting children at risk of all kinds of violence. The rise in extreme weather events – both droughts and floods are affecting food sources in the poorest, least-carbon emitting regions – will also lead to even more conflict over dwindling resources. The hunger crisis is being further exacerbated by soaring food, fertiliser, and fuel prices resulting from the Ukraine conflict. For displaced children and their families, who often rely on humanitarian aid, this a catastrophe on top of a catastrophe.

Published annually to coincide with World Refugee Day, World Vision recently completed their 2022 survey of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in 11 countries to understand the risks children are facing and call for action. This year’s numbers challenge the boundaries of belief, as the challenges multiply, and more children become exposed to more risks. For the second year in a row, the majority of refugees and IDPs, who were already finding it hard to make ends meet, have reported a drop in income, and 82% of survey respondents said they were struggling to afford necessities like rent, health care, and food. Forcibly displaced children and their families need help to simply survive.

It is hard to look everywhere at once and connect how a global hunger emergency jeopardises child protection and the futures of millions of children. With the evidence in this report, we urge the international community to include and monitor how their global crisis response decisions will affect the world’s most vulnerable forcibly displaced children and prioritise their welfare. With better informed resource allocation, we can ensure our responses are effective, sustainable, and echo into the next generation.

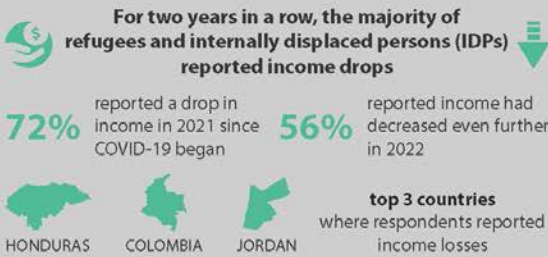
Conflict, climate change, COVID-19, and rising costs

have not only worsened refugees’ pre-existing challenges but also created new barriers and risks. Already amongst the most vulnerable and at-risk populations in the world, they now face increased health, protection, and education challenges, as well as psychosocial distress. While the Ukraine Response has been a model of solidarity with 61.5% (US\$1.38 billion) of the Ukraine flash appeal funding received plus an additional US\$340.48 million for the regional refugee response within two months, this is not the case for appeals from other response settings. Only 18% (US\$860 billion) of all response plans and appeals for 2022 have been funded in the past six months. Within that, just 4% of child protection has been funded globally against its appealed amount, and is the least funded humanitarian sector, which endangers all children, but particularly those who have been forcibly displaced, from realising their rights as declared by the United Nations’ (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child.¹ All refugees and IDPs deserve and desperately need humanitarian assistance, regardless of where they have come from or where they are seeking refuge. We are calling for all donors to honour their existing funding commitments to the global refugee crisis and increase support for refugees and IDPs over the coming year.

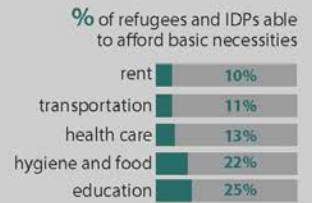
DRIVERS:



Families are suffering



However, the pandemic has not affected everyone equally

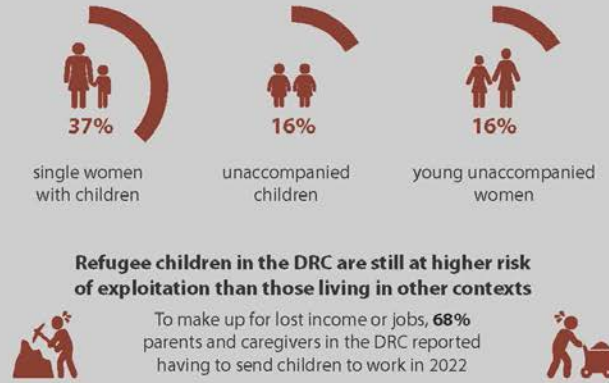


Families need food and protection

Refugees and IDPs are hungry for help
Children are at risk of wasting, malnutrition, and stunting

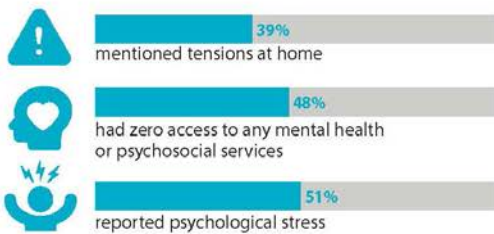
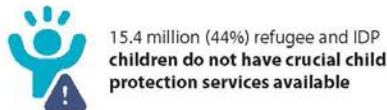


Children are struggling to stay safe
More children are on the move, often alone



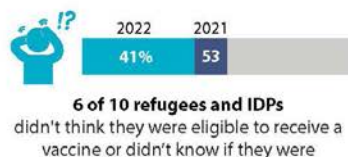
Health and child protection services are urgently needed

Millions of IDP and refugee children are fighting for survival every day



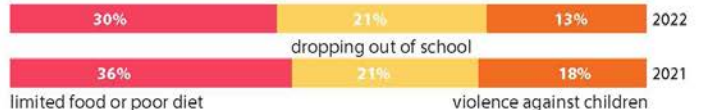
yet harder to reach

Children and their families reported struggling to access:



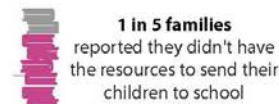
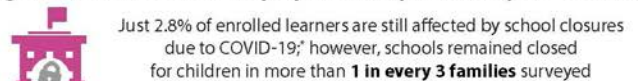
Top concerns for children

Parents and caregivers are concerned about food, violence, and education

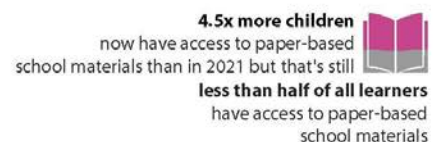


Access to education remains a challenge

Refugee and IDP children are disproportionately affected by school closures



While remote learning remains in place for many schools around the world, the tools needed to access learning are hard to find for refugee and IDP children



World Vision’s 2022 survey of refugees and displaced people showed that: The COVID-19 pandemic continues unabated for people living in fragile contexts and the poorest countries. They are suffering, often more so than other populations, because they are doubly or triply affected due to compounding crises or fragile contexts.

- The forcibly displaced remain a low priority within ongoing COVID-19, refugee, and humanitarian response plans, particularly those living in protracted situations.
- Debt burdens are higher, and economies have not recovered. For two years in a row, the majority of refugees and forcibly displaced people (FDP) reported a drop in their income. In 2021, 72% reported a drop in their income, with 56% reporting their income had decreased even further in 2022.
- Almost 21 million children around the world are one step away from famine and face starvation. Millions more are exposed to violence at home or in the community as a direct result of families being desperate for food.²
- Vaccine access remains inequitable and out of reach for many. More than 11.8 billion doses have been administered across 184 countries; yet, distribution remains uneven. The least wealthy countries, like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda, which host large numbers of FDP have received just 1.4% of available vaccines – only vaccinating an additional 1.1% of their populations since June 2021.³
- Refugees and displaced people also often lack access to health care if they do fall ill. One in every four people surveyed reported having lost a family member within the last year. Four out of 10 of those deaths were due to COVID-19.

82%
were unable to meet their basic needs, reporting struggling to afford things like **health care, rent, and food.**



78%
of all refugees and IDPs interviewed by were not able to meet their daily **nutrition needs.**

Children’s safety is under threat, and children and their families are finding it hard to reach the services they urgently need.

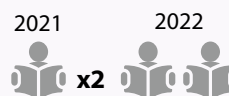
- 15.4 million (44%) of refugee and IDP children do not have crucial child protection services available to them – a 13% increase from 2021.
- Families are being separated, putting children at more risk of experiencing violence or being exploited when they are on the move without adults or other family members. People surveyed said that over the last 12 months they had seen more single women travelling alone with children (37%), more unaccompanied young women (16%), and more children travelling alone (16%).
- Almost half of children (49%) are reported to struggling with access to safe shelter, while 44% struggled to access psychological support and legal services.
- Refugee and IDP children are struggling to access education.



Just 2.8% of enrolled learners are still affected by school closures due to COVID-19;⁴ however, schools remained closed for children in more than **1 in every 3 families** surveyed



1 in 5 families reported they didn't have the resources to send their children to school



The number of families who reported they did not have the resources to send their children to school doubled from 2021 to 2022

Introduction

Though Ukraine dominates headlines and the international community's priorities, there are now more than 90 million people from other vulnerable situations – including 35 million children – forcibly displaced throughout the world.⁴ They live in some of the poorest and most fragile contexts, facing multiple overlapping crises which compound their vulnerability.

