

# Promising practices in child protection

A GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE UN RESOLUTION  
'PROMOTION AND PROTECTION  
OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN'  
AND THE PREVENTION OF  
FAMILY SEPARATION



# Impressum

© Danish Child Protection Network, 2022

Published in Denmark by the Danish Child Protection Network

First edition published December 2022.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the Danish Child Protection Network, or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate reprographics rights organisation. Enquiries in the first instance concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Danish Child Protection Network at the address below.

## Danish Child Protection Network

[www.childprotectionnetwork.dk](http://www.childprotectionnetwork.dk)

Copenhagen, Denmark

Email: [info@childprotectionnetwork.dk](mailto:info@childprotectionnetwork.dk)

**Author:** Dr Chrissie Gale

**Editorial board:** Camilla Legendre, Charlotte Lea Jensen, Rita Tisdall, Ann-Christina Gamillscheg, Lene Godiksen, Annika Bach.

**Design and layout:** Westring kbh

Suggested reference: Danish Child Protection Network (2022) Promising practices in child protection. Danish Child Protection Network.

This publication has been produced with financial assistance from Global Focus and Danida, Denmark. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the Danish Child Protection Network and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of Global Focus or Danida.



With financial support from Globalt Fokus and Danida



# Contents

<b>1. The Danish Child Protection Network</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Acknowledgements</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4. Why the 2019 Resolution is so important</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5. Principles embedded in the 2019 Resolution</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>6. Access to education</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>7. Domestic violence</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>8. Unaccompanied and separated children on the move</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>9. Climate Change</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>10. Volunteerism</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>11. Prevention of child-family separation</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>12. The role of faith-based organisations in alternative care</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>13. Summary and Recommendations</b>	<b>62</b>





# 1. The Danish Child Protection Network

Each year, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) makes important decisions affecting the lives of people around the world. Its resolutions recommend a course of action for all United Nations Member States on a wide array of topics, from human rights to education, development, climate, violence against children, and peace and security. In recognition of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the UNGA issued a new resolution: 'Promotion and protection of the rights of children' (A/RES/74/133)<sup>1</sup> (2019 Resolution). This Resolution provides a focus on the theme of children without parental care. It presents an important opportunity to place their situation on the global agenda, to review progress made in preventing unnecessary family-child separation, and to consider the provision of suitable alternative care. It particularly

guides states in undertaking specific actions to strengthen care reform.

In the wake of this Resolution, the Danish Child Protection Network was established by four organisations: 100% for the Children, Alternatives to Separation (ATOS), Centre for Church-Based Development and SOS Children's Villages. The network aims to promote the 2019 Resolution through dialogue and knowledge exchange between organisations in Denmark and across the globe.

More information can be found on the Danish Child Protection Network website at this link:

<http://childprotectionnetwork.dk/>

---

1. Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3837858?ln=en>

## 2. Introduction

The 2019 Resolution 'Promotion and protection of the rights of children' reaffirms many existing international treaties, including the UNCRC, and optional protocols, as well as the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (UN Guidelines)<sup>2</sup>. It upholds the general principles in the UNCRC, including non-discrimination, participation, best interests of the child, survival and development.

To promote the content of the 2019 Resolution, the Danish Child Protection Network hosted a series of international seminars between March 2021 and September 2022. These seminars offered an opportunity to learn about and explore some of the key messages in the Resolution. The first five seminars considered factors that place children at risk of separation from their families, while the last two discussed prevention of child-family separation. Topics included:

- Access to education
- Domestic violence and child protection
- The care of unaccompanied and separated children on the move
- The impact of climate change and the risk of family separation
- Volunteerism in residential institutions
- The prevention of unnecessary child-family separation
- The role of faith-based organisations in alternative care

Guest speakers from around the world contributed to the seminars, during which they shared their knowledge and expertise on these topics. The seminars also benefited from the experience and ideas of participants from local, national and international NGOs and other bodies. Most importantly, several seminars benefited greatly from the lived experience of young people.

Details of the seminars can be found at: <http://childprotectionnetwork.dk/>

The information in this document has drawn on the content of some of the presentations and discussions that took place during the seminars and internationally recognised treaties, conventions, guidance and research.

The purpose of this document is to offer an overview of some of the reasons children are losing the care of their families and being placed in alternative care. It also includes ideas and guidance on how this situation might be addressed. It draws on international guidance as well as concrete examples of promising practices from around the world.

**This guidance can be read as a whole or used section by section as required.**

---

2. United Nations General Assembly (2009) Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. Resolution A/RES/64/142

# 3. Acknowledgements

Members of the Danish Child Protection Network would like to thank all the contributors who provided valuable insights, expertise and information during the seminar series:

- Mr Philip Aspegren, Executive Director, Casa Viva, Costa Rica
- Stephen Mwaura, Lead Programme Coordinator, IAS Denmark, Kenya
- Mr Johnny Baltzersen, Chairperson, Community of International Cooperation in Education and Development
- Ms Katja Gunnertoft Bojsen, Programme Coordinator, International Aid Services Denmark
- Mr Peter Severin Byrsting, student of International and Intercultural Social Work, University College Copenhagen
- Ms Sinet Chan, Care-leaver Activist
- Dr Anni Donaldson, Honorary Research Fellow, University of Strathclyde
- Dr Chrissie Gale, International Child Protection Specialist
- Ms Gritt Holm Hedehus, National Director, Viva Denmark
- Dr Marilyn Hoar, International Education Specialist
- Mr Lasse Jensen, Head of Global Contact, MS Action Aid, Denmark
- Mr Chhitup Lama, founding Executive Director, Himalayan Education and Development (HEAD Nepal).
- Mr Gopal Lama, Director, Just Nepal Foundation
- Ms Maria Luna, Director, Viva Honduras
- Mr Justine Lungu, Regional Programme Advisor, SOS Children's Villages Eastern and Southern Africa
- Ms Emma Moss, Delegate, Danish Red Cross
- Ms Rebecca Nhep, Senior Technical Advisor, Better Care Network
- Ms Line Friberg Nielsen, Senior Policy Advisor, Save the Children Denmark
- Mr Boniface Owino, Teacher and Mentor for children in street situations in Kenya
- Mr Filip Buff Petersen, Political Advisor, the Danish Centre for Church-Based Development
- Mr Martin Punaks, International Child Protection Consultant
- Mr Ram Chandra Paudel, Executive Director, CHILDREN-Nepal.
- Ms Caroline Shaer, Senior Climate Advisor, CARE Denmark
- Ms Sarah Juul Schmidt, student of International and Intercultural Social Work, University College Copenhagen

The Danish Child Protection Network would like to thank the donors Global Focus and Danida for their support for the work of the network.

# 4. Why the 2019 Resolution is so important

## **Outcomes for care-experienced children and young people**

Around the world, children continue to grow up deprived of parental care, separated from their families and placed in alternative care. Many different factors, including the death or illness of a parent, may cause this separation. The consequences of poverty has been identified as a major factor, as well as disability, stigma and discrimination, violence and other forms of exploitation.<sup>3</sup> Lack of access to education, health, social welfare and other services also contribute to child-family separation.<sup>4</sup> Children become separated from their families during conflict and situations caused by the impact of climate change, such as drought and floods.

Support to families can prevent children from becoming separated. Therefore, work to prevent unnecessary child-family separation, and to create good quality alternative care when needed, is important. This is particularly evidenced in the poor life outcomes experienced by care leavers. Research tells us that care-experienced young people are one of the most vulnerable groups in society, with many facing stigma and discrimination, instability, fear and loneliness.<sup>5</sup> They are highly disadvantaged in comparison with their peers and more likely to experience:

- worse mental health and physical well-being and much higher rates of early death

- poorer levels of education
- higher levels of unemployment
- financial and material poverty
- homelessness
- higher rates of teenage pregnancy
- increased involvement in, or exposure to, criminal activity.

## **Voices from children and young people**

Children and young people around the world have spoken about the need to strengthen child protection systems and make changes to the provision of alternative care. For example, in September 2021, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child devoted its 2021 Day of General Discussion to the theme of Children's Rights and Alternative Care. In preparation for this global meeting, a group of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) commissioned a survey that asked children and young people about their ideas and experience of alternative care. The results were published in a document entitled 'Make Our Voices Count'.<sup>6</sup> Below is a brief summary of some of the information they shared in this and other international consultations.

## **Prevention of child-family separation:**

Children want the prevention of child-family separation to be a priority. They said placement in alternative care should be a last resort after all other options for supporting families to stay together have been exhausted.

This means an increased focus on combatting

---

3. Please see: <https://www.hopeandhomes.org/why-it-matters/how-orphanages-harm-children/why-children-end-up-in-orphanages/>

4. For example, please see: <https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/Push%20and%20Pull%20Factors%20of%20Institutionalization%20of%20Children.pdf> <https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/Push%20and%20Pull%20Factors%20of%20Institutionalization%20of%20Children.pdf>

5. Stein, M. (2006) Research Review: Young People Leaving Care. Child and Family Social Work, Vol 11 (3), pp.273-279

6. Butler et al. (20221) Make Our Voices Count: Children and young peoples' responses to a global survey for the Day of General Discussion 2021 on Children's Rights and Alternative Care. International Institute for Child Rights and Development. Available at: [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/CRC/Discussions/2020/DGD\\_Report\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/CRC/Discussions/2020/DGD_Report_EN.pdf)



Source: Just Nepal Foundation

poverty and helping resolve family conflicts. They want their families to be able to access all the necessary services, including health and education and help with issues such as unemployment and income generation. Children said stigma and bias should always be challenged, and we must help end discrimination based on such factors as background, religion, ability, culture, ethnicity, race, gender, age, sex, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.

*"What makes me feel happy is that me and my family have survived this far no matter how much we struggle" (a child from Kenya in response to an SOS Children's Villages International survey)*

*[I am happy] "When I visit my natural family" (child from Palestine in response to an SOS Children's Villages International survey)*

*[What makes me happy is] "My family...my friends and those I love and care about and people who give me meaning in my life" (a child from Greece in response to an SOS Children's Villages International survey)*

**Prevention of violence:**

Children want to grow up in a safe environment where they can live and thrive without fear of violence or abuse.

**Love and respect:**

Children want to be loved and supported by people who really care for them. They want to be brought up in an environment of trust and mutual respect, and friendships are also very important to them.

**Listening to children and young people:**

Children wish to be listened to and truly heard. They think adults do not always consider their opinions or involve them in a meaningful way when decisions are being made about their lives.

Children do not want to be afraid of speaking out and should have trusted adults they can talk to when needed.

*"We have to be heard and considered experts of life in care. We so often are overlooked in the processes of case planning, case management, training for staff, and policy writing – we are the ones who live through these decisions made by adults who often only have scholarly knowledge or service provision knowledge of what we have to live every day. ASK US!" (a young woman, 18–25, Canada)<sup>7</sup>*

#### **Maintaining identity:**

If separated from parents or other family members, children want to keep their identity through ongoing family connections and other efforts that guarantee the retention of such attributes as personal identity, culture and language.

#### **Knowing their rights:**

Children want to know their rights and understand what they are entitled to.

#### **Going to school:**

School is very important as it offers children some stability and the opportunity to make friends, but they also see education as vital to a successful future.

#### **Well-trained adults:**

Children said adults responsible for children's care should be well-trained. This should include the skills to identify, prevent and respond to violence and trauma in a caring, understanding and careful manner.

#### **Additional support in alternative care:**

All the above factors are very relevant for children while in alternative care. Additional topics they want adults to consider include the importance of keeping siblings together. Children said all decisions should be based on their best interests and, in cases where this might involve separation from parents, all efforts should be made to reunite them as soon as possible. They want all communication between themselves and adults to be clear and consistent, and they want to be kept fully informed, and part of, about the decisions being made about their care and other aspects of their lives. Care-experienced children want stability and are concerned about movements between the multiple placements many of them experience. They also want better support and preparation when leaving care.

#### **What makes us sad:**

In a recent survey conducted by SOS Children's Villages International, children in alternative care were asked what made them sad. Their answers included:

- Instability and living in fear of what tomorrow might bring
- Experiences of loss and grief due to family separation
- Not feeling like other children – not being treated the same way
- Feeling misunderstood.

And most importantly, during the Committee on the Rights of the Child's 2021 Day of General Discussion, a care-experienced child said, **"Don't give up on us."**<sup>8</sup>

---

7. Butler, K., Currie, V., Reid, K. & Wright, L. (2021) Make Our Voices Count: Children and young people's responses to a global survey for the Day of General Discussion 2021 on Children's Rights and Alternative Care. International Institute for Child Rights and Development

8. A young person speaking at the Committee on the Rights of the Child 2021 Day of General Discussion

# 5. Principles embedded in the 2019 Resolution

## **The 'necessity' and 'suitability' principles**

The 2019 Resolution takes into account the 'necessity' and 'suitability' principles highlighted in the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.<sup>9</sup>

## **The 'necessity' principle**

means decisions should be made about the protection and care of a child on a case-by-case basis.<sup>10</sup> These decisions must be based on a rigorous and participatory assessment that determines the actions that are in the child's best interest. This assessment should be managed by a suitably qualified key worker assigned to a child and their family. It should explore all the different circumstances impacting a child's life and be undertaken with colleagues from relevant professions, so there is a multi-sectoral response. If this procedure indicates a child is at risk of harm, and a recommendation is made to place a child in alternative care, according to the 2019 UN Resolution, this must be confirmed through a judicial, administrative or other adequate and recognized procedure that provides legal safeguards for the child.

The 2019 Resolution places a strong focus on the prevention of child-family separation. That means a child should not be placed in care when appropriate support, including access to services, could stop such an action. As also highlighted in

the Resolution, financial and material poverty, or conditions directly attributed to poverty, must never be the only justification for removing a child from the care of parents or another primary or legal caregiver, for receiving a child into alternative care or for preventing family reunification. The Resolution also requires States and other duty-bearers to address unnecessary separation by tackling social exclusion, inequality, stigma, discrimination, conflict and natural disasters.

## **The 'suitability' principle**

involves the provision of the most appropriate care setting for a child that will meet their individual needs, circumstances and wishes.<sup>11</sup> Placement in care should be for the shortest time possible, and all efforts should be made to achieve safe family reunification.

The 2019 Resolution urges states to progressively replace large residential institutions with quality alternative care that is family- and community-based. An example of family-based care is foster care. Community-based care is identified as the provision of small-scale residential settings.<sup>12</sup> An example is a small-group home situated in a house, within a street, within the local community. In these care settings, children should be able to interact and be integrated into their local society just like any other child.

---

9. United Nations General Assembly (2009) Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. Resolution A/RES/64/142.

10. Cantwell, N.; Davidson, J.; Elsley, S.; Milligan, I.; Quinn, N. (2012) Moving Forward: Implementing the 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children'. UK Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland. Available at: <https://www.alternativecareguidelines.org/MovingForward/tabid/2798/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

11. Cantwell, N.; Davidson, J.; Elsley, S.; Milligan, I.; Quinn, N. (2012) Moving Forward: Implementing the 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children'. UK Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland. Available at: <https://www.alternativecareguidelines.org/MovingForward/tabid/2798/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

12. UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Office (2020) White Paper: The role of small-scale residential care for children in the transition from institutional to community-based care and in the continuum of care in the Europe and Central Asia.

In addition, the 2019 Resolution recognises that:

*'many children living without parental care have families, including at least one parent alive and/or relatives, and in this regard encourages actions to achieve family reunification unless not in the best interests of the child'.*

It further calls on duty bearers to ensure young people ageing out of care receive all the support they need. This includes preparation and support while transitioning from care to independent living. Assistance might include help with accessing employment, higher education, training and housing. Young people should also receive emotional and psychosocial support as well as help with inclusion and integration in their local community.