Forcibly displaced children are extremely vulnerable to violence. Forced to flee, displacement triggers significant protection risks, both during their journey and at their destination. Age, gender, disabilities, ethnicity, and other factors further heighten girls' and boys' risk of exposure to violence.

Protection risks have increased exponentially due to the unprecedented combination of intersecting drivers – conflict, COVID-19, climate change, and now rising food and fuel costs – that threaten their safety and amplify their exposure to hunger and violence.

Prioritising girls and boys and their protection saves lives now and in the future. Such interventions help prevent and tackle violence against children; support girls and boys in getting the specific support and physical and psychological healing they need to move on; provide a safe place for children to be children; help children and young people be safe and protected, and most importantly give girls and boys hope and a chance to survive and thrive. This report reveals the serious challenges that children are facing when it comes to accessing these critical services. World Vision's research also shows that, in the context of growing humanitarian needs and inadequate funding, world leaders are failing to protect refugee and internally displaced children in some of the most fragile contexts.

All girls and boys have a right to the protections underpinned by the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes the core principle of non-discrimination. Children in crises should never have to compete for lifesaving support – nor should support be granted to some children and not others.



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Ares, an 8-year-old refugee living with a disability in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

Context

Levels of hunger are reaching alarming levels

A combination of the pandemic's economic fallout and the effects of the conflict in Ukraine have significantly increased hunger around the world. Having left their homes and livelihoods, IDPs and refugees now also face extreme hunger.

In 2020, 30 million IDPs (65%) lived in a location considered to be experiencing the worst food crises,ⁱⁱⁱ and more than one-third of all refugees and asylum seekers (30.5 million people) originated from one of these countries (i.e. Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan). Extreme hunger increased exponentially in 2021, with the number of people experiencing hunger reaching an all-time high. The number of hungry people is expected to rise even further by the end of 2022. In April 2022, the UN warned that the ripple effects of the Ukraine conflict and other crises threaten to increase the number of people without enough food to eat to 'appalling' new levels.⁹

- In 2021, more than 90 million people were forcibly displaced around the world.⁵
- In 2021, 193 million people lived in countries/territories experiencing Crisis-level conditions or worse.^{i,6}
- In 2021, out of 53 million IDPs worldwide, nearly 45 million lived in 24 food-crisis countries/territories.^{iii,7}
- Of 24 million refugees and asylum seekers, more than 60% are being hosted in 52 countries/territories facing food crisis.⁸

Conflict is escalating and costs are rising

"We've had no food to eat since Tuesday. We need help to address our sleeping and living conditions. People crowd into the small classrooms. But most of us sleep outside. This crowding, as well as poor sanitation, could lead to disease." – Riziki, a mother fleeing from renewed violence in the volatile Nyiragongo region of DRC, May 2022¹⁰

Conflict remains one of the biggest drivers of displacement and hunger. Over the past two years, millions of children have been placed in danger after fleeing their homes. Conflict destroys agricultural and livestock assets and food supplies. Markets are disrupted and food prices go up. As families struggle to feed themselves, the risk of children experiencing violence or exploitation increases.¹¹

Extreme weather events are increasing

Increasing climate shocks and weather events in fragile settings create and aggravate multiple protection risks for forcibly displaced children. These events worsen hunger and threaten livelihoods, which in turn exacerbate risks such as separation, disruption of education, and socioeconomic stress factors on families, communities, and countries.¹²

About this report

In 2020–2021, World Vision listened to girls' and boys' experiences and shined a light on the consequences of the pandemic on refugee and internally displaced children in fragile contexts. In surveying refugee and internally displaced children in 2022, World Vision again looked at the ongoing impacts of the pandemic, as well as the emerging global hunger crisis and what it means for forcibly displaced girls and boys.

COVID-19 aftershocks are still reverberating

The long-term implications of COVID-19, such as hunger, decreased incomes, livelihood and education losses, experiencing abuse and violence, social isolation, suffering the loss of family members, and the psychosocial impacts of these experiences, will all have a persistent bearing on this generation's children, particularly the most vulnerable.

ⁱ Crisis-level conditions or worse is defined as countries who are rated the equivalent of IPC Phase 3 or worse. IPC is the Integrated [Food Security] Phase Classification system. Phases are ranked as follows: IPC 1 (minimal), IPC 2 (stressed), IPC 3 (crisis), IPC 4 (emergency), and IPC 5 (catastrophe/famine).

ⁱⁱ A food-crisis country or territory is one in 'Crisis' or worse (i.e. IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) – their populations require urgent action in order to meet their food needs (GRFC 2022 pp11, 15–16).

ⁱⁱⁱ i.e. Syria, the DRC, Yemen, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, northern Nigeria, Sudan

Last year's report

In 2021, World Vision published its first World Refugee Day report, [High risk – Low priority: Why unlocking COVID-19 vaccine access for refugees and internally displaced communities is critical for children](#). The report was informed by a World Vision survey conducted with 339 refugee households, representing 1,914 people in eight countries: Brazil, Colombia, the DRC, Jordan, Peru, Turkey, and Uganda, as well as internally displaced Venezuelans. The survey exposed the growing and far-reaching impacts of the pandemic on children living in displacement between 2020 and 2021 and the disproportionate vulnerability of displaced families. It also found that the health and well-being of displaced children had been significantly affected due to the lack of support for their families, service disruption or unavailability, and their exclusion from COVID-19 vaccination campaigns.¹³



© Syria Relief Organization

Mazen in an internally displaced camp in northwest Syria where Action for Humanity (Syria Relief) were able to contact him and enroll him in the education programme.

Hungry and unprotected children: The forgotten refugees

World Vision's 2022 World Refugee Day report, *Hungry and unprotected children: The forgotten refugees*, has been informed by the findings from a follow-up survey conducted in 11 contexts, including the same countries as 2021 (excluding Turkey) with the addition of Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar), Guatemala, Honduras, and Mali, with 467 households – representing 2,522 FDP – surveyed in April 2022. Respondents were asked about their economic circumstances, access to nutritious food, access to health care, child protection services and other essential services like education, as well as their safety and security, over the last 12 months.

World Vision's 2022 survey results show that more than two years into the pandemic, refugee and internally displaced girls and boys in all 11 surveyed countries continue to live in precarious conditions. Their protection needs are consistently eroded by crises, fragile contexts, and vulnerable situations all compounding one another. Entrenched conflict, climate change, the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, and the ensuing stress and tensions at home, have been further compounded by skyrocketing food, fertiliser, and fuel prices. The research shows that life-saving and life-sustaining child protection services and interventions for children – already de-prioritised before the pandemic – continue to be severely disrupted.

Nowhere is safe

The 2021 survey found that people who are forcibly displaced were being overlooked in the global response to COVID-19. While many countries prioritised these populations in plans and policies, at a practical level, refugees and IDPs were not accessing services, including vaccines, at the same rate as host communities. Our comparative research reflects huge disparity between global responses to crises that created large numbers of displaced people, particularly in regards to the world's response to the Ukraine conflict. The Ukraine Response is a model of solidarity; in fact, 61.5% (US\$1.38 billion) of the Ukraine flash appeal funding was received plus an additional US\$340.48 million for the regional refugee response.

The same attention should be afforded to all people struggling within similar circumstances – regardless of where they are in the world or how long they have been displaced – days, months, or decades. Unfortunately, this is not the case. For example, 82% of 2022's response plan and appeal requirements remain unfunded (Bangladesh – 13.3%, Colombia – 9%, DRC – 9.8%, Guatemala – 14.4%, Honduras – 22.7%, Mali – 10.8%, Venezuela – 0.3%).¹⁴

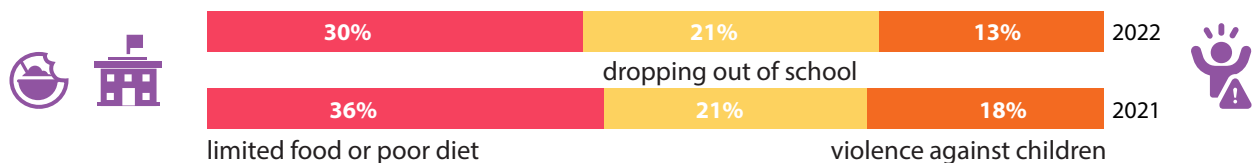
HUNGRY FOR HELP:

Millions of IDP and refugee children are fighting for survival everyday

Before COVID-19, refugee and internally displaced girls and boys living in fragile and humanitarian contexts were routinely denied their most basic rights by both their home and host countries. The pandemic intensified the health, protection, and economic risks faced by displaced families. Now, in the wake of the Ukraine conflict, they must also cope with what has become a global hunger crisis due to rapidly increasing prices of food, fertiliser, and fuel.