### **Best interests of the child**

The 2019 Resolution reaffirms Article 3.1. of the UNCRC, requiring all decisions and actions to be taken 'in the best interests' of the child.<sup>13</sup> This means all assessments and decisions should seriously consider the views and wishes of the child, and decisions must lead to the best possible outcomes for them. However, after all relevant information about the child's situation has been considered, this might mean that decisions may have to go partly or wholly against their views and wishes to meet their best interests. It is important to always provide a child with up-to-date information about what is happening and explain how and why decisions have been made.

### **Full and meaningful participation**

The 2019 Resolution recognises the important principle of participation as laid out in Article 12 of the UNCRC. This Article stipulates the obligation to obtain and take due account of children's views on all matters affecting them. The implications of such participation in decision-making are numerous.

First, children and young people, individually and as a group, must be offered or be able to request and be given information regarding any circumstances they find themselves in. If their "participation" is to be meaningful, children should be given information in a way that is easy to understand and appropriate for their age, ability and maturity. Second, the opportunities and support in this information must be realistic in terms of what is actually available.

Third, the child's views must be obtained in a manner and context that means they feel able to express their views and ideas freely. They should not be pressured or constrained in any way when giving their opinion. Fourth, children should be given an explanation when it is not possible to make decisions that meet their desires and wishes completely. As mentioned earlier, they should be told how and why decisions were made about their lives.

Responding appropriately to the principle of "participation" does not just mean "consultation." It has to guarantee all efforts are made so a child can participate in decision-making fully and meaningfully. This requires a commitment from all adults to make sure this happens. When participation takes place on this level, it contributes to better decision-making.

---

13. See also: UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration (art. 3, para. 1)

## Development of national child protection systems

Alternative care is an integral component of a national child protection system. This system should operate in a constantly vigilant way, identifying all children at risk of harm in a country and supporting those at risk of separation from their families. The Resolution urges states to strengthen child protection systems and undertake appropriate childcare reforms. This includes investment in the following interdependent components of a national child protection system:



A multi-sectoral approach is vital in applying a national child protection system and requires a competent and well-trained workforce, and coordination and cooperation between different sectors. This includes, but is not limited to, those working within government and non-governmental agencies delivering:

- Social services
- Health services
- Education
- Judiciary and law enforcement
- Housing
- Employment
- Financial and social protection services

### **Additional resources**

UNGA Resolution (2019) Promotion and protection of the rights of children. Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3837858?ln=en>

UN. General Assembly (64th sess.: 2009-2010) (2010) The UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/673583?ln=en>

Cantwell, N.; Davidson, J.; Elsley, S.; Milligan, I.; Quinn, N. (2012) *Moving Forward: Implementing the 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children'*. UK Centre for Excellence for Looked After

Children in Scotland. Available at: <https://www.alternativecareguidelines.org/MovingForward/tabid/2798/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

Better Care Network, UNICEF (2015) Making Decisions for Better Care of Children: Role of gatekeeping in strengthening family-based care/ reforming alternative care. Available at: <https://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/resources/making-decisions-better-care-children-role-gatekeeping-strengthening-family-based>

Committee on the Rights of the Child (2021) Day of General Discussion.

Children's Rights and Alternative Care: Outcome Report. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/13Jun2022-DGD-Outcome-report-and-Recommendations.docx>

# 6. Access to education

This section of the Guide highlights some of the factors that might place children at risk of being separated from their families. This includes concerns around lack of access to free quality local education causing unnecessary separation of children from their families.

## What the 2019 Resolution says

The 2019 Resolution expresses concern that 'millions of children worldwide continue to grow up deprived of parental care, separated from their families for many reasons, including but not limited to ... lack of access to education'. It goes on to reaffirm 'the right to education' and, on the basis of equal opportunity and non-discrimination, calls upon states to make primary education compulsory, inclusive and available free to all children'. The Resolution requires states to ensure that all children have equal access to good-quality education and to make 'secondary education generally available and accessible to all'.

Measures should be taken to ensure equal access by combatting exclusion due to:

*'social, economic and gender disparities in education and ensuring school attendance, in particular for girls, children with disabilities, pregnant adolescent girls, children living in poverty, indigenous children, children of African descent, persons belonging to ethnic or religious minorities and children in vulnerable or marginalized situations.'*

## Understanding the challenges

In February 2021, the Danish Child Protection Network held a seminar on the topic of Education and Alternative Care. Details of the seminar can be found at: <http://childprotectionnetwork.dk/6-education/>.

This section of the Guide includes information drawn from the presentations of Dr Marilyn Hoar, an international education specialist, Ms Katja Gunnertoft Bojsen, a Programme Coordinator at International Aid Services Denmark (IAS DK) and Mr Chhitup Lama, the founding Executive Director of the Himalayan Education and Development (HEAD Nepal).



Education and going to school are important for a child's well-being, protection and future prospects. However, some children lack access to education which, for a variety of reasons, can lead to child-family separation. For example, families purposely send their children away to public or private boarding schools or other residential institutions, and in some countries, government agencies might also place children in boarding schools if they come from families experiencing financial hardship. These decisions may be taken for a variety of reasons. For example:

- Lack of schools in the immediate vicinity
- The cost of uniforms, books or school meals available free of charge in an institution
- Stigma and discrimination – for example, against girls, children from a particular ethnicity or children with a disability which denies them access to local schools
- The belief that private and public residential schools can provide a better quality of education, which is not necessarily true.

One of the reasons the 2019 Resolution calls on states to address these issues is the harm separation can cause when children are sent away from their families. For example, the importance of the love, nurturing and sense of attachment a family environment offers is often not understood. The lack of this care can harm children's social, emotional and cognitive development. Furthermore, not only is abuse in residential settings regularly reported but being sent away from home can permanently destroy a child's relationship with their family and community.

### **Response and practice**

Factors that can help prevent unnecessary child-family separation because of a lack of access to local free and good-quality education include raising awareness among policymakers and service providers of the importance of children being raised in a family environment. A step towards developing

an appropriate education system would be first assessing why children are not going to school and using that information to develop appropriate policies, plans and services. This might include consideration of the following factors:

- Developing programmes that combat stigma and discrimination and provision of inclusive education for all children, including children with disabilities, in local schools
- Budgets for transportation, school uniforms and school meals
- Investing in the quality of education, sufficient numbers of teachers and professional teacher training courses
- Investing in infrastructure – including building more schools and adapting existing ones to make them accessible for children with all forms of disability
- Raising awareness of the importance of education for all
- Strengthening partnerships between government and CSO/NGOs to deliver quality education in different localities
- Legalising regulations governing or preventing the use of 'boarding schools' and 'special' residential schools
- Use of distance learning or homeschooling when really necessary – for instance, for children of pastoral families or in very remote, inaccessible communities.

### **An example of practice: Inclusive education programmes in East Africa and the Sahel - International Aid Services, Denmark**

International Aid Services, Denmark (IAS) is a Danish non-governmental organisation 'founded for the sole purpose of saving lives, creating opportunity for self-help, and providing dignity for human beings through a transformation that transcends emergency aid and humanitarian development.'<sup>14</sup> IAS has been working in partnership with local organisations and churches in East Africa and the Sahel for 20 years.

14. Please see: <https://ias-danmark.dk/english>

IAS supports inclusive education programmes in Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania and South Sudan. It aims to remove barriers to learning for vulnerable children, especially children with disabilities, and ensure they are included in regular classes in local schools alongside their peers.

IAS understands that an important step in providing inclusive education is recognising and overcoming existing barriers. These might be:

- *Attitudinal barriers* – for example, addressing issues of stigma and discrimination that present obstacles to achieving equality of opportunity and social integration
- *Environmental barriers* including inaccessible buildings and lack of disability aids such as hearing loops and learning resources for children with disabilities
- *Institutional barriers* including laws, policies, strategies and practices that perpetuate discrimination against children with disabilities rather than promoting inclusion; failure to implement policies and programmes due to poor political will; insufficient resource allocation and poorly trained personnel.

IAS promotes a multi-faceted holistic approach to help overcome existing barriers when promoting and facilitating the inclusion of children with disabilities in local schools. Examples of local initiatives include:

- Establishing influential and vibrant civil society groups that promote inclusive education
- Supporting local partners in their work with other agents of change that include parents, other primary caregivers, CSOs, teachers, school managers and government bodies
- Strengthening coordination between actors in education and building strategic partnerships to ensure participation in the planning,

implementation and monitoring of inclusive education initiatives

- Training teachers on basic inclusive education pedagogy and functional and educational assessments
- Creating awareness in the community to increase social awareness, encourage a change of attitudes and acceptance of new initiatives
- Establishing family support groups as key agents of change
- Establishing model schools with child-disability and gender-sensitive learning environments
- Undertaking advocacy at the grassroots level by reviewing existing evidence-based advocacy strategies and identifying gaps in promoting inclusive education.

IAS recognises the need for further efforts at all levels – local, regional and national – to ensure policies mandate for locally-accessible inclusive education and the provision of all necessary financial, human and material resources to make this possible.

More information about the work of IAS can be found at: <https://ias-danmark.dk/english>

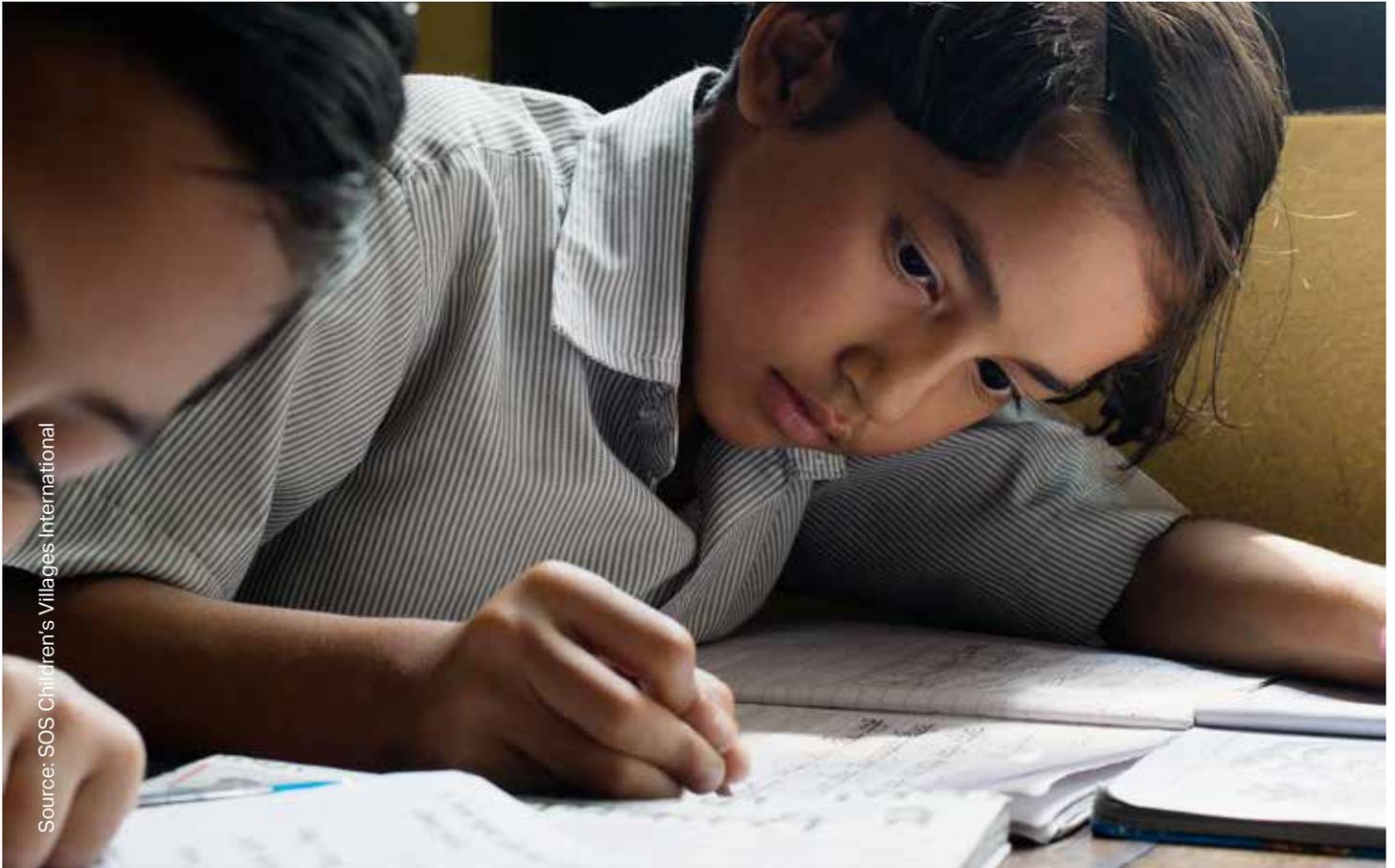
### **An example of practice: Creating access to education in the Himalayas – HEAD Nepal**

Himalayan Education and Development Nepal (HEAD) is a non-profit NGO working to empower and develop people with disabilities in the Himalayan region of Nepal including promoting and developing inclusive education for children with disabilities.

There are approximately 207,000 children with disabilities in Nepal.<sup>15</sup> In 2018, only 380 of the 30,000 schools in Nepal provided any form of special education for children with disabilities. It is estimated that 90% of children with disabilities

---

15. Please see: <https://thehimalayantimes.com/kathmandu/disabled-children-in-nepal-facing-barriers-to-quality-education-hrw>



Source: SOS Children's Villages International

living in mountainous regions of Nepal are illiterate.<sup>16</sup> There is also a practice of grouping children with similar disabilities (for example, children lacking in sight or hearing) within 'special' residential, resource classes and schools.

Access to education for all children in the mountain region of Nepal, but most especially for children with disabilities, is challenging because of:

- The long distances they must travel to get to a school each day
- A shortage of teachers
- A lack of specialised training in providing inclusive education
- A shortage of educational materials and other resources.

This situation is compounded by the lack of acceptance of children with disabilities in some schools, the stigma and discrimination they face and ostracisation – not only from society in general but sometimes their own families.

To help address this situation, HEAD Nepal promotes access to inclusive education through:

- Locating children with disabilities, assessing their educational needs and providing education through mobile schools. For example, for those children with disabilities who cannot access mainstream education, HEAD has an outreach programme that delivers education programmes to children in their own homes and communities. Because of the harsh terrain and remoteness of some of the villages, teachers travel through the mountains on horseback
- Helping children with disabilities acquire life skills, mobility training and confidence
- Promoting integration of children with disabilities into mainstream education
- Working with parents to help raise their awareness of different issues related to disability and increase the support they are able to offer to their children.

---

16. Please see: [https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/13/nepal-barriers-inclusive-education#:~:text=\(Brussels\)%20%E2%80%93%20Children%20with%20disabilities,with%20disabilities%20into%20separate%20classrooms](https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/13/nepal-barriers-inclusive-education#:~:text=(Brussels)%20%E2%80%93%20Children%20with%20disabilities,with%20disabilities%20into%20separate%20classrooms)

Some of the children identified through the outreach project and other HEAD programmes are also supported in accessing mainstream education. This involves collaboration with local schools, the provision of additional classes in maths, science and English, help with homework and participation in extracurricular activities.

HEAD also offers support to schools providing inclusive education for children with disabilities. This includes additional teacher training, help with modifying school buildings, and activities promoting awareness and acceptance of disability among school pupils and the local community.

More information about HEAD NEPAL can be found at: <https://www.headnepal.org/>

**In conclusion,** lack of access to education should not be a reason for any child to be separated from their family. To this end, all efforts must be made to develop policies and programmes that ensure all children can freely access high-quality education in their local communities.

### **Additional resources**

UNICEF (2021) Children with Disabilities and Care Reform in Eastern and Southern Africa. UNICEF ESARO

Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/esa/media/11021/file/Children-Disabilities-Care-Reform-ESA-2021.pdf>

UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (2007) Innocenti Digest 13: Promoting the Rights of Children with Disabilities. UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. Available at: [https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/children\\_disability\\_rights.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/children_disability_rights.pdf)

# 7. Domestic violence

*This section of the Guide highlights some of the factors that might place children at risk of being separated from their families. This includes concerns around domestic violence and abuse adding to the risk of separation of children from their families.*

## **What the 2019 Resolution says**

The 2019 Resolution strongly condemns all forms of violence in all settings, including domestic violence. It recognises the impact such violence can have on children, especially girls. The Resolution urges states 'to formulate or review, as needed, comprehensive, multidisciplinary and coordinated national plans, programmes or strategies to eliminate all forms of violence'.

States are also asked to dedicate specific resources to combatting violence. This includes developing age-appropriate, safe, confidential and disability-accessible programmes and medical, social and psychological support services to assist girls subjected to violence and discrimination. States should also develop effective monitoring and enforcement procedures.

## **Understanding the challenges**

In May 2021, the Danish Child Protection Network held a seminar on the topic of Education and Alternative Care. Details of the seminar can be found at: <http://childprotectionnetwork.dk/6-education/>.

This section of the Guide includes information drawn from the presentations of Dr Anni Donaldson, an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Strathclyde, and Mr Ram Chandra Paudel, the Executive Director of CHILDREN-Nepal.



Source: ATOS Nepal

Children living in situations of domestic violence, also known as domestic abuse, are considered to be at risk of separation from their families.

Domestic violence and abuse is an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, intimidating, terrorising, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour directed by the perpetrator of the violence towards other family members. This includes:

- Physical assaults
- Sexual violence
- Mental and emotional abuse – including isolation and blackmail
- Economic and psychological actions
- Threats of these actions are also considered abuse.

Domestic violence and abuse have also been defined as ‘a pattern of behaviour in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner’.<sup>17</sup> It can happen to anyone anywhere in the world and affects people of all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and education levels.

In the vast majority of cases, domestic violence and abuse are perpetrated against women, with men comprising the majority of perpetrators. However, it is recognised that men can also be the victims of such abuse. According to data published by UN Women:<sup>18</sup>

- Globally, an estimated 736 million women – almost one in three – have been subjected to intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at least once in their life
- Most violence against women is perpetrated by current or former husbands or intimate partners
- An estimate made in 2018 indicated that in the previous 12 months, 1 in 7 women had experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner or husband

- 137 women are killed by a member of their family every day.

Unfortunately, children both witness and experience domestic violence and abuse and the impact may include:

- Disruption not just of their home environment but their ability to engage in interactions within the wider community – for example, learning at school or relationships with their peers
- Damaging their physical, mental and emotional health
- Undermining their sense of stability or attachment to a non-abusive parent/caregiver
- Causing higher rates of anxiety, depression and behavioural and cognitive problems than their peers living in non-violent domestic situations.

An illustration of how domestic violence and abuse can seriously impact a child’s life is found in recent evidence published in Scotland.<sup>19</sup> This revealed how:

- Domestic violence is one of the most common reasons for children being placed on the Scottish Child Protection Register and is present in almost two-thirds of significant children’s protection case reviews
- Children living with domestic abuse are more likely to be physically or sexually abused
- Some groups of children are particularly vulnerable, for example, those with learning disabilities
- Children and young people can be affected by the control imposed on their mothers. It can undermine their relationship and deprive children of feeling stable, protected and nurtured. The perpetrator may restrict the time a mother and her children are allowed to spend together or the capacity to enjoy each other’s company
- Children’s freedom to act and speak may be

---

17. Please see: <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/what-is-domestic-abuse>

18. Please see: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

19. Please see: [https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/Domestic%20Abuse%20and%20Child%20Welfare\\_0.pdf](https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/Domestic%20Abuse%20and%20Child%20Welfare_0.pdf)

restricted by rules imposed by the perpetrator of the violence or out of fear. For example, they may not be allowed to play with or have friends over, or they may be constantly told to keep quiet

- Control of their mother's movements outside the home can also negatively impact children – for example, they may not be allowed to see friends and other family members or take part in extracurricular activities
- A child's relationship with and respect for one or both parents can be seriously undermined, especially if one of them is constantly being belittled and insulted
- Domestic abuse has links to offending, homelessness, mental health and substance use, all of which will have an impact on children in the household.

### **Response and practice**

As a first step in developing effective support for children living in situations of domestic violence, trained professionals should undertake a careful and broad assessment of the nature, frequency, severity and impact of the perpetrator's abuse on all members of the family and on family life. An assessment of the risks posed by the perpetrator should also be undertaken. Professionals should then work closely with the non-abusive parent to identify and build on their existing strengths and strategies for keeping themselves and their children safe.<sup>20</sup> The safety of the non-abusive parent and the children must be paramount and central to any planned interventions.

It is also important to recognise that children living in situations of domestic violence and abuse often experience feelings of guilt, shame and isolation and live in perpetual fear. They might be frightened to tell anyone what is happening or to seek help. Indeed, they might have been threatened and face reprisals if they do so. They might also think they will automatically be taken away from their family if they tell someone.

Children affected by domestic violence and abuse are also at higher risk of experiencing and exhibiting symptoms of trauma.<sup>21</sup> It is vital that adults with responsibility for the care and support of children and young people are aware of and understand that they might exhibit certain behaviours as a reaction to what is happening to them and that these might differ depending on their age and stage of development. Behaviours that sometimes result in children being classified as 'delinquent' or 'badly behaved' are often due to a lack of understanding that children impacted by traumatic events often develop survival mechanisms and coping strategies, which causes them to react in different ways. Common reactions to trauma include 'freeze', 'flight', 'fight' and 'fawn' responses. These are normal reactions to abnormal situations.



20. <https://safeandtogetherinstitute.com/the-sti-model/model-overview/>

21. Levendosky, A.A. and Graham-Bermann, S.A., 2001. Parenting in battered women: The effects of domestic violence on women and their children. *Journal of family violence*, 16(2), pp.171-192.

# Trauma Responses



**Fight** is when a child reacts to situations with aggressive behaviour, for example, by shouting, using physical violence, being defiant, using bad language, or confronting and challenging those in charge. They are exhibiting a reaction with the intention of 'protecting' themselves from a perceived threat.



**Flight** is when a protective instinct kicks in to escape a situation, often literally, by running away or avoiding the situation.



**Freeze** is when a child keeps their emotions inside. They might be unable to express themselves and freeze up inside with fear and anxiety. They might not stand up for themselves and let others treat them badly without responding. They feel unable to do anything to change a situation.



**Fawn** is when a child attempts to avoid situations such as conflict or criticism by abandoning their own wishes and needs to appease or please others.

It is important that professionals and others around the child are able to recognise that these behaviours signal a need to support a child. This support should always be undertaken by someone professionally trained – for example, a social worker or psychosocial specialist. This support should always:

- Be offered in a considerate and caring manner
- Reassure children and allow them to express any anger or other emotions they are experiencing safely
- Ensure decisions are always in the child's best interest
- Consider preventing unnecessary separation from the non-violent parent/caregiver in their family.

Recovery from trauma for children and adults depends on creating a context where safe, trusting and positive relationships can grow and which facilitates reconnection with trusted others. For example, Judith Herman, MD,<sup>22</sup> has identified three stages of post-traumatic recovery that require effective interventions. These are:

- Stage 1: Crisis intervention, safety planning and symptom management
- Stage 2: Intermediate or therapeutic solutions, working with traumatised children and adults, processing and healing
- Stage 3: Long-term outcomes, moving on, reconnecting with community and reducing isolation.

### **An example of practice: CHILDREN Nepal – Building strong family relationships and protecting children in Nepal**

CHILDREN-Nepal is a national NGO based in Pokhara, Nepal. As part of the organisation's remit, it is working to help keep children safe by encouraging bonding between family members and providing specific support when there is a risk of harm.

CHILDREN-Nepal recognizes that violence in a domestic setting can occur for many different reasons. These include:

- Violence has become a learned behaviour passed down from generation to generation, both within families themselves and the community
- There is a lack of good communication between family members. This not only contributes to family breakdown but means when violence does occur, it might not be spoken about and remains hidden
- A breakdown in family relationships Breakdowns can be the result of socioeconomic challenges. This situation is often compounded by the lack of social support available from government and other organisations when such breakdowns occur.

CHILDREN-Nepal supports and encourages communication between family members to improve relationships and family bonding. When responding to situations of family breakdown and violence, CHILDREN-Nepal begins by working with one key person in the family. For example, this might be a parent, grandparent, uncle or aunt willing to speak about what is happening. This family member is encouraged to talk about the situation and how they feel about it. Once this person feels able, they then introduce other members of the family to the team. Then, through careful facilitation, a non-aggressive environment is created in which discussions can safely take place between family members and concerns can be shared and carefully listened to. This process also helps family members:

- Gain a better understanding of how they are personally being affected by the conflict
- Allows them to speak openly about their own concerns and hurt
- Provides ways of working together to prevent harm and identify the support they will each need.

---

22. Please see: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judith\\_Lewis\\_Herman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judith_Lewis_Herman)

This facilitation aims to build loving, supportive and caring relationships between family members. Something that is particularly important in preventing child-family separation.

CHILDREN-Nepal offers workshops and training on anti-violence as well as addressing stress that can be caused by poor household financial management. The organisation also understands that violence within families is affected by situations within their local communities, such as intercommunity violence or violence in schools. To help address some of the root causes of violence and contribute to the effectiveness of the child protection system, it brings together different stakeholders, including social workers, police, education and health staff, and elected members of the community, with the aim of improving working relationships. This is complemented by workshops for professionals and community members that address gaps in understanding and skills that contribute to family strengthening and violence prevention.

Further information about CHILDREN-Nepal can be found at: <https://www.childrennepal.org.np/>

**In conclusion,** working to support families in situations of crisis is an important step in preventing the separation of children from their families. Support for children in situations of domestic violence should be undertaken by teams of professionals who are trained to work in these difficult circumstances. This support should be offered in a caring manner with the ability and knowledge to engender trust and a sense of safety.

### **Additional resources**

Cleaver, H. & Rose, W. (2022) Caring for children who have experienced domestic abuse: a guide to supporting foster carers, adopters and kinship carers, London: Coram BAAF Adoptions and Fostering Academy

Available at: <https://corambaaf.org.uk/books/caring-children-who-have-experienced-domestic-abuse>

Action for Children: <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/support-us/campaign-with-us/domestic-abuse/>

NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child->

[abuse/types-of-abuse/domestic-abuse/](#)

Research in Practice: <https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/all/content-pages/change-project-dva/rethinking-children-s-social-care-responses-to-domestic-abuse-and-violence/>

Here is a short video developed by a project that works to prevent and support those affected by domestic violence. This video provides children with some guidance on who to turn to if they need help because they are living in a household where there is domestic violence <https://cedarnetwork.org.uk/for-practitioners/mikey-jools-animation/>

# 8. Unaccompanied and separated children on the move

*This section of the Guide highlights some of the factors that might place children at risk of leaving their homes and families and the challenges they face as unaccompanied and separated children affected by migration.*

## **What the 2019 Resolution says**

The 2019 Resolution recognises all relevant international instruments on the rights of migrants and refugees. It highlights the importance of protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all refugee and migrant children, including those unaccompanied or separated from their caregivers. This includes access to healthcare, social services, social protection and accessible and inclusive education on an equal basis with others.

The Resolution should also be used in conjunction with other international treaties, for example:

- UN Refugee Convention Relating to Stateless Persons (1951/1954)
- International Convention on Civil & Political Rights (1966)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1984)
- UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018)
- UNGA Resolution 55/25 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children (2000)
- UN Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants By Land, Sea And Air, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (2000)
- UN Resolution 55/79 on the Rights of the Child (2001)

- Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action<sup>23</sup>.

Furthermore, states must ensure 'unaccompanied migrant children, internally displaced children and those who are victims of violence and exploitation, receive special protection and assistance'. The best interests of these children should be a primary consideration in 'policies of integration, return and family reunification'.

The Resolution also expresses 'deep concern' regarding:

*'the large and growing number of migrant children, particularly those who are unaccompanied or separated from their parents or primary caregivers, who may be particularly vulnerable along their journey, and expresses the commitment to protect the human rights of migrant children, given their vulnerability, in particular unaccompanied migrant children and migrant children with disabilities, to ensure that they receive appropriate protection and assistance and to provide for their health, education and psychosocial development, ensuring that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in policies on integration, return and family reunification.'*

---

23. Available at: [https://alliancecpa.org/en/CPMS\\_home](https://alliancecpa.org/en/CPMS_home)

### **Understanding the challenges**

In August 2021, the Danish Child Protection Network held a seminar on Unaccompanied and Separated Children on the Move. Details of the seminar can be found at: <http://childprotectionnetwork.dk/3-children-on-the-move/>

This section of the Guide includes information drawn from the presentations of Ms Emma Moss, a delegate of the Danish Red Cross and Dr Chrissie Gale, International Child Protection Specialist



Source: UNICEF <https://www.unicef.org/armenia/en/node/411>

**Unaccompanied and separated children on the move include refugees, asylum seekers and migrant children:**

<b>An unaccompanied child</b>	A child who is not with their parents, other relatives, or another legal or customary primary caretaker.
<b>A separated child</b>	A child who is not with their parents or legal or customary primary caregiver but might be with another relative.
<b>Refugee and asylum seeker</b>	In international law, refugees and asylum seekers are those who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and crossed an international border to find safety in another country.
<b>Migrant</b>	The term 'migrant' does not have an international legal definition but is a term captured by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as anyone who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a state away from their usual place of residence, regardless of the person's legal status, what has caused their movement or whether they have moved voluntarily or involuntarily. Therefore, this term includes refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants.
<b>A trafficked child</b>	Trafficking is defined as the "recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt" of a child for the purpose of exploitation (UN Palermo Protocol). It includes the "recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or reception of persons, including the exchange or transfer of control over those persons ... for the purpose of exploitation" (ibid.) Human trafficking is distinct from smuggling, which might involve the clandestine movement of a child across national borders but does not necessarily involve their exploitation.

In 2020, it was estimated that 280.6 million adults and children were on the move, of which 14.6% were 19 years old or younger.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, there are no accurate statistics for unaccompanied and separated children on the move, but the International Organization for Migration (IOM) report an estimated 300,000 unaccompanied and separated children had moved across borders and were registered in 80 countries between 2015 and 2016.<sup>25</sup>

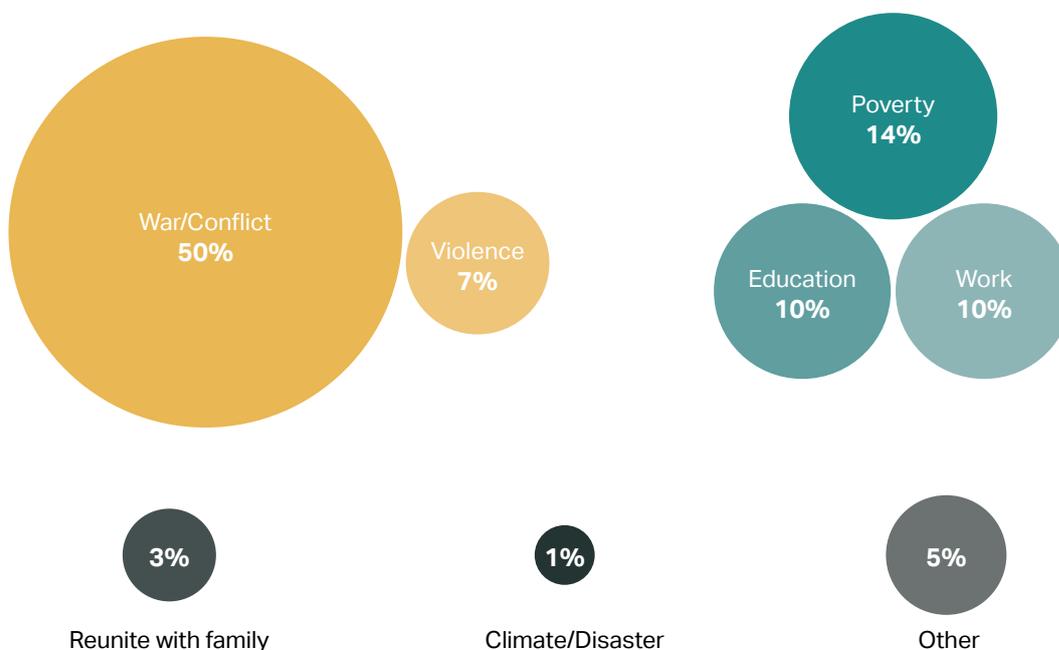
When developing programmes of support for unaccompanied and separated children, it is vital to understand their plight, including the **reasons they leave** home. In the diagram below, extracted from a 2018 UNICEF survey,<sup>26</sup> there are many different reasons that cause children to leave their families and communities.