Refugees and IDPs' top 3 concerns for children

In 2022, when respondents were asked about the major concerns facing children as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and its direct and indirect impacts in their community, the top three concerns given were the same as those reported in 2021.



Other concerns included physical health deterioration and family separation. Additionally, 33% of respondents said they still did not have access to safe shelter or psychosocial support. There was a slight improvement when it came to accessing shelter (7%) but a decline in terms of mental health needs (compared to 28% who reported a lack of support last year).

Certain concerns were more pressing in some countries over others. For example:

- in Venezuela, nearly 60% of households cited **limited food or poor diet** as main concern.
- **children dropping out of school or educational projects** was the primary concern for 43% of households interviewed in Uganda.
- nearly one-third (31%) of households surveyed in Brazil expressed that **children's exposure to violence and exploitation** was their main concern.

Refugee and IDP incomes keep falling

Refugees and IDPs are overrepresented in the informal labour sector, which has been disproportionately affected by pandemic-related restrictions. When combined with rising food prices and the low inclusion levels of refugees and IDPs in national social protection mechanisms, children and their families are perpetually fighting to put food on the table.¹⁵

Two years in a row, refugees and IDPs surveyed reported drops in their incomes. In 2021, 72% of all respondents reported their income had gone down since COVID-19 began, and in 2022, 56% reported another drop over the last 12 months. Like 2021, the top reasons for loss of income in 2022 were attributed to:



job losses (47% in 2022 versus 52% in 2021)



declines in revenue for small business owners (42% in 2021 and 2022)



salary decreases (21% and 18% respectively).

Refugees in Honduras (76%), Colombia (72%), Guatemala (69%), and Jordan (64%) had the highest number of respondents who reported income losses. Even though nearly three-quarters of displaced respondents living in Colombia surveyed reported drops in income, 14% less people said they lost their jobs in 2022 than 2021; however, **in Jordan, this reported decrease in income rose significantly (15%) since the 2021 survey was conducted.** This aligns with recent assessment data released by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that shows 64% refugees living in Jordan are living in extreme poverty.^{iv} A CARE International assessment also found that the employment of refugees in Jordan declined in 2021; only 41% of their respondents had jobs, with Iraqi refugees being the least employed. Less than a quarter (22%) of Syrian refugees had work permits in the countries they live in – the lowest employment rate recorded in two years.¹⁶

Latin America and the Caribbean has been the region hardest hit by the pandemic's socioeconomic impacts,¹⁷ which, when combined with extreme weather events, has amplified stress on the livelihoods of refugees and IDPs. Of the countries with a majority of FDP (50%+) reporting income losses in 2022, five out of seven (71%) were located in the region. For more than two years now, the financial struggles of IDP and refugee families have increased. A 2020 World Vision survey showed a shocking 80% drop in income amongst forcibly displaced Venezuelan families across seven Latin American countries.¹⁸ In May 2021, a similar regional survey conducted by World Vision confirmed this worrying trend: 69% of respondents reported a drop in income, either due to job loss or reduction in hours or wages.¹⁹ Unfortunately, this survey indicates that the regional trend is holding steady at 66%.



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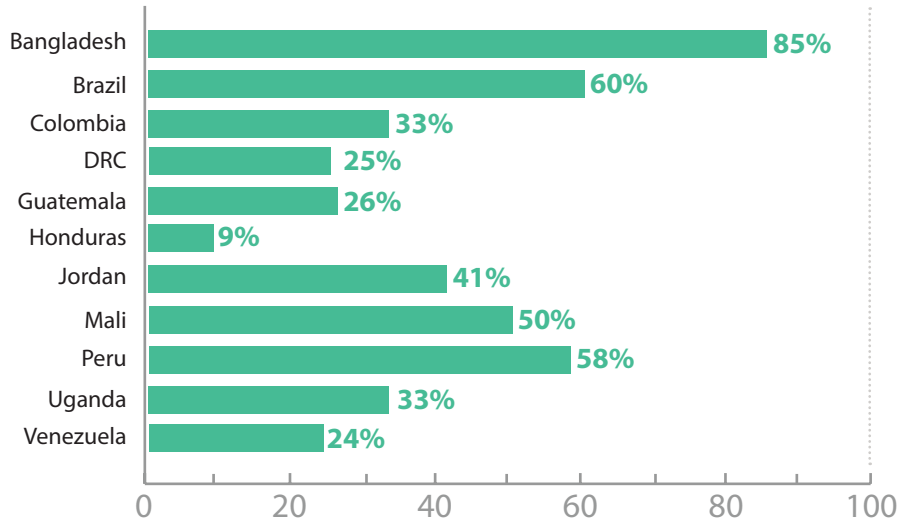
Children in the DRC displaced by the eruption of Mount Goma, which forced more than 364,000 to flee their homes in 2021.

^{iv} Poverty is calculated using the international poverty line of a person having US\$5.50 purchasing power parity per day, which in Jordan would equate to JOD3 (dinar) a day.

Aid dependence is on the rise

The 2022 survey also showed that dependence on humanitarian aid – including cash transfers – increased across all survey countries between 2021 (31%) and 2022 (35%) to help alleviate the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and other regional drivers affecting refugees and IDPs’ livelihoods, and as a result of the ongoing loss of income from other sources. Dependence on aid, as a source of income, rose across all countries (see Figure 1) except Uganda, which dropped from 41% in 2021 to 33% in 2022, due in part to the World Food Programme (WFP) ration cuts and World Vision efforts to help communities become more self-reliant.

Figure 1. FDP reliant on humanitarian aid to cope with income or job loss



In Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, 85% of respondents reported depending on humanitarian assistance for survival.

This is reflective of the extreme vulnerabilities facing the refugees who live there, which have been further exacerbated by several large-scale disasters, including floods and fires that hit the camps in 2021 and 2022.²⁰



Maishara, age 7, in the aftermath of a widespread fire in one of the refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, standing near what was her home. She and her family lost all of their belongings.

© Sathi Islam / World Vision



© Shabir Hussain / World Vision

Loss of income leads to heightened stress

Khursida, age 12, and her mother, Dilara, report that they are struggling with the impacts of COVID-19 on their mental health. Khursida describes being afraid, isolated, and sad as she experienced lockdowns in the camp. They are not alone in experiencing fear and anxiety because of COVID-19 and the way it has affected their lives. More than half a million children live at the Rohingya refugee camp in Cox’s Bazar, and in 2021, research conducted by World Vision and War Child showed that **38% of children and young people living in conflict-affected countries said they felt sad and fearful**, with 12% at the extreme end, at risk of developing moderate to severe mental health disorders, such as depression and anxiety.²¹

“The children couldn’t step out of [our] home, their father couldn’t earn a living, and we had to bother him for food. As a mother, I was scared if my children went out. I was worried if my kids would get infected by others . . . [My] kids also suffered for the food. I passed a hard time feeding my babies.” – Dilara, Rohingya refugee, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh

In 2021, World Vision’s survey found that loss of household income led to significant psychological impacts and strains at home for families and children, with 77% of respondents reporting increased levels of stress, as well as tensions in the home. Reported stress levels remained high with more than three out of four FDP (77%) reporting heightened levels of psychological stress (54%) or tensions at home (23%) when asked about the impacts of income or job loss on the well-being of their family members in 2022 (see figure 2 for country breakdowns). One in five respondents reported that someone in their family had suffered from either severe stress or a mental illness since the pandemic began. The 2022 survey saw a large jump of respondents reporting heightened levels of stress in Jordan (68%) and Uganda (33%) in particular, where nearly three-quarters (74%) of respondents in both countries now said they feel psychological stress. Despite the level of need, almost half (48%) of respondents stated they do not have access to mental health and psychosocial services.