# Reasons for being uprooted



*Question: What is the main reason for leaving your home country?*

*Percentage of respondents aged 14-24 by reason they left their home country*



Source: UNICEF

24. Please see: [https://www.migrationdataportal.org/international-data?i=stock\\_abs\\_&t=2020](https://www.migrationdataportal.org/international-data?i=stock_abs_&t=2020)

25. Please see: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/children-move-key-facts-and-figures>

26. Available at: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/a-right-to-be-heard-interactive-dashboard/>

Further reasons children are on the move include:

- **War and armed conflict** – such as children fleeing Ukraine, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Syria
- **Persecution of a particular social group** – for example, being a member of a persecuted social or religious group, such as the Rohingya children fleeing Myanmar and Tamil refugees continuing to seek asylum in India
- **Escape from abuse and violence** – including children in certain countries who flee to avoid being recruited or subjected to violence by armed forces or gangs. Or when a child is being abused within their family and has no one to turn to in the community for protection
- **Natural disasters** – for example, as a result of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti or the 2015 earthquake in Nepal and recent floods in Pakistan in 2022
- **Exploitation** – for example, children who come under the influence of criminals such as traffickers who claim they will offer opportunities but actually place them in harmful situations such as forced labour or prostitution. Unfortunately, some families believe traffickers are offering positive opportunities, such as taking children to places where they will receive better life opportunities when in fact, they are taken to places for purposes of sexual exploitation
- **Threat of early or forced marriage** – for example, young girls running away in parts of West Africa to avoid being forced into marriage
- **Persecution due to sexual orientation** – for example, those whose sexual orientation is not accepted within families, and/or local cultures, including people who identify as LGBTIQ+
- **Family expectations** – some children may be sent by their parents to live and work elsewhere if they think the child's quality of life and prospects will be better. In other cases, the motivation might be to eventually gain financial support from the child they send away

- **Economic and educational aspirations** – this might be when the child themselves feels they should go and find better employment opportunities and earn an income so that they can help improve their family's quality of life. For example, young girls who cross borders to find work as domestic servants or boys who travel to Europe to become agricultural labourers
- **Family reunification** – when children go to join one or both parents or another relative living in another country.

Children are also separated from caregivers while fleeing dangerous situations or at crowded border crossings. It might also be the result of officials who detain the caregiver a child is travelling with or, in some instances, a carer falls ill on the journey or dies.

When working to support unaccompanied and separated children affected by migration, it is also important to recognise the serious risks they may have faced **while on the move** and in the country of final destination. Risks include:

- **Abuse, violence and exploitation** taking place at the hands of different people, including traffickers, armed forces and gangs, officials, smugglers and even adults and other children they are travelling alongside. It includes the risk of physical, psychological and sexual violence and exploitation
- **Physical hardship** – including very harsh and difficult travelling conditions, lack of food and water, nowhere warm or dry to sleep, and no clean clothes or places to wash. Children with disabilities may be unable to pass through certain routes
- **Health concerns** – being unable to get medical help, malnutrition and dehydration. Health issues resulting from physical, emotional and sexual violence. Children with disabilities may not have their specific health needs met. Experiences while travelling can also be the cause of physical injury as well as mental health problems

- **Hostility, stigma and discrimination** – resulting in different forms of violence ranging from verbal harassment and having possessions stolen to all forms of physical and sexual abuse. Stigma and discrimination can come from members of the local community as well as systematic discrimination by state authorities
- **Lack of money** – or the need for money to pay the costs of continuing a journey, perhaps leading a child to engage in hazardous activities such as having sex in return for cash.

They may end up working for criminals or taking on dangerous work

- **Inappropriate treatment by officials** – such as an incorrect age assessment resulting in a child being accommodated with adults. Extortion at crossings may include requests for bribes (monetary or sexual) to allow the child to continue. It could be forced expulsion from a country or placement in detention where they may face ill-treatment or torture
- **Isolation, loneliness, loss of self-esteem, depression and fear.**

## Key findings

*Percentage based on poll respondents who self-identified as migrants and refugees aged 14-24*



**67%**

of respondents were forced to leave for any reason



**57%**

of respondents left home country specifically because of war, conflict or violence



**44%**

of respondents left home country alone



**65%**

of respondents' families agreed to their journey



**49%**

of respondents did not see a doctor when needed



**58%**

of respondents lost 1 or more year of school



**50%**

of respondents would advise their family or friends to move, too



**38%**

received no help from anyone – family, friends, institutions

Source: UNICEF

Unaccompanied and separated children have a right to the same support and care as national children when they pass through or reach a country they wish to settle in. Of concern is data from a UNICEF poll<sup>27</sup> in which 38% of all the children and young people who completed the survey said, while on the move, they had not received help from anyone, including family, friends and institutions (both governmental and non-governmental service providers).

**Response and practice**

The rights of children do not stop as they step across a border. The Resolution acknowledges all the Articles of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and requires states to uphold all the rights of all children in their country, including those affected by migration. This means a system

should be in place that guarantees child-protection authorities are promptly informed about an unaccompanied or separated child once they enter a country, and trained professionals, such as social workers, are quickly assigned responsibility for their care and protection.

A **best-interest** determination assessment should be completed to offer the most appropriate support and care to a child affected by migration. This should be done with the child’s participation so their care and protection needs, wishes and best interests are immediately identified and addressed. As illustrated in the diagram below, UNHCR has developed a best-interest determination framework that other organisations across the world now use.<sup>28</sup>



Source: UNHCR: <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/44308/best-interests-procedure>

27. Available at: [https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/A\\_right\\_to\\_be\\_heard\\_youthpoll.pdf](https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/A_right_to_be_heard_youthpoll.pdf)  
 28. Please see: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5c18d7254.html>

Age determination is a very important part of this assessment. Children who are incorrectly identified as being 18 years and over are:

- Being denied their rights as minors, including access to support and alternative care
- Having their legal status affected
- Being denied the opportunity of family reunification
- Being incorrectly placed in adult reception centres or imprisonment in adult detention centres.

International standards state that young people should be given the benefit of the doubt if their exact age is uncertain. This means, unless there is evidence they are not a child, it should be assumed that a young person who says they are a child is under 18, even if they look older.

Children should also be supported in reunification with their families when it is safe to do so and in their best interests. This should be a very carefully facilitated process with checks to ensure they return to a safe situation. No child should be subject to forced return to their countries and situations that will put them at risk.

These actions require sufficient numbers of well-trained professionals from a range of sectors to work together so that unaccompanied children receive the alternative care, support, protection and access to other services they need.

### **An example of practice: Preparedness and building response services for unaccompanied and separated children in East Sudan – Danish Red Cross**

It is important that systems and services of support for children affected by migration are put in place in advance of their arrival – as part of emergency preparedness planning. An example of

such preparation is illustrated by work undertaken by the Danish Red Cross (DRC) in partnership with the Sudanese Red Crescent Society in East Sudan on a popular migratory route used by child migrants.

Unaccompanied and separated children moving from West, East and Central Africa are making their way through Libya and across the sea to central Mediterranean countries such as Italy and Malta. It is a highly dangerous route along which children face many protection risks, including sexual abuse and exploitation, imprisonment and drowning.



Source: Danish Red Cross <sup>29</sup>

29. Extracted from a piece of research commissioned by the Danish Red Cross called “No Place for Me Here: The Challenges of Ethiopian Male Return Migrants” undertaken by the Danish Institute of International Studies)



Source: SOS Children's Villages International

A document published by UNICEF <sup>30</sup> reveals how 'among children transiting through Libya, three-quarters of those interviewed said they had experienced violence, harassment or aggression at the hands of an adult.' While there is no data that is considered truly accurate, it is calculated more than 22,000 people have died or gone missing along this route in the past decade.

Some of the steps in the emergency preparedness planning process undertaken with the support of the DRC include:

- A needs and context analysis relating to the situation of migrants, including consultation with children, before the development of programmes
- Support for local responses to humanitarian action and consideration of any necessary capacity building
- The need for a coordinated multi-sectoral response that involves different stakeholders and partnerships.

Most importantly, the assessment process includes group discussions with migrant children

themselves to find out about their experiences, thoughts and ideas. The assessments helped the DRC teamwork with local partners to identify gaps in the skills of key stakeholders as well as improvements needed in coordination and cooperation between different agencies and service providers. In response, the DRC supported a programme that included:

- The reinstatement of coordination meetings between key stakeholders, including child protection and sexual and gender-based violence working groups
- An interagency child protection training programme for key stakeholders
- First aid training for key stakeholders and psychological first aid training for staff and volunteers working at two refugee reception points.

The work of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, when developing preparation plans and response programmes for unaccompanied and separated children on the move, is inspired and guided by the fundamental principles of humanitarian action.

30. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/turkiye/en/node/1641>

These principles include:

- Support for migrants that stems from recognition of their **humanity**, irrespective of legal status, and their attendant needs and vulnerabilities
- **Neutrality, independence and impartiality** – meaning no stance should be taken on whether migration should or should not occur, and neither encouraging nor discouraging migration. Addressing needs and reducing vulnerability and risks is undertaken wherever they are found
- Upholding the principle of **universality**, including ensuring that everyone is aware of and able to access their legal rights to protection and assistance.

**In conclusion**, it is important that all those with a responsibility to protect, care for and support unaccompanied and separated children should have a complete understanding of the child's individual circumstances, including the reasons they left home and the risks and experiences they have endured. This can be achieved through a best-interest determination assessment and care plans that will meet their needs and wishes. A multi-sectoral response is very important in ensuring that all the rights of these children are met. In addition, an important aspect of responding to their situation is being prepared for their arrival so that the programme and services can be activated when necessary.

### **Additional resources**

Inter-agency Guiding Principles on unaccompanied and Separated Children (2020) Available at: <https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/1101-inter-agency-guiding-principles-unaccompanied-and-separated-children>

International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2015) Unaccompanied Children on the Move

Available at: <https://publications.iom.int/books/unaccompanied-children-move>

UNICEF (2018) A right to be heard: Listening to Children and Young People on the Move.

Available at: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/youthpoll/>

Massive Open Online Course: Caring for Children Moving Alone. Available at: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/caring-for-children-moving-alone>

UNICEF: <https://www.unicef.org/migrant-refugee-internally-displaced-children>

International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Resource Centre: <https://pscentre.org/resource-category/migration/>

International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent: <https://www.ifrc.org/document/position-paper-protection-and-assistance-children-move>

# 9. Climate Change

This section of the Guide highlights some of the factors that might place children at risk of being separated from their families. This includes concerns around the impact of climate change.

## What the 2019 Resolution says

The 2019 Resolution highlights a profound concern that:

*'children in many parts of the world remain negatively affected by the adverse impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, including persistent drought and extreme weather events, land degradation, sea level rise, coastal erosion and ocean acidification, loss of biodiversity and pollution, which further threaten health, food security and efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development, and in this regard calling for the implementation of the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.'*<sup>31</sup>

The Resolution also expresses 'concern' that millions of children worldwide continue to grow up deprived of parental care and separated from their families for many reasons, including natural disasters and climate change. It underscores that women and girls may be disproportionately affected by, and are more vulnerable to, the adverse impacts of climate change and are already experiencing an increase in such impacts, including persistent drought and extreme weather events, land degradation, sea level rise, coastal erosion and ocean acidification.

## Understanding the challenges

In September 2022, the Danish Child Protection Network held a seminar on climate change. Details of the seminar can be found at: <http://childprotectionnetwork.dk/8-climate-change/>

This section of the Guide includes information drawn from the presentations given by Ms Caroline Shaer, Senior Climate Advisor at CARE Denmark, Ms Line Friberg Nielsen, a Senior Policy Advisory at Save the Children Denmark, and Mr Gopal Lama, Director of the Just Nepal Foundation.



31. Please also see [FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/article/2015/10/15/fccc-cp-2015-10-add-1), decision 1/CP.21, annex.

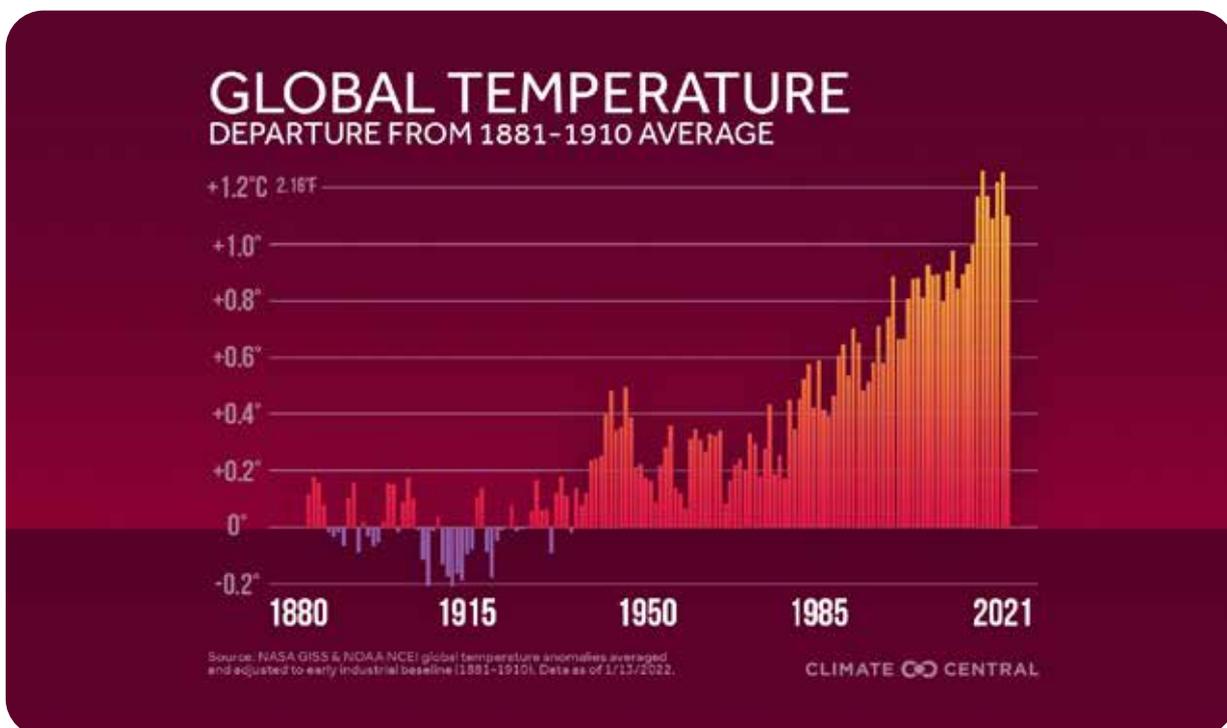
Unfortunately, climate change is leading to circumstances that can result in even more children being separated from their families. These vulnerabilities include:

- Increased poverty – perhaps as a result of drought leading to crop failure and the death of animals, leading to families feeling unable to care adequately for their children
- Loss of household coping mechanisms and increase in stress, which in turn can lead to increases in violence and separation
- Loss of access to basic needs and services, for example, food, education and health centres
- Migration of parents for work
- Increased child labour
- Early or forced marriage
- Children becoming unaccompanied or separated migrants
- Risks as children are sent to places of 'safety', for example, using smugglers and traffickers

to take them to other parts of the country or another country

- Poor health of parents or children, for example, from an outbreak of disease or because of disability
- Separation due to the death of parents during the disaster, for example, lost in floods or tsunamis
- Vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation
- Forced adoption, for example, families are promised their children are being 'taken to safety' but are then placed for international adoption.

Global warming is a well-known phenomenon, and child rights and child protection agencies are gaining awareness of its impact on children and their rights. The diagram below shows world temperatures are continuing to rise, with 19 of the last 20 years having been the hottest on record.<sup>32</sup>



Source: NASA GISS & NOAA NCEI: global temperature anomalies averaged and adjusted to early industrial baseline (2022)

32. Please see: <https://www.climatecentral.org/outreach/alert-archive/2022/20222021GlobalTemps.html>

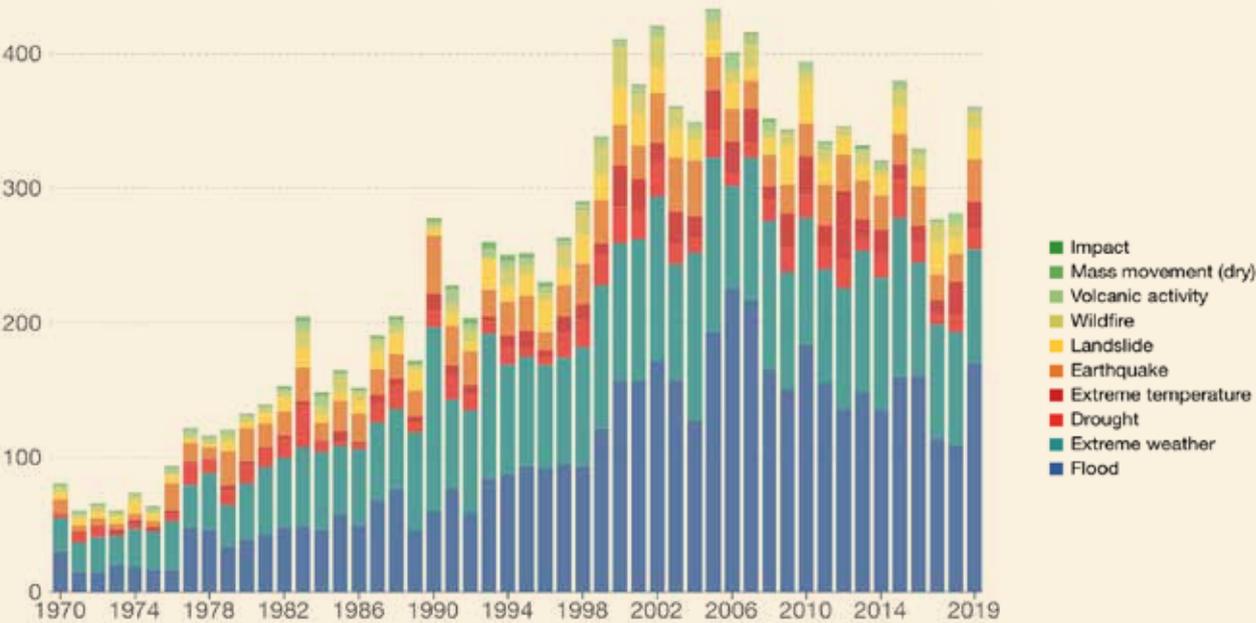
One example of the impact of global warming is the rise in sea levels. Since 1880, global sea levels have risen 21–24cm, and the rise has more than doubled since 2006. In many areas, sea levels are expected to rise as much over the next 30 years (to 2050) as they have over the last 100 years.<sup>33</sup> This has potentially catastrophic implications for coastal communities, particularly in the Asian mega deltas and families living in small island states.

The world is also experiencing increasingly extreme weather patterns. For example, there has been an increase in the number of tropical storms around the world compounded by the greater strength of these storms.<sup>34</sup> Overall, the number of disasters as a result of global warming continues to rise (see the diagram below), with floods and extreme weather being the two most common causes.<sup>35</sup>

**Global reported natural disasters by type, 1970 to 2019**

The annual reported number of natural disasters, categorised by type. This includes both weather and non-weather related disasters.

Source: EM DAT: OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database (2020)

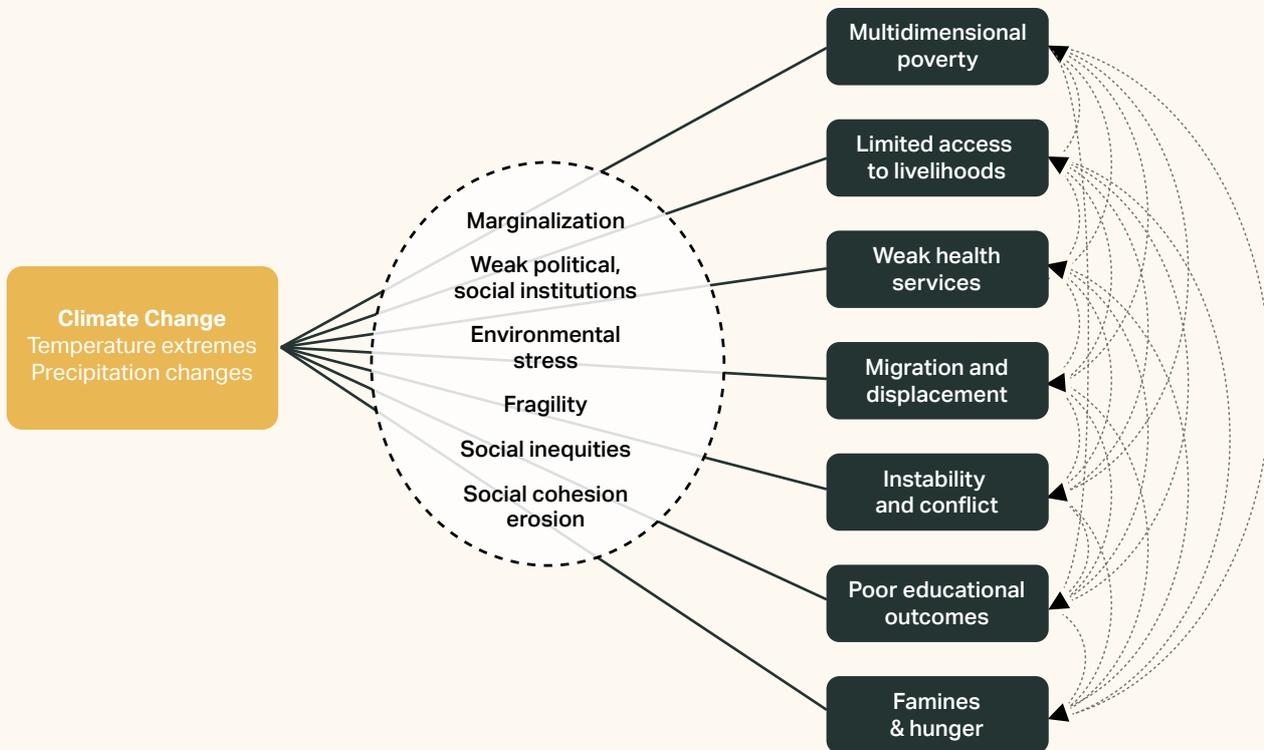


33. Please see: <https://www.emmavreed.com/sea-level-rise>

34. Please see: <http://www.realclimate.org/index.php/archives/2018/05/does-global-warming-make-tropical-cyclones-stronger/>

35. Please see: <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/natural-disasters-by-type>

Climate change is having both **direct and indirect impacts on the lives of families**, as illustrated in the diagram below:



Source: Save the Children: Overlapping Vulnerabilities 2022

Further facts illustrating the impact of climate change on children and situations that may lead to their separation from family include:

- A world with medium-high levels of climate change will have an additional 25.2 million malnourished children<sup>36</sup>
- In Africa, school enrollment rates have declined by 20% in regions affected by drought<sup>37</sup>
- 50% of the children out of school are in this situation because of the impact of climate change. The education of around 38 million children is disrupted each year by the climate crisis<sup>38</sup>
- By 2050, 143 million people across Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and LAC will be forced to 'permanently' migrate due to climate change<sup>39</sup>
- Compared to sixty-year-olds, children born in Afghanistan in 2020 will confront 5.3 times more droughts in their lifetimes than those born in 1960. In Tanzania and Kenya, children will face 2.8 and 4.6 times the exposure to droughts, respectively. In comparison, a child in Western Europe is projected to experience roughly similar exposure to droughts to past generations.

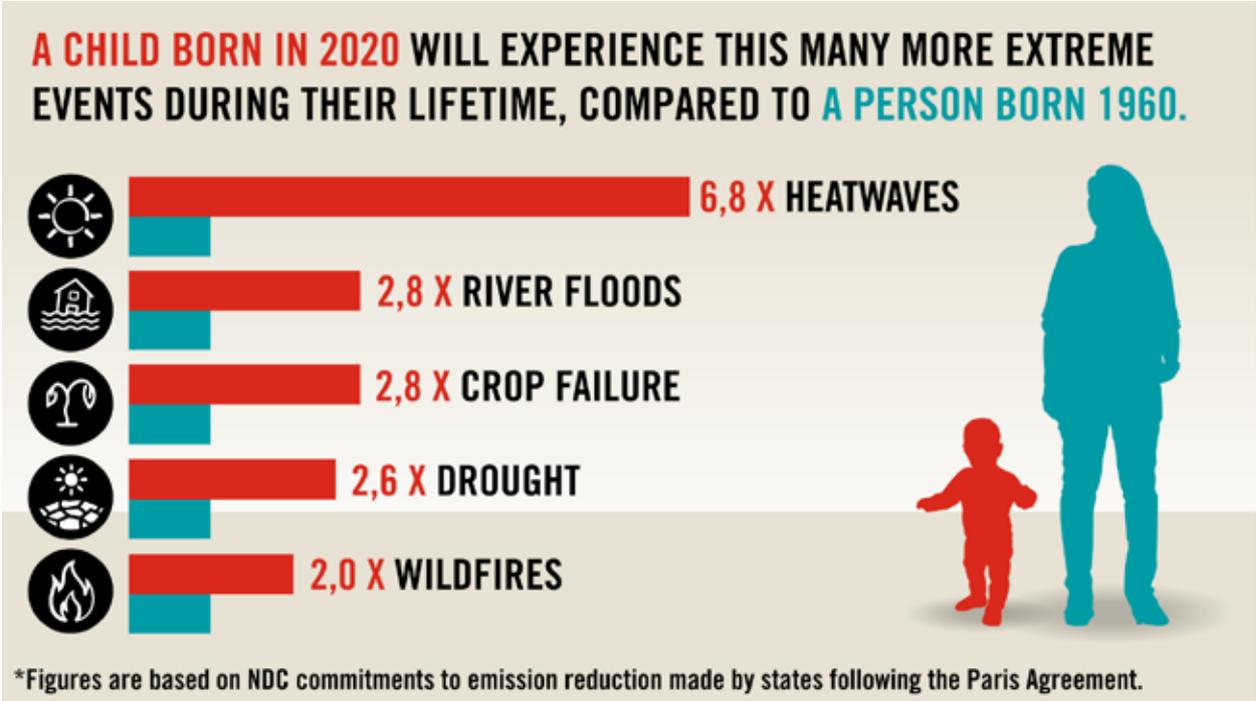
36. Please see: <https://publichealthreviews.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40985-016-0031-6>

37. Please see: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/born-climate-crisis-why-we-must-act-now-secure-childrens-rights/>

38. Please see: <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/emergency-response/climate-change>

39. Please see: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36248>

Furthermore, a child born in 2020 will be far more seriously impacted by climate change than someone born in 1960 (see the graphic below).



Source: Save the Children: Born into the Climate Crisis (2021)

**Response and practice.**

Sadly, more than 99% of deaths attributable to climate-related changes occur in developing countries, with over 80% being the death of children.<sup>40</sup> Through local, national and global campaigns, children themselves are now expressing their concerns, as shown in these quotations:

*The impact on school attendance at the time of the floods. We cannot go to school and food is less due to changes in the climate. The result of not going to school will be the loss of education.*

– Boy in Iraq

*Children or poor families are the most affected negatively from climate change because they don't have the ability to handle the huge dangers.*

*As a result of climate change, girls like us are being subjected to child marriage, trafficking and sexual abuse due to different problems and situations arises.*

– 14-year old boy, Gaza City

– 16-year-old girl, Bangladesh

Source: Save the Children: Generation Hope: 2.4 billion reasons to end the global climate and inequality crisis (2022)

40. Please see: <https://www.unicef-irc.org/e-book/Climate-Ch-web-D215/files/assets/basic-html/index.html#page1>

However, work is underway to support communities in addressing the impact of climate change on children and families, and actions that will hopefully prevent and even reverse the erosion of the environment.

### **An example of practice: Climate change and the impact on child rights – Save the Children Denmark**

Save the Children Denmark is taking a multi-sectoral approach when working with local communities to help slow down and even reverse the damage of climate change while planning for and managing the impacts. To help achieve this, the organisation has produced some helpful guidance that organisations might consider when working to help mitigate and respond to the impact of climate change. This includes assessing the work of an organisation to see if it contributes to climate change, developing strategies that would mitigate and respond to the impact of climate change, raising awareness and becoming an advocate for change.

Save the Children Denmark is also taking actions, including:

- Listening to and using children's voices to influence change – especially those experiencing inequality and discrimination
- Making the climate crisis a child rights crisis – putting child rights on the climate agenda

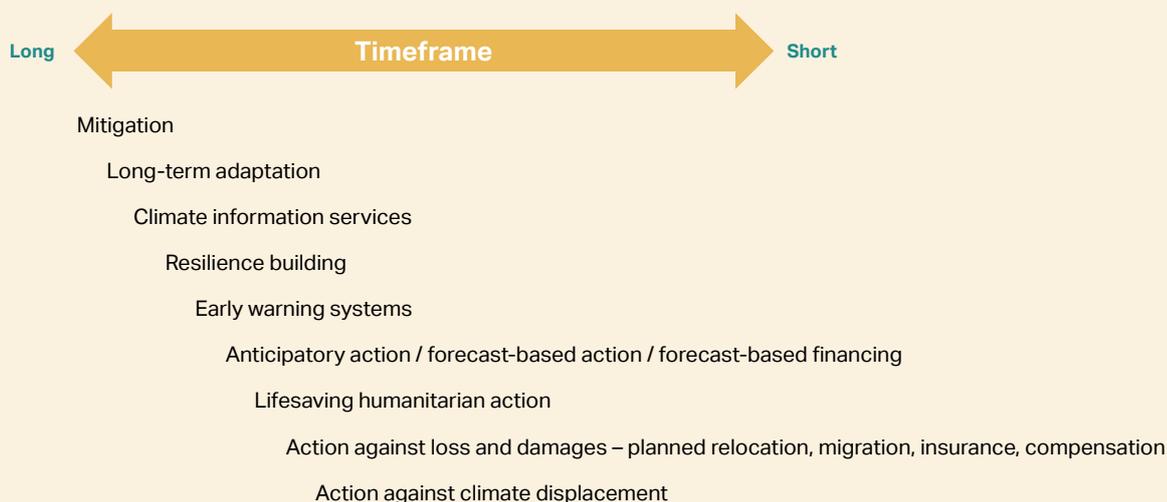
- Bringing to scale – reaching millions with child-centred climate change adaptation and education
- Holding states to account – through, for example, strategic litigation and international accountability mechanisms
- Influencing climate change financing – ensuring it becomes child-sensitive
- Leveraging partnerships – with communities, local and national government and international institutions.