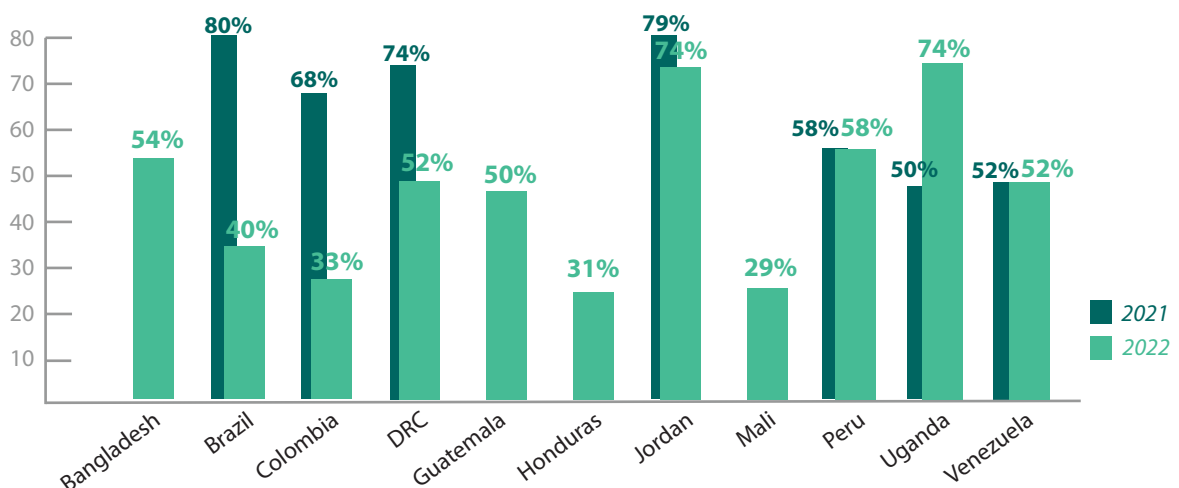


Figure 2. Impact of income or job loss on FDP’s social well-being



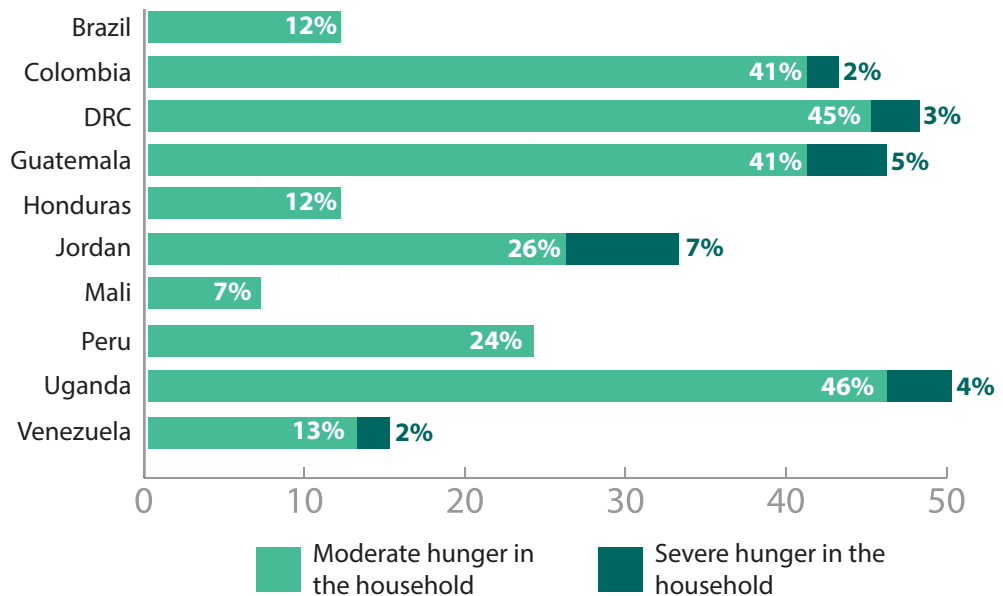
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Crispin, a 7-month-old in the DRC, battles hunger.

When incomes drop, families cut meals

- **39% of all respondents reduced the quantity and quality of meals.**
- **Half of all adults and one-third of all children surveyed ate only once or twice a day.**
- **78% of all refugees and IDPs interviewed were not able to meet their daily nutrition needs.**
 - Fruit and vegetables were not available to nearly three-quarters (71%) of families surveyed in Mali.
 - Four out of five families surveyed in Uganda did not have milk for their children.
 - More than one-quarter of respondents in Honduras, Jordan, the DRC, and Peru said that energy dense food, like oil, nuts, and sugar, were not available.
 - Two out of three households in Mali had no access to leafy green vegetables.
 - Half of all FDP in Uganda surveyed did not have access to any protein-rich food sources (e.g. meat, eggs, seafood).
 - 85% of all respondents had access to starch-based food (e.g. rice, maize, bread, potato, cassava).
- **More than a third of respondents (35%) reported that their children had lost weight over the last 12 months: this number rises to 50% in Colombia and 46% in Mali.**

Figure 3.
2022 household hunger levels



For the first time, families interviewed in 2022 were asked about the quantities of meals they consumed on a daily basis in the last 30 days and the frequency of absence of any type of food available at home. This allowed us to calculate approximate levels of hunger in each country. Those interviewed reported having to make drastic sacrifices due to income loss, including eating less and prioritising cheap (and less nutritious) foods. The result was girls and boys losing weight over the past 12 months.^{vi}

^v 'Moderate hunger' has been defined as when households sometimes (i.e. between 3 and 10 times in the last month) or rarely (i.e. 1 or 2 times) have no food in their house due to a lack of resources. This calculation is based on households who reported going to sleep hungry and going a whole day and night without eating. 'Severe hunger' is when households responded that this happened more than 10 times in the past month.

^{vi} Evidence based on parents' reporting of children's weight changes over the last 12 months.



Evelyn and her family of 10 sit outside their home in Bidi Bidi refugee camp in Uganda.

Seven-year-old Evelyn and her family are amongst those having to skip meals and reduce the quality of the food they eat, simply to survive. Evelyn's father lost his job as a result of pandemic lockdowns, and with it, his ability to provide food for his family. Forced to rely on reduced rations, due to WFP underfunding, and the generosity of neighbours, the family eat just once a day at best; their meals consisting solely of starch. When World Vision staff met Evelyn, she had not eaten in 24 hours. However, her mother shared that this was not a long time for them to go without food, "About a week ago, we spent four days without eating," she said.

In the DRC, 81% of respondents reported they had reduced their quantity of meals – a 20% increase since 2021. Respondents from the DRC also had the highest number of adults eating just once (53%) or twice a day (48%), and children eating just once (48%) or twice a day (43%). Yet, in 2021, only 39% of humanitarian funding needs were met – the lowest rate in the last decade, and, as of June 2022, DRC's humanitarian response plan was only 9.8% funded.

The DRC has the largest number of food insecure people and IDPs in sub-Saharan Africa due to ongoing conflict, natural disasters, epidemics, and COVID-19, with 5.4 million people facing starvation and regular meals not a certainty for around 27 million people. As recently as of 2 June 2022, girls and boys were being separated from their families and going without food for days after fleeing renewed violence between rebels and military forces. The country experiences regular bouts of violence, but this latest surge is of particular concern as it plunged the fragile nation into further food insecurity, with children paying the highest price.²²

"This could be something children will never recover from. Urgent humanitarian support for their immediate and longer-term needs is essential to avoid the worst-case outcomes for them," said Daniel Wordsworth, World Vision Australia's CEO.²³

In Jordan, 52% of respondents had reduced the number of daily meals due to income loss – a 31% increase since 2021. In 2021, food insecurity amongst refugees in Jordan doubled from the previous year to reach 25%. At the same time, due to growing need and funding shortages, the WFP announced monthly food assistance cuts to 21,000 Syrian refugees in Jordan.²⁴

World Vision expects needs to continue to grow as the economic impacts of COVID-19 move into their third year, climate change and conflict continue to drive forced displacement, and a global hunger crisis looms, exacerbated by the war in Ukraine. Ensuring adequate funding for refugee responses and prioritising children's well-being and protection is more important than ever in the face of potential diversion of aid and funding shortages.

Ukraine conflict: A catastrophic hunger threat

The effects of the Ukraine conflict are being felt worldwide, but they are not affecting people equally. The world's most food insecure populations such as refugees and internally displaced girls and boys are hit hardest by the rise in food, fuel, and fertiliser prices.

Together, Ukraine and Russia export around 30% the world's wheat, 19% of corn, and 80% of sunflower products. Interruptions to both countries global grain exports are severely affecting lower- and middle-income countries which are heavily reliant on their wheat. Price increases are driving up hunger in fragile and humanitarian contexts where refugees and IDPs are already struggling to feed their families.²⁵

Seven million children are on the brink of starvation in Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya; 90% of their wheat is imported from Russia and Ukraine.²⁶

The impacts on food security and humanitarian needs have been compounded as operational costs increase. For example, the WFP's operational costs to deliver food increased by US\$71 million per month due to the global rise in food and fuel prices. The WFP estimates in Eastern Africa, over 70% of refugees requiring support do not currently receive a full ration due to lack of funding. Some of the most underfunded WFP operations are for displacement crises with significant refugee populations who require assistance. For example, in Uganda, the WFP supports more than 1.2 million refugees, representing 65% of their operations in the country.²⁷

As the WFP's largest implementing partner, World Vision is also affected by funding and supply chain challenges in delivering life-saving interventions. Even before the Ukraine crisis led to price spikes, last year World Vision warned that over 6 million refugees and IDPs were facing ration cuts as needs increased.²⁸ Adjustments such as decreasing rations and the number of days children are fed in school as part of School Feeding Programmes will have disastrous impacts on the most vulnerable children as the global community is forced to take food from hungry people to save those who are starving.