Further information about the work being undertaken by Save the Children Denmark can be found at: <https://redbarnet.dk/>

### **An example of practice: Working with local communities as agents of change: CARE Denmark**

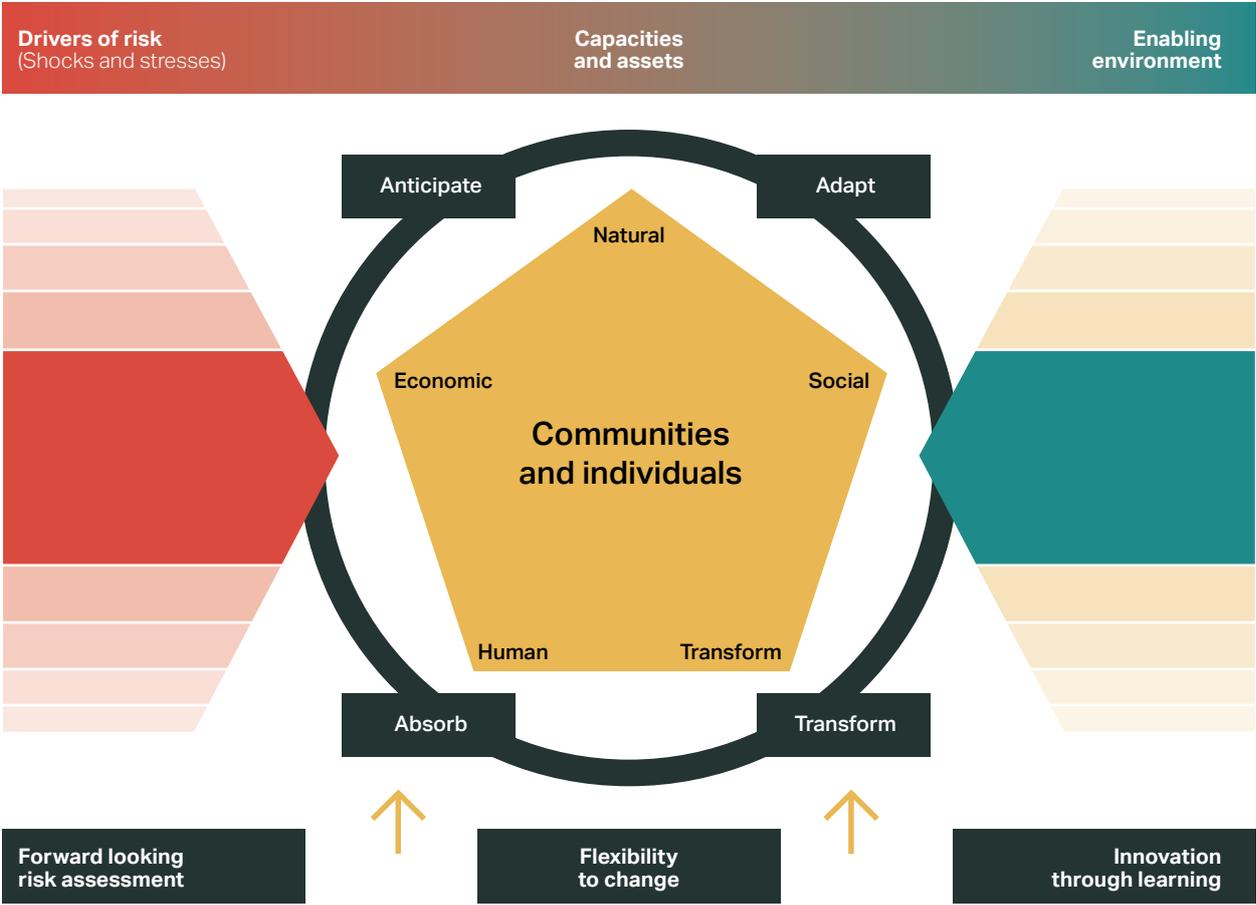
CARE Denmark is an organisation that is also concerned about the impact of climate change on families and communities. The organisation recognises the harm climate change is causing and is working to help mitigate these detrimental effects.

An aspect of this work is the recognition of the strength of women and children as key agents of change, particularly when considering a continuum of climate adaptation programmes and actions, as shown in the diagram below:



The diagram below shows factors considered in designing and developing climate adaptation initiatives to increase vulnerable communities' climate resilience capacity. These factors take into consideration:

- The drivers of risks
- The local capacities and assets that communities already have
- The enabling environment that will help bring about actions.



In the central box of the diagram above, CARE Denmark applies four principal areas of resilience building that:

- **Anticipate risks:** foresee and reduce the impacts of hazards
- **Adapt:** adjust behaviours, lifestyles and livelihood strategies in response to changed circumstances and multiple complex risks
- **Absorb shocks:** accommodate the immediate impacts that shocks and stresses have on lives and well-being by making changes in usual practices based on available skills and resources
- **Transform:** influence within the enabling environment and the drivers of risks through systemic change in behaviour, governance and decision-making structures.

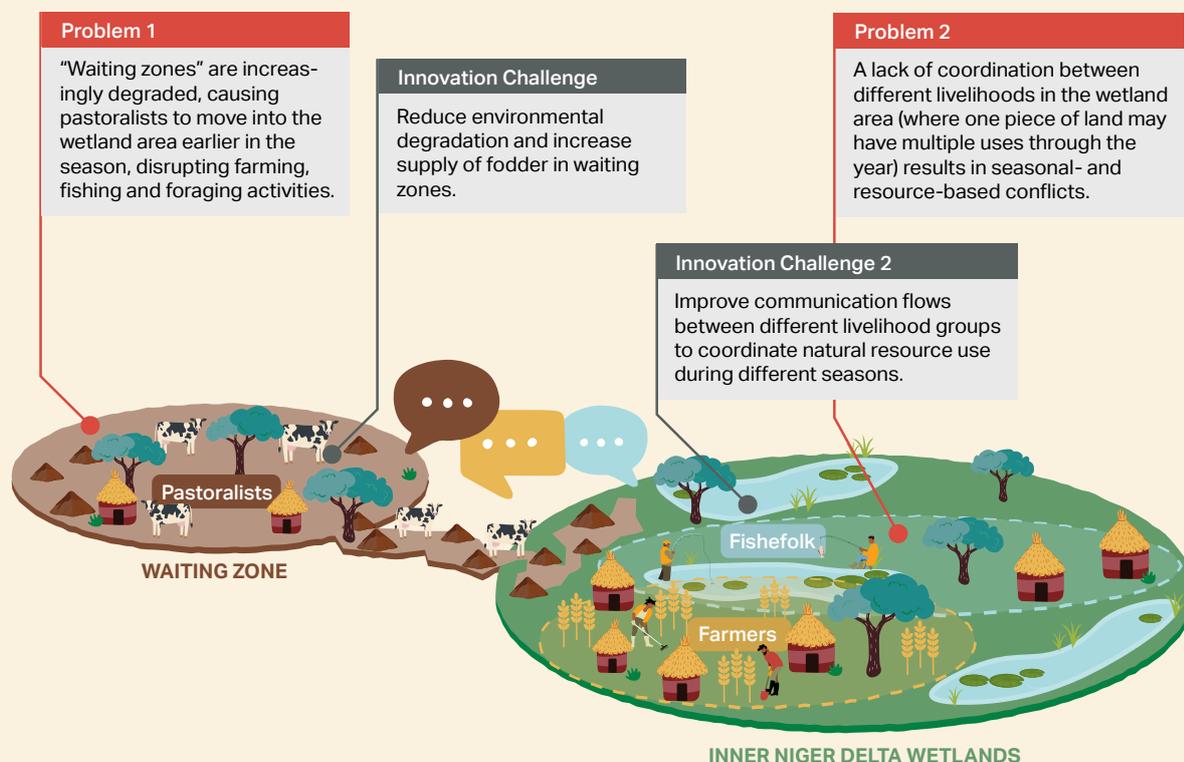
One of the tools used with communities to conduct assessments is a **Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis**. This assessment is an important component of programmes and projects that aim to help prevent and respond to the impact of climate change. The assessment is undertaken by local communities utilising a range of participatory methods, including Venn diagramming, mapping and the use of seasonal calendars.

Through such assessments, communities identify the challenges they are facing and prioritize solutions.

An example of the programme currently supported by CARE Denmark in Mali is shown in the diagram below:

# Mali

*Strengthening the adaptive capacity of community by improving the coordination of and access to natural resources between different livelihoods groups.*



Source: Care Denmark

In summary, CARE Denmark considers some of the most important aspects of the programme to include:

- Local engagement and ownership
- Identification and analysis of climate vulnerability and capacity
- Integration in local institutions' governance mechanisms and regional and national plans
- Multiple partnerships
- Being flexible
- Taking a long-term perspective
- Scaling of potential and the business case
- Supporting change through evidence-based learning.

Further information about the work being undertaken by CARE Denmark can be found at:

<https://care.dk/>

### **An example of practice: Responding to the impact of climate change – the Just Nepal Foundation.**

The Just Nepal Foundation, founded in 1992, is a community-based organisation in Sindupalchock in Nepal. The area where the Foundation works was struck by a massive earthquake in 2015 and was the hardest-hit district, leaving it extremely prone to landslides. In 2021, the slopes were already saturated by monsoon rains when the area experienced flash rains that triggered massive flooding. Until then, little was known about the issue of flooding, so it came as an enormous shock when the floods washed away many villages. The damage caused by the flood was compounded by the impact of mudslides. It was predicted that spring 2022 would bring the same kind of flooding as the previous year.

The Foundation is the first organization to ever receive a small grant for an Anticipatory Action Intervention (AAI) from the Danish Emergency Relief Fund ([www.cisu.dk/derf](http://www.cisu.dk/derf)).

The AAI funding programme helps communities:

- Reduce the consequences of an expected climate-change-related disaster or crisis
- Contribute to actions that prevent a natural hazard from developing into a humanitarian crisis.

The AAI programme wants those submitting proposals to be able to act swiftly. The application process also requires community-based organisations to have in-depth knowledge and data for the target groups and terrain and access to reliable weather forecasts.

Before the AAI application, the Just Nepal Foundation had completed a community profiling exercise (named 'SEE IT') that included all schools and community sites within the target municipality shortly after the 2021 floods. The assessment adhered to the principles of participation through an inclusive inquiry process and resulted in the collective agreement by the participants to the data, challenges, needs and resources required. There was a special focus on gathering information on missing children and those at risk of trafficking, as the area had the highest record of child trafficking in the country. Levels of authentic community engagement in local government bodies and committees were also recorded. A number of other factors put the Foundation in an excellent position to apply for the AAI funds, including in-depth knowledge of the area and the recent mobilisation of young people.

The AAI-supported activities included:

- Storing food supplies in areas most vulnerable to food scarcity along with medicines for children with disabilities
- Strengthening the capacity of youth groups in first aid and rescue techniques, so they are able to be first responders
- Supporting a mobile phone communication platform so community members could share vital information during the monsoon



- Disseminating disaster-related safety messages via posters, flyers and radio jingles and talks, including community responsibility for protecting all children
- Capacity building for teachers and other staff on risk reduction and child protection during and after a disaster
- Relocating families to temporary safer sites
- Relocating children in child-headed households living near the river to foster families. Together with the children, identify a person in the community who would visit them to make sure they are safe
- Forming disaster management and rescue groups at schools near the river
- Stationing two outreach workers in communities with a high frequency of domestic violence.

The Foundation has developed a short film in which children and other community members speak about the impact of climate change in their region. They also highlight some of the response mechanisms that have been developed as a result of experiencing an earthquake and major flooding. The film can be found at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgm2Qka-ttU>

Lessons learned include:

- Young people have strong coping skills and are motivated to help their communities
- There has been less malnutrition among marginalised children, especially children with disabilities compared to other crisis situations
- There have been no reports of trafficking or escalation of domestic violence during the recent monsoon period
- Moving marginalized families to safer places has saved lives. A permanent relocation needs to be facilitated by the local government. As a local CBO, the Foundation can facilitate this as they will remain on the ground
- The temporary location of children to foster families kept them safe. As many of these children do not want to return to live alone and want to reconnect with their families, the Foundation is now trying to trace parents who left the area to work abroad
- It is important to work in partnership with others, especially with the local government for collective implementation of local adaptation plans
- A heightened awareness and understanding of child trafficking offer the opportunity to

address the topic of child abuse in general more widely. This is a shift from previous practice in which traffickers were sometimes encouraged to take children to what was perceived as 'safety'. In general, communities have until now been very silent about trafficking, often seeing efforts by outsiders to address the issue as intrusive and condemning

- A need for small local implementing CBOs to support and collaborate with each other can strengthen their capacity in climate-change-related issues and so better serve their communities.

Challenges detected:

- Larger NGOs coming from outside local areas in response to disasters lack local knowledge and, as a result, do not necessarily respond in the most appropriate manner. There is a need for a more collaborative effort with CBOs
- Larger NGOs are able to pay higher salaries,

which tempts staff from CBOs to take temporary contracts, thus tempting them to leave their local organisations and harming the long-term services they can offer

- The difficulty for local CBOs in accessing funds from national initiatives and networks.

More information about the Just Nepal Foundation can be found at: <https://justnepal.org/>

**In conclusion,** the impact of climate change poses a serious threat, causing conditions in which children are vulnerable to being separated from their family care. All efforts must be taken to prevent climate change, mitigate the impact now being experienced, prepare for future disaster response and work to support local communities in finding their own solutions.

### **Additional resources**

IUNICEF (2015) Children and the Changing Climate UNICEF UK. Available at: [https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Unicef\\_2015childrenandclimatechange.pdf](https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Unicef_2015childrenandclimatechange.pdf)

Faustini, P. (2014) The Challenges of Climate Change: Children on the Front Line. UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. Available at: <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/716-the-challenges-of-climate-change-children-on-the-front-line.html>

OHCHR Climate Change: Protecting the Rights of Children. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/ClimateChange/materials/2PChildrenLight.pdf>

See also:

End Violence Against Children: Reports and Studies: <https://www.end-violence.org/articles/childrens-safety-face-climate-change>

UNICEF UK: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/children-and-climate-change/#:~:text=Climate%20change%20puts%20children's%20most,more%20children's%20lives%20in%20danger.>

# 10. Volunteerism

*This section of the Guide highlights factors related to volunteerism and the impact this can have on the lives of children in alternative care. It includes the manner in which volunteerism contributes to unnecessary separation of children from their families, and the ongoing use of large residential institutions.*

## **What the 2019 Resolution says**

The 2019 Resolution urges states 'to take action to ensure the enjoyment of human rights for all children without parental care', including measures to 'protect children who are victims of trafficking and are deprived of parental care.' The Resolution requires states to take 'appropriate measures to prevent and address the harms related to volunteering programmes in orphanages, including in the context of tourism, which can lead to trafficking and exploitation'.

*There were so many volunteers: short-time, long-time, middle-time, according to visa! ... Sometimes they organise programme and I don't want to go. Children sometimes feel angry because they want to do what they want. There is a nice movie and children they want to watch, but volunteers organize a football programme and house managers say you have to go. And all children were angry ... Why foreigners come to Nepal? Why do they go in orphanage? That time they come for short time, and they give love to us, but then they leave, and when I write, they don't reply.*

*I say to a volunteer, 'Sister, I am very lonely', and they say, 'No problem, I am here', but then they go their country, and I write, but they don't reply. When I was little, everyone can love me, now I am big, and I need love."*

*(A care experienced child in Nepal)*

Volunteering as a concept of duty and giving back to society is recognised as a worthy and positive thing to do. It is understood that most people who volunteer, including those who do so overseas, genuinely want to do something meaningful while also having the opportunity to gain new experiences for themselves.

For many years, a popular form of volunteering has taken place in children's residential institutions – sometimes known as 'orphanages'. This is being organised in different ways, including through tourism, volunteering agencies, faith-based organisations, schools, and universities. However, concern about such volunteerism continues to grow. This includes worries that:

## **Understanding the challenges**

In November 2021, the Danish Child Protection Network held a seminar on volunteerism in residential institutions.

Details of the seminar can be found at:

<http://childprotectionnetwork.dk/resources/>

This section of the Guide includes information drawn from the presentations of Ms Rebecca Nhep, the Senior Technical Advisor for Better Care Network, and Mr Martin Punaks, an international consultant.

- These acts of volunteering may be more about offering a life-changing experience for the volunteers rather than responding appropriately and safely to the actual needs and wishes of the host communities, especially for children living in residential institutions
- Most volunteers do not have the necessary training, qualifications, skills and understanding that is needed to work with children, especially vulnerable children in alternative care
- Volunteers do not always have the necessary awareness and understanding of the cultures and societies they go to work in
- Agencies and organisations that facilitate volunteering do not provide the necessary preparation
- Many agencies and organisations do not have child protection policies or protocols in place.

It is vital that all volunteerism should be conducted under the strictest ethical criteria, including careful and thorough vetting and recruitment covered by policies that protect the recipients of the volunteering. This is particularly important when working with vulnerable community members, whether at home or abroad.

Volunteerism in so-called 'orphanages' is damaging as it perpetuates the myth that many children in alternative care are orphans. It is estimated that over 90% of children living in alternative care have at least one living parent.<sup>41</sup> The misinformed image of children as orphans helps to attract funding and means children remain in institutions. This misinformed image can also lead to the 'illegal' adoption of children who actually still have birth parents.

Volunteerism also places children at risk of abuse and exploitation perpetrated by the volunteers. Indeed, volunteerism in children's residential

institutions has been described as a form of child exploitation.<sup>42</sup> This is illustrated in the shocking picture below used in an international campaign to stop volunteering in children's residential institutions.<sup>43</sup> The intention of this poster was also to create awareness of how volunteerism uses children as tourist exhibits.



A further damaging element of volunteerism is how it contributes to the ongoing use and survival of institutionalisation of children worldwide. The 2019 Resolution calls for the elimination of this practice because of the lifelong harm it can cause. For example, children who have been separated from their parents and placed in alternative care are at increased risk of developing attachment disorder. Children who have been affected by volunteerism speak of the attachment they form with some volunteers and the emotional harm this causes when they leave. The process then begins again when the next volunteer arrives. This can lead to children losing trust in people and a life-long fear of forming healthy relationships.<sup>44</sup>

Care-experienced young people have reported the detrimental effects of institutionalisation and how volunteerism has impacted their lives. They speak of harsh and abusive treatment in residential

41. Please see: [https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/1.Global%20Numbers\\_2\\_0.pdf](https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/1.Global%20Numbers_2_0.pdf)

42. Please see: <https://www.hopeandhomes.org/blog/orphanage-volunteering/>

43. Please see: <https://thinkchildsafe.org>

44. Please see: <https://rethinkorphanages.org/resources>

institutions, including lack of food, being denied an education and being sent out to work on the streets or in the fields every day, with some 'owners' of institutions reportedly profiting from this labour. For some children, it is only when volunteers visit that a false sense of their care is created by being given better food and not having to go to work. They are made to 'perform' for volunteers and must appear to be happy, smiling children. Volunteers bring gifts, play with children and seem to temporarily 'befriend' them. There are also reports of abuse, especially if volunteers are allowed to take children out of the institution unaccompanied. Because of this seemingly friendly approach, children grow 'attached' to volunteers and may even be sad when they leave, especially if the improved treatment they receive also ceases. Children are particularly harmed by feelings of abandonment, as for example, when volunteers do not stay in touch or write as promised.

Combatting the practice and the scale of such volunteerism remains a challenge. Indeed, volunteering has become a multi-million dollar business benefitting the companies that facilitate the visits as well as many of the managers and other staff of the alternative care institutions. Volunteerism is thought to raise up to \$2.6 billion per annum.<sup>45</sup> It is estimated that in Uganda alone, a total of USD 250 million per year is raised by issuing visas for volunteers visiting children's residential institutions.<sup>46</sup> It is also estimated that 4 million people from the USA alone have volunteered in children's residential institutions. Furthermore, 57.5% of Australian universities and 26.4% of UK universities have promoted such volunteering.<sup>47</sup>

## Response and Practice

In recognition of the harm volunteerism in

children's residential institutions can cause, there are now a number of international campaigns, such as 'Rethink Orphanages'<sup>48</sup> calling for this practice to stop. These campaigns understand the contribution volunteering can make in general but, with specific reference to children's residential institutions, provide ideas for alternatives to such practice. For example, ethical alternatives include:

- Involvement with projects from the perspective of a volunteer's own country – perhaps to raise funds to promote the prevention of unnecessary child-family separation, deinstitutionalisation and the use of family-based care, and family reunification in other countries
- Assessing skill gaps in the staff providing alternative care for children and then, if professionally equipped, working directly with these staff overseas to help increase capacity (but without making contact with children while undertaking such activities)
- Only using and supporting ethical tourism and other companies and organisations that arrange volunteering
- Advocating for responsible tourism, faith-based organised trips etc.
- Advocating for the development of child protection policies and protocols in any organisation that sends volunteers – including educational institutions.

Advocacy might take the form of internal campaigning within one's own organisation if involved in volunteerism in children's residential institutions. For example, raising awareness about the harm of volunteering in these institutions and calling for clear ethical guidelines and protocols for all forms of volunteerism. It might also be involvement in campaigns highlighting the harm

---

45. Please see: <https://www.hopeandhomes.org/blog/orphanage-volunteering/>

46. Please see: Van Doore, K. (2022) Orphanage Trafficking in International Law. Cambridge: University Press

47. Please see: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321758532\\_Mapping\\_Australia%27s\\_support\\_for\\_the\\_institutionalisation\\_of\\_children\\_overseas](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321758532_Mapping_Australia%27s_support_for_the_institutionalisation_of_children_overseas)

48. Please see: <https://rethinkorphanages.org/>

of volunteerism with government policy makers, funders, faith-based organisations, volunteering businesses, travel and tourist firms, and centres of education.

Further information and guidance on ethical volunteering can be found on the website of the campaign 'Rethink Orphanages' at this link: <https://rethinkorphanages.org/individual-orphanage-volunteering/ethical-volunteering-alternatives>

**In conclusion**, becoming a volunteer can provide a positive contribution to a local society, but because of the harm it can cause if undertaken in children's residential institutions, potential volunteers are urged to consider alternative ways to offer their time and skills, including those that will bring an end to the use of such childcare facilities, and seek other ways to contribute to the lives of children ethically and safely.

### **Additional resources**

**ReThink Orphanages:** The website for the BCN-led network of organisations working against orphanage volunteering – it also has a good resource page with links to many other resources: <https://rethinkorphanages.org/resources>

**Beyond Orphanage Visits:** Developed by the Responsible Tourism Partnership in 2019, which summarises all the evidence and arguments related to orphanage volunteering, including outlining the ethical alternatives. It was written for the travel industry, but it is still relevant and useful for children's NGOs.

**Better Care Network:** <https://bettercarenetwork.org/bcn-in-action/key-initiatives/rethink-orphanages/resources>

The above resources list many other more specific resources, however, here are a selection which might be useful:

- Friend's International Children are Not Tourist Attractions: <https://thinkchildsafe.org/children-are-not-tourist-attractions/>

- A Nepali care leaver's views on voluntourism: <https://learningservice.info/vehicles-for-your-guilt-privilege-nepal-part-one/>
- Forum's Global Standard for Volunteering for Development which prohibits orphanage volunteering: <https://www.vsointernational.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/forum-global-standard-volunteering-for-development.pdf>
- ACCI Protecting Children in Short-Term Missions Toolkit: [https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/acci/pages/145/attachments/original/1464830333/ACCI\\_Short\\_Term\\_Missions\\_Manual.pdf?1464830333](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/acci/pages/145/attachments/original/1464830333/ACCI_Short_Term_Missions_Manual.pdf?1464830333)
- Podcast of two children's experiences growing up in a residential institution Available at: <https://www.listennotes.com/podcasts/uproot-the-podcast/good-intentions-arent-enough-gHUy5mwFhKC/>

Resource in Danish: <https://danwatch.dk/perspektiv/cambodjas-bornehjem-er-blevet-en-lukrativ-turistindustri-som-kan-skade-bornene-for-livet/>

# 11. Prevention of child-family separation

This section of the Guide highlights some of the protective factors that may help prevent unnecessary child-family separation.

## What the 2019 Resolution says

The prevention of unnecessary child-family separation is a primary focus of the 2019 Resolution. The Resolution highlights many of the multiple intersecting factors currently leading to such separation, including those related to all forms of violence, social exclusion, inequality, stigma and discrimination. Armed conflict and the impact of climate change are also recognised as posing severe risks to family survival and unity. The Resolution urges states to prioritize and respond to situations that lead to child-family separation, including access to universal and specialist services and support.

The Resolution stresses that poverty in itself is not a reason for separation. However, situations of poverty should be seen as a signal to provide any necessary multi-sectoral support to families that will, for example:

- Ensure fulfilment of the human rights of all family members
- Address structural poverty
- Combat racism and discrimination
- Provide access to inclusive and quality education
- Provide access to health services and well-being for all
- Provide equal access to economic resources
- Enable full and productive employment and livelihoods
- Provide all forms of social security when necessary.

The Resolution recognises the importance of developing and strengthening inclusive and responsive family-oriented policies and programmes that reduce poverty and:

*'promote and strengthen parents' ability to care for their children, and to confront family poverty and social exclusion, recognizing the multidimensional aspects of poverty, focusing on inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning for all, including initiatives to promote involved and positive parenting, health and well-being for all at all ages, equal access to economic resources, full and productive employment, decent work, social security, livelihoods and social cohesion and promoting and protecting the human rights of all family members.'*

A study published by the European Commission in 2020<sup>49</sup> found 'income poverty and other social stress factors remain a major reason for alternative care placements' and that children from 'socially disadvantaged families are seriously over-represented among those in residential care.'

---

49. European Commission (2020) Feasibility Study for a Child Guarantee: Final Report. European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c312c468-c7e0-11ea-adf7-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

## Understanding the challenges

In May 2022, the Danish Child Protection Network held a seminar on preventing family separation. Details of the seminar can be found at: <http://childprotectionnetwork.dk/7-exploring-preventative-strategies/>

This section of the Guide includes information drawn from the presentations of Mr Justine Lungu, a Regional Programme Advisor for SOS Children's Villages in Eastern and Southern Africa with responsibility for family strengthening programmes and Dr Chrissie Gale, an International Child Protection Specialist



Source: SOS Children's Villages International

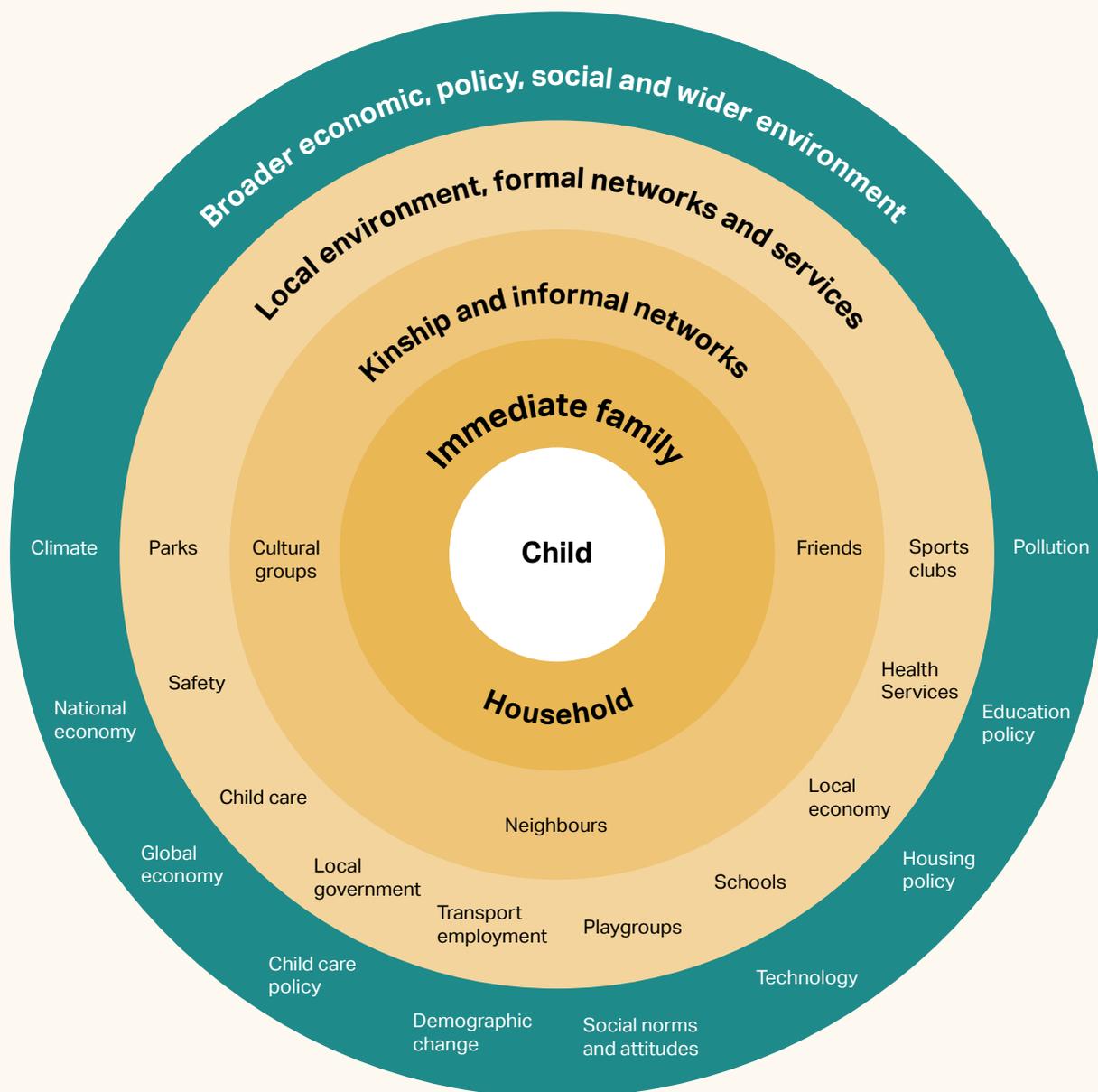
Families can become vulnerable through a combination of risk factors that are consequences of the social, cultural, economic and physical environments in which they live. Examples may be poor opportunities for local employment or crop failure because of serious drought due to climate change. These situations are compounded when there is a lack of access to appropriate services such as social security, inclusive education, health systems, employment and supportive social networks. The stress placed on families by these circumstances, along with weakened coping mechanisms and dwindling community resources

and support, are compounding situations that can lead to child-family separation.

### Response and practice

To develop appropriate and effective services and programmes of support that respond to the needs of families where there may be a risk of losing children into care, it is important first to assess and understand the many external and internal factors impacting their lives. To do this, it is helpful to take an approach based on what is known as a socio-ecological model.

One example of an ecological model was developed by psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner.<sup>50</sup> The diagram below is based on Bronfenbrenner's model – the child is placed at the centre of different micro and macro systems. This can be adapted to place a family at the centre. Using this approach means exploring and understanding the influences of these different systems and how they affect the lives of children and their families.