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Brian, a refugee from South Sudan living in Uganda, relies on World Food Programme rations.

Heightened stress raises violence towards children

Community safety has improved since 2021 (7%); however, 33% of respondents still think their communities have become less safe for children than before the pandemic.

Stress caused by financial pressure, forced movement, the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on families, and growing food insecurity and hunger,²⁹ is severely increasing girls' and boys' exposure to all kinds of violence.

There is a strong correlation between stress, isolation, lockdown measures, and increased violence against children. An assessment conducted by World Vision and partners highlighted the correlation between harmful consequences on children as a result of pandemic restrictions and increased stress during COVID-19, finding that 65% to 99% of children surveyed in countries across five countries in East and West Africa had experienced physical or psychological aggression from guardians due to COVID-19. Additionally, in Uganda, lockdowns led to a

65% increase in cases of violence against children reported to the Uganda Child Help Line, with much of this abuse being perpetrated by family members.³⁰

Based on the 2022 survey's findings on families' level of stress and tensions (see figure 2), as well as the growing levels of hunger reported (see figure 3), refugee and IDP children may be at heightened risk of violence. Considering that self-reporting of violence or victimisation of others is typically low, 12% of respondents shared that reduced household incomes had already resulted in violence against children, including child labour, child marriage, and violence against women and girls in the home, a slight decrease from 2021 (17%).

Child marriage and child labour

In fragile contexts, financial strains and food scarcity often see families resorting to negative coping mechanisms, such as child marriage and child labour, as a short-term means of alleviating pressure on a household. United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) warned that 9 million additional children were at risk of being pushed into child labour by the end of 2022 due to the impacts of COVID-19.³¹ Also, according to anecdotal data from World Vision programmes after the initial onset of the pandemic, between March and December 2020, child marriages more than doubled in many communities compared to 2019.³² Follow up research conducted by World Vision in 2021 found that a child who experienced hunger in the four weeks prior to being surveyed was 60% more likely to be married than his or her peers who did not experience hunger.³³

Respondents (8%) from nine of the 11 surveyed countries either reported sending their children to work or agreeing to marrying them off to cope with income losses; however, no households surveyed in either Brazil or Guatemala said they were using these strategies as a coping mechanism. Yet, in the week leading up to the survey, parents from all surveyed countries reported that 40% of children between six to 11 years old had engaged in one of the following activities: helping with the household's farm, garden, or animals; helping family members with businesses; selling products; or engaging in other activities in return for income.

Refugee children in the DRC were again at higher risk of exploitation than those living in other contexts. In 2022, nearly half (45%) of displaced people in the DRC thought that child labour and early marriage (55%) were major concerns facing children in their communities as a result of the pandemic and its indirect impacts. Concerns about child labour (43%) were comparable to 2021; however, concern grew dramatically about children being married off – nearly seven times more people said early marriage was cause for major concern in their community than in 2021 (8%).

In the DRC:

- 68% reported being engaged in domestic work or child labour (115% in 2021)
- 48% were unable to return to school because they had to work to supplement their family's income (57% in 2021)

Children in Venezuela are struggling with hunger and are at risk of exploitation.



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Education hurdles increase protection risks



1 in every 3 respondents were still affected by school closures

Learners in Latin America and the Caribbean were significantly affected by school closures. Brazil (31%), Colombia (30%), and Honduras (40%) reported that schools were permanently closed.

1 in 5 families reported they did not have the resources to send their children to school



On average, about half (53%) of families surveyed in the DRC and Uganda said they did not have the resources to send their children to school.

3 out of 4 households (77%) said that school-age children did not have access to the Internet (just 4% more than in 2021) and could not access virtual classes (73% in 2022 versus 74% in 2021).



63% had no access to a phone to connect with teachers and peers – compared to 64% and 56% respectively from 2021.

The education and future of hundreds of millions of children are in jeopardy.

The most vulnerable children especially are falling further behind and less likely to return to school. Yet, we know that education has the power to change lives and break the cycle of poverty.³⁴ When household finances are strained, one of the first sacrifices is education, an issue that has been exacerbated by pandemic-related closures. Sometimes parents grow accustomed to having their children at home to help around the house or work to supplement household incomes when schools are closed and prefer that they do not return, even once schools reopen. In 2022, the survey found that this sentiment was expressed most often by refugees and IDPs in Mali, with 20% of respondents explaining that their primary reason for children who were no longer attending school not returning was because they either preferred for their child to stay home or that they were needed to work now.

Children's lack of access to education means that their exposure to all kinds of violence significantly increases.

Social isolation, coupled with repeated school closures, can put children at risk of experiencing violence and exploitation. This increases the probability of learners missing further education and places them at risk of experiencing early pregnancies and, as a result, poor pregnancy outcomes. A global World Vision study early in the pandemic heard similar statements from children and young people, 81% of whom spoke about violence in their homes, communities, and online since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.³⁵ The culmination of these factors can lead to child labour, forced recruitment, child marriage, and physical and emotional abuse.

There is also a gender dimension to the lasting impact of the pandemic on children's education, with family decisions resulting in girls being less likely to return to school compared to boys. When asked whether the children in their households would return to school once reopened, respondents were more likely to say that boys were 'very likely' (80%) to return over girls (74%). Girls were also said to only be 'somewhat likely' (22% versus 16%) or 'unlikely' (5% versus 3%) to return to school more often than boys.

School closures affect all children; however, refugees and internally displaced children are disproportionately affected. As of 28 February 2022, just 2.8% of enrolled learners were affected by school closures globally due to COVID-19;³⁶ however, respondents stated in April 2022, that, on average, 35% of refugee and IDP children between the ages of 3 and 18 were still affected by school closures. When children were not in school, the survey also found that just 51% of displaced households have access to remote learning, and only 26% have access to alternatives in place of classroom education.

Making matters worse is a lack of access to learning tools, especially the Internet, which has worsened since 2021. Children are being cut off from learning and isolated from their peers, and parents face limited or no choices when it comes to getting them back into education.



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Esther,* a 16-year-old from the DRC, had big dreams for her future. Those dreams were disrupted when she was assaulted. Hospitalised and struggling with trauma, she was no longer able to go to school.

As compounding crises leave girls and boys less protected in the DRC and beyond, violence and exploitation has worsened. Child protection services are urgently needed for girls like Esther, to ensure they are safe and able to stay in school.

*name changed to protect identity

Gaps in education are widening due to inequality

In Cox's Bazar refugee camp, Bangladesh:



100% of all respondents reported that children do not have access to Internet, virtual classrooms, radios, laptops, or tablets in order to learn remotely.



Only 8% of respondents' children had access to a cell phone to access remote learning service and tools.



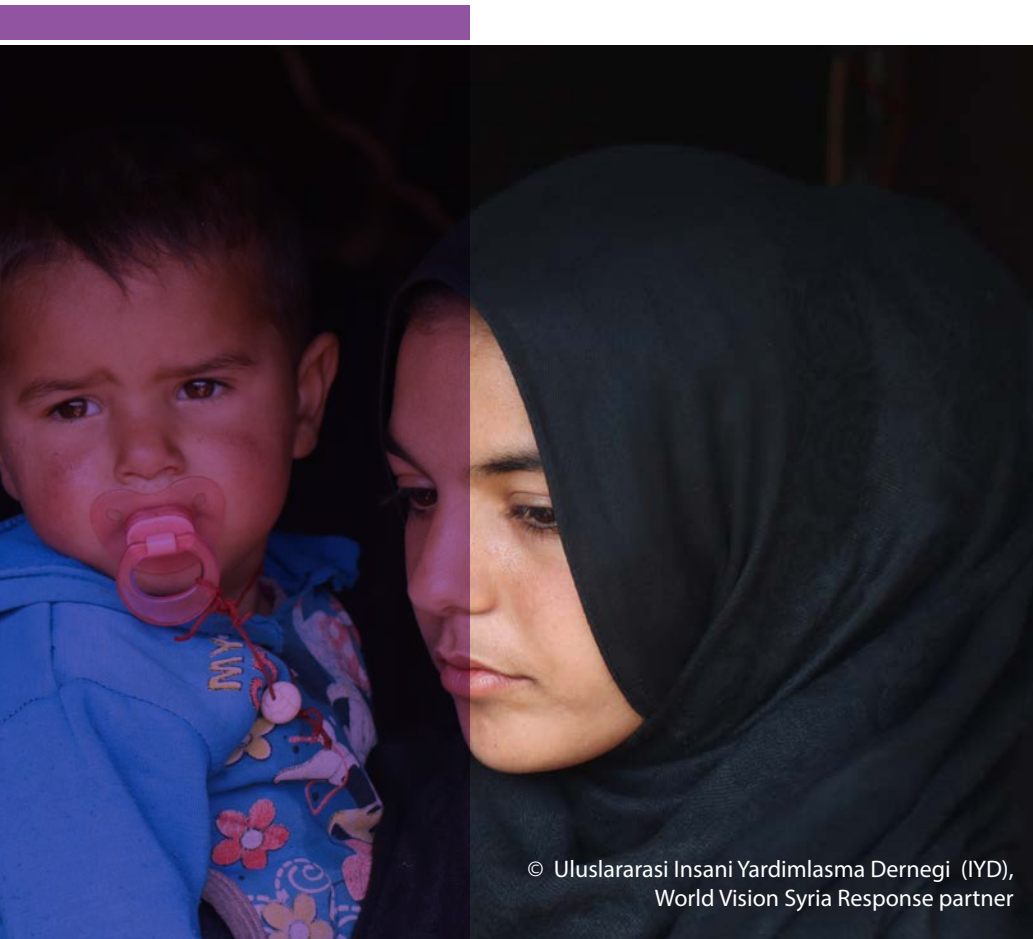
More than half of all respondents' children were dependent on the UN or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide educational materials.

Unaccompanied and separated children face dangers when travelling alone

World Vision's 2022 survey found that more children are on the move – and more frequently moving alone. In the last 12 months, 16% of respondents noticed more unaccompanied children, with the highest numbers being reported in Uganda and the DRC (both 28%), followed by Colombia (26%) and Honduras (21%). More than one-third (37%) of respondents also noticed that there were more single women with children on the move, and 16% noticed more young, unaccompanied women.

Children on the move without the protection of family are especially vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Hunger, the absence of a support system, isolation, and the need

for security make unaccompanied and separated children easy prey for traffickers; people in positions of authority or control over food; and armed groups. A coalition report found that at the height of the pandemic, unaccompanied and separated children in IDP camps were trading their food rations to obtain basic non-food items. They were also engaged in child labour and forced into sexual exploitation and abuse. It found that unaccompanied and separated refugee and internally displaced children, who are already more vulnerable to forced recruitment by armed groups, are at heightened risk due to the lack of protection by family.



At just 13 years old Tahani* is responsible for caring for her four younger brothers and sisters and keeping them safe and fed since the deaths of both of her parents in the conflict in Syria. "I consider [my siblings] my children because I am the one who takes care of them, raises them, and I am responsible for them in all aspects. The most difficult thing that I address is how to manage our lives, such as food, clothing, and medicine when [we are] sick."

Children like Tahani are carrying disproportionate burdens of care for their siblings even while they themselves are more vulnerable to violence and exploitation. They urgently need child protection support to ensure their safety.

*name changed to protect identity

© Uluslararası İnsani Yardım Derneği (IYD),
World Vision Syria Response partner

Lifesaving child protection services are lacking

15.4 million (44%) refugee and IDP children do not have crucial child protection services available to them – a 13% increase from 2021.

Girls and boys are facing unprecedented protection concerns threatening their physical safety, rights, and future as a result of the pandemic. Surveys conducted by World Vision over the past two years showed that all children, whether forcibly displaced or not, are experiencing physical and emotional abuse at higher rates than pre-pandemic.³⁷

Whilst increases in violence against children have been reported globally, forcibly displaced children, continue to be more vulnerable to violence and child exploitation.³⁸ Key factors that disproportionately affect displaced children's risk of violence in COVID-19 times include living in crowded conditions in refugee camps and urban slums, significantly amplified tensions due to COVID-19

stressors (such as financial pressure and lockdowns), and becoming separated from parents and carers.

In 2021, our survey identified that an average of 34% of a wide range of protection services for displaced children had been severely disrupted, particularly in Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, the DRC, and Uganda. It also found that provision of essential protection interventions was already lacking in these contexts prior to the pandemic.

The 2022 survey findings highlight the chronic lack of child protection services for forcibly displaced children who have experienced violence and exploitation. These services continue to be disrupted by the pandemic and funding shortfalls.

Colombia stood out as the main country where child protection services for refugee children were least available before the pandemic and were still lacking over the past year. In 2021 around 60% of Venezuelan children in Colombia were not able to access child protection services, a figure that remained the same in 2022. While case management child protection services slightly improved (73% were not able to access them in 2021 vs. 64% in 2022), safe shelters were not available to more than three out of every five girls and boys (70% in 2022 compared to 68% in 2021).

“A few days ago, a torrential rain soaked the four of us; we had no food or anywhere to shelter.” – Tony, displaced Venezuelan and father of two in Colombia

- **Safe shelter:** Lack of safe shelter was one of the top two services not available across countries, with 49% of respondents reporting no access to safe shelter for forcibly displaced children. Respondents in Colombia reported that 70% of children did not have access to a safe place to stay.
- **Medical treatment:** In general, refugees and IDPs are still not receiving accurate or timely information about health services and even fewer FDP (41%) believed they were eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine than in 2021 (53%). This trend was particularly concerning, however, when it came to questions about health care access for girls and boys – 32% of respondents across countries reported that medical treatment for cases of child violence and abuse was not available, with the lack of access being greatest in Honduras (62%), followed by Guatemala (59%), Venezuela (55%), Peru (61%) and Colombia (50%). In Peru, lack of medical treatment for children also severely worsened since last year (24%).
- **Psychosocial support:** 44% of respondents said mental health and psychosocial support was not available to children, with the greatest concern over lack of access expressed in Mali (66%), Peru (59%), and Honduras (48%). In Colombia, 50% of respondents reported that psychological support was not accessible before COVID-19 and remains unavailable.
- **Legal and family mediation services:** Children and their families also have limited access to legal support (30%) and family mediation (28%), with 44% of all respondents reporting that both types of services are not available. In Brazil 42% of respondents said legal services are not available.
- **Case management:** 43% of respondents reported that children do not have access to case management services. Respondents in Peru (78%), Venezuela (65%), and Colombia (63%) reported once again within the three with the most limited access.



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Tony, a young father from Venezuela, was forced to migrate to Colombia with his family where, due to crises compounded by COVID-19, it has been impossible for him to find permanent employment. Without a steady income, Tony and his family do not have access to a safe place to stay and have had to sleep on the streets while he struggles to find food to feed his children. Tony's family is one of thousands dependent on humanitarian aid, unable to access services they urgently need to be able to keep their children safe.

The lack of child protection services is particularly concerning given the alarmingly high need for child protection support identified in the survey. It also reflects a systemic gap in humanitarian action, with millions of forcibly displaced children missing out the critical – sometimes life-saving – support they need to deal with the trauma and violence they have experienced before, during and after displacement.

Underfunding also severely affected child protection activities just as COVID-19 spread across the globe.³⁹ In 2020, the UNHCR reported that lack of funding had led to a scaling down of child protection and psychosocial case management services in settlements hosting

South Sudanese refugees in Uganda. This resulted in a drastic reduction of at-risk children not receiving home monitoring visits (Uganda has a caseworker-to-child ratio of 1:300 compared with the international standard of 1:25).⁴⁰ Funding shortfalls meant that in Colombia, in 2020, the UNHCR was unable to continue to support child-friendly spaces, exposing thousands of newly arrived Venezuelan children to significant protection risks in the crowded border crossing spaces, as their parents dealt with immigration procedures.⁴¹ Then, in 2021, World Vision estimated that US\$1.4 billion was still required to provide urgent mental health and psychosocial support for 456 million children living in fragile and conflict-affected regions.⁴²

Investing in child protection saves lives and futures

“Investing in child protection and violence prevention should be seen as a ‘vaccine’ against the pandemic of violence against children.” – Najat Maalla M’jid, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children⁴³

Diverted resources disproportionately affect the most vulnerable

Girls and boys are facing unprecedented protection Two years of a global pandemic, increasing needs driven by conflict and climate change, and now a global hunger crisis exacerbated by war in Ukraine, has led to a record level of humanitarian need. Refugee and internally displaced populations are suffering; yet, less funding is available to support their many needs – UNHCR’s COVID-19 Response plan was the agency’s most underfunded emergency in 2021⁴⁴ – as many donor governments face growing challenges domestically. Some have even had to decrease or divert humanitarian funding that may have earlier been sent abroad to help the most vulnerable away from some of the world’s largest displacement crises in order to support their own national responses to COVID-19 or refocus development aid to Ukraine.

- The United States government approved a US\$10 billion package in April 2022 that removed international aid funding directed to the global COVID-19 response, including vaccines for the most vulnerable.⁴⁵
- Sweden recently announced its plan to divert nearly one-fifth (US\$1 billion) of its annual foreign aid monies to cover its own costs of hosting the expected influx of refugees from Ukraine.⁴⁶
- While not yet approved by its parliament, Norway released a revised budget in May 2022 that re-designated previously earmarked development funds (US\$415.67 million) to support ‘refugee-related measures in Norway’ away from existing aid commitments.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, COVID-19, conflict and climate continue to have devastating impacts on refugees and IDPs, especially girls and boys,⁴⁸ and anecdotal data from

World Vision’s operational teams indicate that programmes are already being affected by – or witnessing – donors’ re-prioritisation of funding.

- The Asia Pacific regional office, who oversee World Vision’s Rohingya Response in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, relayed that they had been warned by several donors ahead of the current conflict escalation, that they already expected to reduce their 2023 budgets for other humanitarian responses in light of the ongoing Ukraine crisis.
- Due to budget re-allocations to the conflict in Ukraine, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) reduced their already limited funding (10%) for disaster risk reduction programmes for Colombia’s Ven Esperanza consortium, which seeks to respond to the Venezuela migration crisis through the food security sector, to just 2–3%.

The impact of humanitarian response supporting displaced Venezuelans may also be at risk, with pressure being placed on partners to stretch budgets designed for one year of intervention to two years, which is likely to practically result in an overall reduction of assistance and services to the affected population.

Although this data is anecdotal and only targeted a small number of country operations, it corroborates the information that is starting to emerge around donors withdrawing from existing commitments, which led the UN Secretary General to urge donor governments to reconsider making cuts affecting the world’s most vulnerable.⁴⁹

Humanitarian needs continue to outgrow funding

The funding shortfall has grown wider, with near-record levels of funding going towards the Ukraine Response and much smaller amounts of money targeting existing humanitarian crises.⁵⁰ There is growing concern that donors are re-directing existing aid budgets towards Ukraine, cutting funding, cancelling grants, and increasing military spending.⁵¹ In March 2022, Denmark announced that it was re-directing 2 billion kroner (equivalent US\$279,780,140) of humanitarian aid aimed at some of the most pressing displacement

crises, including Mali, Syria, and Bangladesh, for refugees from Ukraine.⁵² The United Kingdom has so far redirected GBP£220 million (US\$276 million) of aid money to meet immediate humanitarian needs in Ukraine.⁵³ Multiple World Vision country offices have reported that programmes funded by institutional donors are at risk of being cut from conversations they have had with donors and partners. The UN Secretary General has urged donor governments to reconsider making cuts that will affect the world's most vulnerable.⁵⁴

Child protection needs are increasing but funding is chronically low

With more life-saving aid expected to be re-directed towards the Ukraine response on top of the already existing resource gaps for displacement crises, there is an urgent need for dialogue about the potential impact on child protection programmes. Funding for child protection for children on the move was already drastically and chronically underfunded and deprioritised before COVID-19 and the conflict in Ukraine.

A recent report from the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (ACPHA) found that while funding had recently increased,⁵⁵ it remains largely insufficient. Critically, funding fails to meet the high protection needs of forcibly displaced children. Child protection funding for the worst humanitarian crises dropped from 42% of the amount required in 2019 to 24% in 2020 – representing less than 1% of the total funds received for humanitarian response plans in 2020.⁵⁶ In 2021, child protection remained one of the most underfunded areas in humanitarian action, dropping even further to meet just 21% of needs; 2022's child protection requirements still has a gaping 96% funding breach.⁵⁷

- Child protection globally is 4% funded against its appealed amount, and consequently, represents the least funded humanitarian sector.⁵⁸ The 2022 Global

Humanitarian Overview called for US\$46.06 billion to meet humanitarian and refugee needs worldwide – including an appeal of US\$721.88 million specifically for child protection. An estimated 17.2% of the entire appeal has been funded – with just 1.6% of that (US\$29.6 million) going to meet child protection needs – leaving US\$692.3 million worth of needs unmet.⁵⁹

- Child protection appeals do not match actual needs. For example, plans and appeals for the Central African Republic in 2019 only contained 4% of children in need within its targets, and in the DRC, only 8% of children in need were included. These targeting issues can be attributed to a number of reasons, such as pressure to limit appeal amounts by reducing the number of children targeted, the perception by some that child protection is not 'as lifesaving' as other interventions, or to humanitarian access constraints.⁶⁰
- Tracking child protection in humanitarian and refugee response plans remains challenging. Some plans still fail to include child protection as a distinct sector, despite guidance for its disaggregation rolling out across the humanitarian system several years ago. This limits the ability to appeal for, monitor, and advocate to address funding gaps for child protection interventions.

Over the past three years underfunding for child protection has been systematic:⁶¹

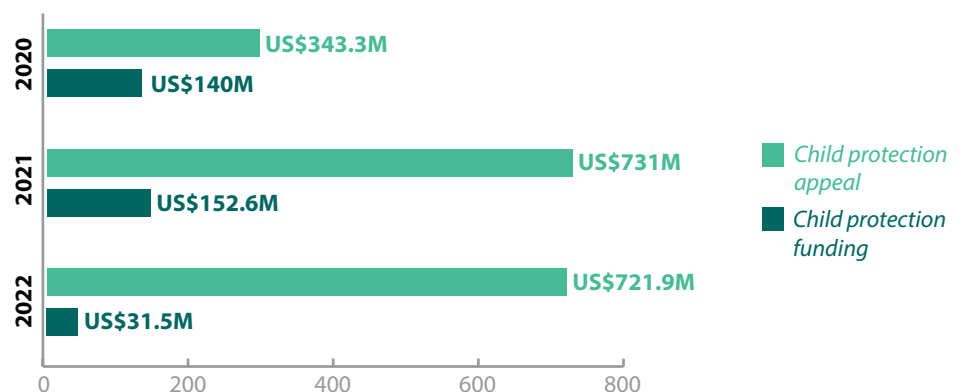


Figure 4. Comparing funding levels: Child protection appeals in refugee/humanitarian response plans versus funding

Child protection programmes not only keep displaced children safe, but also help girls and boys to heal and find hope for their futures amidst the trauma of having fled their homes.

Children like Tasnim, a Syrian refugee, benefit from being a part of regular child protection programming. Initially shy and withdrawn, she struggled to connect with others because of what she had been through. However, thanks to the psychological support she was able to access at the centre, she has become more sociable.

Even though some donors do not recognise the importance of these types of child protection services, funding for these interventions can help to address the emotional effects of trauma on children, which is essential for the girls and boys living in these fragile contexts. It can also help them learn self-care strategies that eventually can ameliorate the impact of mental disorders and stress caused by the trauma.⁶²



Key challenges for child protection funding

Several obstacles augment the lack of specific funding for child protection in humanitarian action, and more generally donors' lack of prioritisation for child protection services. The challenges below apply to most humanitarian responses including those with refugee and internally displaced populations.

Gender and age-disaggregated data are critically missing

The absence of disaggregated data perpetuates the false notion that protection risks are the same for all and compounds the 'one-size-fits-all' approach driving policymakers and practitioners' priorities and funding.

Four in 10 countries hosting and reporting on refugees living within their borders to the UN do not provide reliable data on age, and almost nine in 10 countries and territories with conflict-driven internal displacement do not disaggregate data by age. Disaggregated data on additional factors of vulnerability, including gender, disability, and being unaccompanied or separated from



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Tasnim, a Syrian refugee living in Azraq camp in Jordan, participates in a child protection programme.

family, are also critically missing from data collection. This further reinforces the assumption that all children face the same challenges and are affected by forced displacement the same way.⁶³

The absence of data means that child protection-specific funding requests in humanitarian appeals remain very low and rarely match the level of need.

Poor tracking and monitoring systems paint an inadequate picture

Child protection only became a standalone sector within the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (OCHA) Financial Tracking Services recently, and it still often remains categorised under the wider funds allocation for the protection sector. This makes it difficult to track actual investments in specific child protection services, causing figures to either be inflated in line with the overall protection allocations, or be hidden under the broad sector category.⁶⁴

Although mainstreaming the prevention and mitigation of child protection issues across humanitarian and refugee responses is crucial, the absence of specific child protection objectives, actions, targets, and appeal

requests can limit the ability to monitor and appropriately advocate for strengthening dedicated services and systems in response settings. A World Vision analysis of the 2019 Global Refugee Forum pledges for Syria exposed the impact of the lack of specific and trackable commitments on child protection. This contributes to the generalisation of protection issues and further reinforces the invisibility of forcibly displaced Syrian children in humanitarian planning; this in turn translates into low requests for specific child protection funding. This downward spiral has been exacerbated by the funding impacts of COVID-19.⁶⁵

The spectrum of child protection services and their life-saving role is still misunderstood

The life-saving role of child protection services is misunderstood and inhibits the prioritisation of child protection interventions within humanitarian response plans.

Child protection services are often difficult to quantify, therefore making it difficult to justify the need and explain the interventions to donors when there are fewer tangible outcomes on which to report. An evaluation of UNHCR's child protection programming found a 'lack of clarity across the organisation' (aside from child protection technical staff) on what 'child protection' involves.⁶⁶ Recognising these gaps and educating people on child protection is not enough, World Vision works to build capacity in child protection programming, mainstreaming, and advocacy, particularly with frontline humanitarian workers and local partners, including faith leaders. For example, World Vision coordinated the development of an action plan for Faith Action on the Move that provided faith leaders actionable interventions to respond and scale up action for children on the move – highlighting their importance in supporting continuum of care for child protection, offering spiritual support as a form of resilience, promoting peace, and addressing xenophobia.⁶⁷



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A family crossing the border from Colombia to Venezuela receives support from World Vision.

Recommendations

World Vision's 2022 survey found that forcibly displaced girls and boys are more vulnerable than ever before, facing food insecurity from the global hunger crisis, long-term socioeconomic impacts of the global pandemic, ongoing entrenched conflict, and climate change.

These complex factors have contributed to a child protection crisis on a global scale. This comes at a time when resources for strengthening the services and systems that help children stay safe, healthy, and recover from the impacts of conflict and displacement are dramatically failing to match required needs.

World Vision calls on the UN, donor governments, host countries, local government and service providers, non-governmental organisations, donors, faith leaders, and civil society, to ensure that forcibly displaced children in all crises have access to the protection, support, and healing they need. This should be provided through efforts to maintain and expand life-saving child protection programming and ensure global response to the growing hunger crisis integrates the prevention and mitigation of violence and exploitation of children.

As a matter of urgency

All parties to conflict must:

- **abide by their obligations under international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law** – it is essential that children are protected from grave violations of their rights
- **facilitate safe, unimpeded access for all health and humanitarian workers and suppliers** to ensure the timely delivery of lifesaving humanitarian assistance – this must include ensuring access for staff working to protect children

National governments must:

- **ensure domestic policy and practice aligns with international refugee law**, including the principle of non-refoulement, as well as international commitments to the Global Compact on Refugees⁶⁸ – guaranteeing unimpeded access to education, promoting economic opportunities and job creation, including provision of necessary work permits, and enabling access to health care for refugee children and their families, alongside host communities
- **invest in national systems and services that protect children**, particularly comprehensive case management; mental health care; psychosocial support; and legal services, such as birth registration and recovery of lost legal documentation – these must be freely available and accessible to all forcibly displaced children, including refugees and asylum seekers
- **establish or strengthen national child-sensitive social protection systems**, ensure adequate budgetary allocations to operationalise, and put in place accountability mechanisms to ensure children experiencing forced displacement and their families receive sufficient support to mitigate household food insecurity and loss of income that can drive protection concerns
- **maintain national child protection systems and services** that support both formal and informal referral pathways and partners and include engagement with and leverage the experience of faith leaders and their communities
- **ensure national responses to COVID-19 are equitable** and that forcibly displaced populations, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, have the same access to vaccination programmes and all other aspects of national COVID-19 prevention and response initiatives

Donors must:

- **At minimum, maintain current humanitarian assistance commitments, particularly in ‘forgotten crises’** with chronically underfunded response plans, and ensure funds intended for child protection in these humanitarian responses are not compromised to meet additional needs created by the crisis in Ukraine
- **urgently commit humanitarian assistance to meet the needs outlined in humanitarian and refugee response plans**, prioritising funding to tackle the factors that contribute the most to protection risks that forcibly displaced children experience, including food insecurity, loss of household income, lack of access to education, and the impacts of climate change
- **allocate new funding for the global hunger crisis**, mitigating cuts to the delivery of food assistance to populations affected by forcible displacement, and prevent more severe levels of food insecurity in the near future while making investments in food systems strengthening concurrently with emergency food assistance resourcing and in alignment with a nexus approach to increasing food security and resilience
- **prioritise funding for dedicated child protection interventions**, ensuring humanitarian and refugee response plan appeals for child protection programming are fully funded in alignment with the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action’s 2020 standing recommendation

All humanitarian actors, including UN agencies and NGOs must:

- **ensure the protection of children is prioritised in all humanitarian responses** – humanitarian and refugee needs overviews and assessments should include age-specific and gender-sensitive data and analysis to inform response planning, and all humanitarian and refugee response plans should include a dedicated child protection appeal, accompanied by a sub-cluster/sector plan, actions, and targets
- **work collectively to ensure all forcibly displaced children have access to and are supported with child protection services**, particularly comprehensive case management and mental health and psychosocial support, as well as services that support the health and safety of children – e.g. access to health care, nutrition services, food assistance, education, and specialised services, (such as for child survivors of gender-based violence or children formerly associated with armed forces or groups), in line with the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and as a contribution to UNICEF’s Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action⁶⁹
- **continue to support capacity building in child protection programming, mainstreaming, and advocacy**, particularly for frontline humanitarian workers and local partners, including faith leaders
- **ensure that all food security, livelihoods, and nutrition assessments, plans, and interventions mainstream child protection considerations** to support the prevention and mitigation of violence and exploitation, including the specific protection issues forcibly displaced children experience
- **collectively advocate to ensure the situation for refugee and internally displaced children reaches national governments and donor agencies**, prioritising opportunities to amplify children’s voices and participation with safeguarding measures in place, to help realise critical political commitments and funding decisions to address their most urgent challenges

Refugees in Cox’s Bazar receive food support after a landslide and flooding devastated their home.



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Annexes

Methodology

This survey was conducted between 1 and 15 April 2022 in 11 countries – Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, the DRC, Guatemala, Honduras, Jordan, Mali, Peru, Uganda, and Venezuela. In Bangladesh, World Vision surveyed Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar; in the DRC, refugees from the Central African Republic; in Uganda, South Sudanese refugees; in Jordan, Syrian refugees; in Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, Venezuelan refugees; and in Guatemala and Honduras, Central American refugees and IDPs. In Venezuela and Mali, World Vision surveyed IDPs.

The survey used a mix of sampling methodologies (random, purposive, and convenience sampling) covering 466 households across 11 countries, with the average number of 5.81 people per household. Households in Bangladesh (40), Brazil (26), Colombia (46), the DRC (40), Guatemala (39), Honduras (42), Jordan (42), Mali (41), Peru (41), Uganda (46), and Venezuela (63) were surveyed. Interviews were conducted over the phone or face-to-face, following COVID-19 safety regulations and local mandates. Consideration was given to the sex, age, legal status, and living situations of the respondents.

Over 60% of respondents were women, reflecting the high number of female-led households amongst displaced families, with the largest number of women respondents from Colombia, Brazil, Honduras, and Venezuela. Considerations were given in choosing the locations and type of living situation of refugees and

Age of respondents	2021	2022
Under 18	16%	1%
18 to 24	16%	13%
25 to 29	16%	22%
30 to 49	33%	52%
50 to 64	12%	11%
65 and above	7%	1%

Status of respondents	2021	2022
Registered refugee	57%	33%
Internally displaced	14%	13%
Temporary residency permit	9%	9%
Unregistered refugee	13%	8%
On the move / other	5%	34%
Not willing to share	2%	3%

IDPs. Respondents lived in many contexts, including urban (37%), rural (37%), peri-urban (17%), or other location (9%); as well slums (7%), refugee/IDP camps (33%), low-income housing settings (39%), or other living situations (21%).

Limitations

The results are not representative of the whole refugee and IDP population in respective countries or globally. This survey was conducted in locations and situations that ensured a safe environment for World Vision staff, its partners, and respondents; therefore, the data also does not represent the hardest-to-reach people, often living in the most vulnerable situations. Thus, an estimate can be made that the data presented in this report represent a moderate picture of refugees' and IDPs' situations that is indicative of the situation faced by the surveyed respondents in the assessed locations at the time of assessment. However, the overarching experience of those World Vision spoke to is likely to apply to many more and be significantly worse in other ongoing crises and conflicts, including Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Ethiopia.

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World Vision cannot do this work alone. It is only through the dedicated support and cooperation of local governments, hundreds of thousands of child sponsors and supporters, institutional donors, and communities themselves that our programming makes a change. We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to our friends, partners, and donors including:

Aktion Deutschland Hilft
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The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
World Bank
World Food Programme
World Health Organization

World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities to reach their full potential by tackling the root causes of poverty and injustice. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.



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