Source: <sup>51</sup>

50. For more information please see: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/Bronfenbrenner.html>. You might also like to watch this short video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HV4E05BnoI8>

51. Please see: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311843438\\_Housing\\_Children\\_South\\_Auckland\\_The\\_Housing\\_Pathways\\_Longitudinal\\_Study/figures?lo=1&utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=organic](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311843438_Housing_Children_South_Auckland_The_Housing_Pathways_Longitudinal_Study/figures?lo=1&utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic)

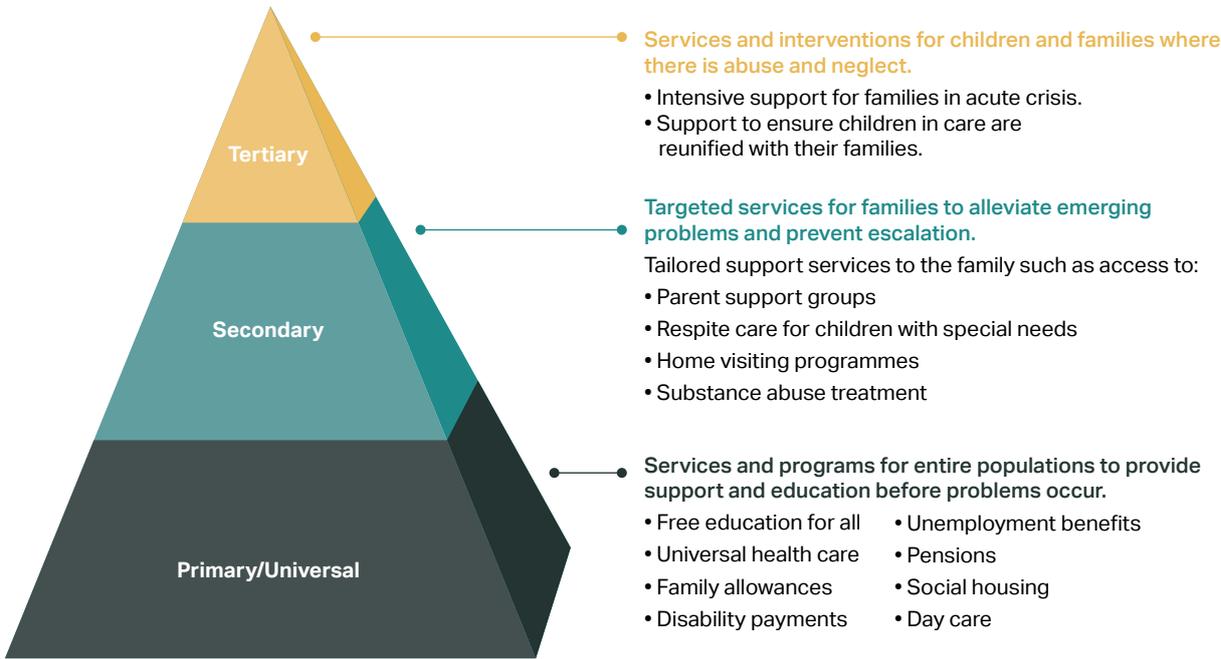
Understanding the factors leading to families becoming vulnerable will inform more accurate and effective development of services and programmes that help address the challenges they are facing. This approach to addressing risk factors is also known as **family strengthening**. Family-strengthening programmes should include access to a range of individualised and tailored services that help build on and increase protective factors, resilience and self-reliance within families. This support aimed at the prevention of child-family separation should be available at three levels (shown in the diagram<sup>52</sup> below) and includes:

**Primary prevention** – including access to universal services for everyone so that all children and families have the best opportunities for safe, happy and fulfilling lives.

**Secondary prevention** – providing support for

families identified as needing more specialised or specific support. For example, this might include additional health needs because of a disability or chronic illness.

**Tertiary prevention** – offering even greater specialist support for families that are at acute or heightened risk of separation or perhaps already have a child in alternative care and need to address certain issues before the child can be returned. For example, this might be households in which there is domestic violence or parents who wish to relinquish their children because of homelessness or substance abuse.



52. Please also see: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/interagency-guidelines/prevention-and-early-intervention2/chapters/the-public-health-model-for-child-protection-and-wellbeing/text-alternative-to-public-health-model-diagram>

**An example of practice: Family Strengthening in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region – SOS Children’s Villages International**

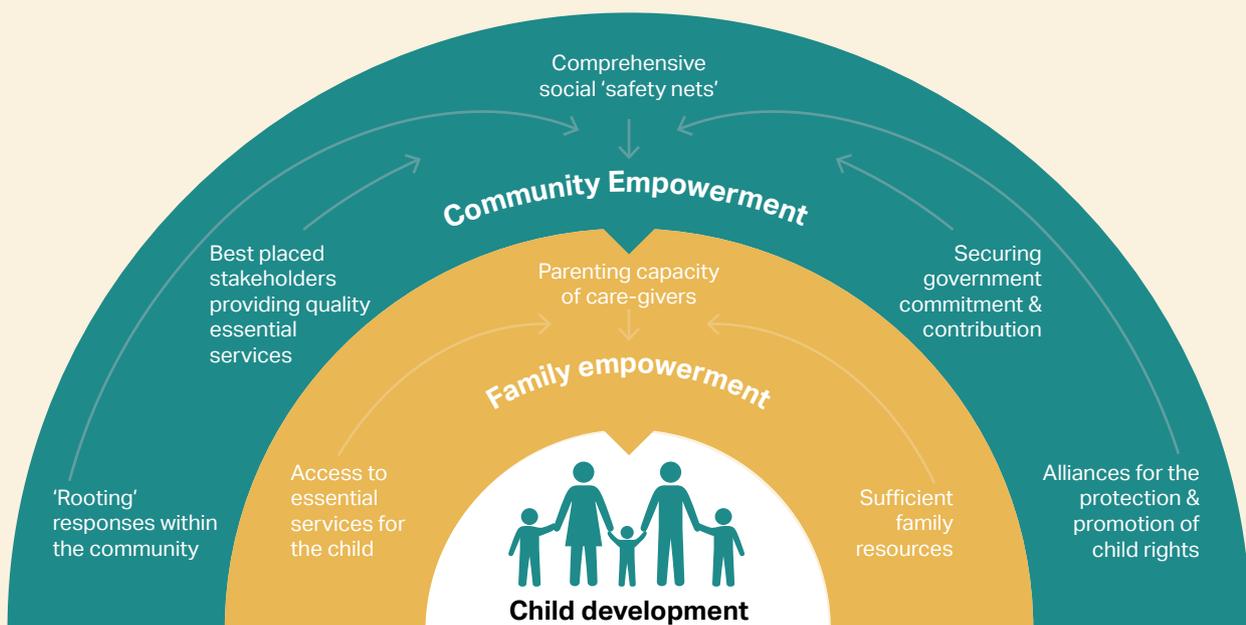
SOS Children’s Villages International is promoting family strengthening programmes, using a multi-faceted and multi-sectoral approach to supporting families to prevent unnecessary child–family separation. Family strengthening programmes take into consideration different factors contributing to the vulnerability of families within the local community and the wider environment. The SOS Children’s Villages programme (shown in the diagram below) includes activities that contribute to:

- Empowering communities to support families and respond to challenges in the local community
- Empowering families, including strengthening self-reliance and resilience
- Advocating for strong government systems and structures that include effective service delivery
- Supporting children and young people to understand and attain their rights.

The first steps of a family strengthening programme include:

- A participatory assessment that identifies the strengths, capacities and challenges facing families and the wider community. It is important that children and young people, families and community members are meaningful participants in these assessments and the design of any response programmes
- Development of an implementation framework and signed agreements with families and communities that incorporate Family Development plans and Community Empowerment Plans
- Cooperation of, and partnership with, government services and other public institutions, CSOs and NGOs to bring about effective implementation of family strengthening plans.

Depending on the needs identified and the wishes of families and communities, the programme of activities can include all or any of the following elements:



Source: SOS Children Villages, ESAF Sustainability Guidelines, 2007



Source: SOS Children's Villages International

**Economic empowerment programmes and livelihood security:**

Even though there are millions of poor parents who love and care for their children, financial and material poverty, or conditions directly attributed to poverty, continue to be used as reasons to place children in alternative care. The family strengthening programme provides opportunities that promote income generation and financial stability.

Elements of the economic development programme might include help in:

- Developing vocational skills and access to apprenticeships
- Coaching, mentoring and provision of business development information and services
- Accessing affordable financing, savings and loans schemes and community and government insurance services
- Providing resources such as seeds and tools, and help with crop diversification

- Direct provision of food, water, shelter and other essential goods for some families when first entering a programme or as a response to emergency situations
- Protecting livelihoods through the development of community early-warning systems in case of impending disaster, and flood prevention and agricultural programmes that prevent and mitigate the impact of climate change.

**Access to services:** The vulnerability of families is compounded by a lack of access to universal and specialist services. Therefore, family strengthening includes working with a range of government and non-government providers to improve access for families through coordination and partnership working between multi-sectoral providers.

**Building children's futures:** Working with children in ways that will help them build a more secure future, such as access to education and training.

**Child protection:** The SOS family strengthening programme recognises the risks children face and the importance of building a protective environment in the family and the wider society.

**Mental health and psychosocial support:** Families can face high stress and anxiety levels when dealing with internal and external challenges and vulnerabilities. Mental health and emotional well-being are essential to maintaining strong family relationships and a happy family life. In turn, strong family *relationships can help members cope with stress, engage in healthier behaviours, and enhance self-esteem and coping mechanisms.* Recognizing this, the SOS family strengthening programme also offers mental health and psychosocial support.

**Sexual and reproductive health and rights:** Sexual and reproductive health and rights mean the right for everyone, regardless of age, ethnicity, HIV status, sexual orientation, or other aspects of identity, to make informed choices regarding their own sexuality and reproduction. Access to information about sexual and reproductive health and rights can, for example, prevent unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections and even save the lives of some of the poorest, most marginalised women and girls.<sup>53</sup> Topics covered in the family strengthening programme include:

- Sexual and reproductive health rights
- Sex and sexuality
- Gender identity and expression
- Contraception
- Teen pregnancy
- How to access appropriate medical advice, for example, gynecological services
- Harmful practices
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Menstruation.

More information about the work of SOS Children's Villages and their Family Strengthening programmes can be found at: <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/our-work/quality-care/strengthen-families>

**In conclusion,** it is important to take a multi-sectoral and holistic approach when assessing and responding to factors that place families in situations of vulnerability that may then result in children being placed in alternative care. The Resolution strongly urges the primary focus of governments and other bodies to be investment in efforts to stop this placement when support to the child, family and community could address the risks they are facing.

### **Additional resources**

Many documents on family strengthening can be found at this resource centre provided by the Better Care Network:

<https://bettercarenetwork.org/library/strengthening-family-care/strengthening-family-care>

---

53. Please see: <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/our-work/vawg/sexual-reproductive-health-rights-women-and-girls>

# 12. The role of faith-based actors in alternative care

*This section of the Guide highlights some of the protective factors that may help prevent unnecessary child-family separation and institutionalisation, such as involvement of faith-based actors.*

## **Understanding the challenges**

A broad range of religious communities have a long history of supporting the world's most vulnerable: Many religious scripts contain a moral obligation to provide care for orphans, widows and other vulnerable groups in their communities, recognizing the inherent dignity of every person. Around the world, faith-based communities have therefore historically taken a leading role in providing care for children who have been separated from their families. The form of care offered has often been in large residential care settings – orphanages and childcare institutions. This was done during a time, where large residential institutions were widely accepted, and often carried out in collaboration with state actors, however often not acknowledging the harm that the institutionalization of children can bring.



Many faith traditions at the same time emphasize the family as fundamental to the fabric of society and the best place for bringing up children. Today, faith-based communities are beginning to realize that institutions cannot provide the same care for the children's physical emotional, social and spiritual needs. Furthermore, there is growing evidence that

many children could have safely remained with their families if additional support had been available.<sup>54</sup> Many faith actors have therefore started to discuss and reconsider their way of responding to the needs of vulnerable families who are at risk of losing their children into care and to the children already in alternative care settings.

54. Please see for example: European Commission (2020) Feasibility Study for a Child Guarantee: Final Report. European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c312c468-c7e0-11ea-adf7-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

With their presence and local networks even in the most remote parts of the world, faith actors are often in a pivotal position to raise awareness of guidelines, child rights and examples of good practice at all levels and to advocate for change in how to provide care for the most vulnerable. They can thus play an important role in the promotion of the 2019 Resolution, which calls for the elimination of large residential care settings and instead supporting families as the unit that is best able to provide a child with individual love and care, a sense of belonging and a lifelong connection to a community of people.

### Response and practice

In March 2021, the Danish Child Protection Network held a seminar on the role of faith-based organisations. Details of the seminar can be found at: <http://childprotectionnetwork.dk/6-religion/>

This section of the Guide includes information drawn from the presentations of Annika Bach, the Project Consultant for the Centre for Church

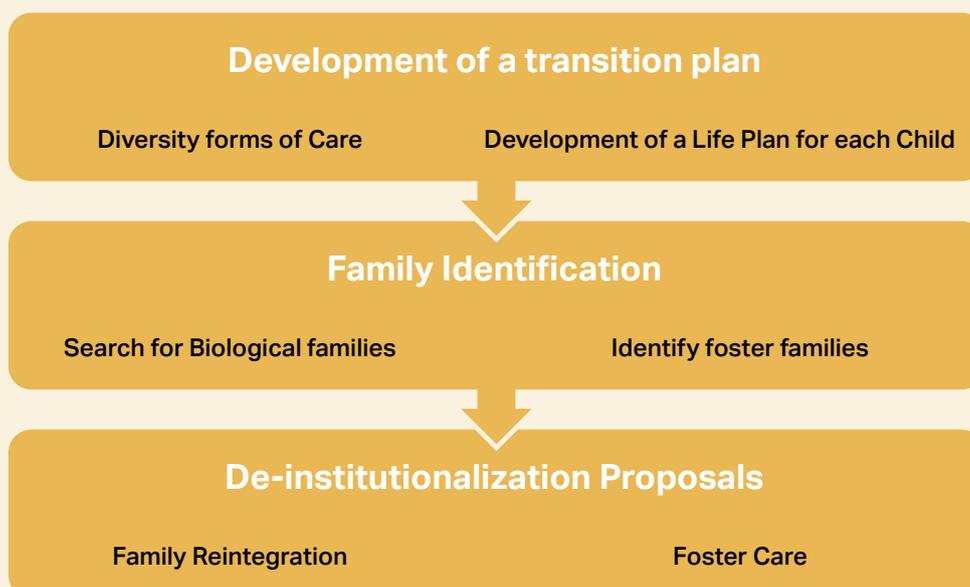
Development Cooperation, Denmark, Ms Gritt Holm Hedehus, the National Director of Viva Denmark, Mr Philip Aspegren, the Executive Director at Casa Viva in Costa Rica, and Ms Maria Luna, the Director of Viva Honduras.

### An example of practice: Working in partnership to change practice: Members of Viva Together for Children: Viva Denmark, Casa Viva in Costa Rica and Red Viva in Honduras

Viva Together for Children is a global network of organisations working in 28 countries. These organisations work towards improving the lives of children and young people in some of the poorest regions of the world. The aim is their enjoyment of a safe and healthy upbringing with opportunities to create their own future.

Viva Denmark is a member of the network and has been working with churches, local faith-based organisations and CBOs in a number of countries.

## Diversifying forms of care through individual case decisions



Approximately seven years ago, the strategy of the organisation changed in recognition of the importance of children being raised in families. This meant the focus of their work shifted from supporting residential institutions to supporting local initiatives of deinstitutionalisation and the safe return of children to their families. Viva Denmark also realised the importance of providing family-based alternative care, such as foster care, when needed. The organisation bases all of its work on the principle of best interests. An example of its work includes its programme in Nicaragua, 'Towards family-based care'.

Another member of the network is Casa Viva in Costa Rica. A primary aim of Casa Viva is to advocate for and support change, in line with the content of the 2019 UN Resolution. This includes working with local churches, local government and other partners to refocus programmes towards prioritising the prevention of family separation through support to vulnerable families. When care outside of the biological family is assessed as necessary, the best long-term solution for each child and young person is sought through:

- Placement with extended family (kinship)
- Working with local churches to find families willing to offer children temporary family-based alternative care (foster care)
- Only if these options are not feasible, working towards long-term care in small-scale residential care or adoption

To date, Casa Viva Costa Rica has placed more than 1,000 children and young people in short-term foster families while they work to reunite the children with their biological families or, if this is not possible, adoption. Casa Viva also supports the reunification of children from alternative care back into their families.

Another member of the network is Red Viva in Honduras. Red Viva is also working with providers of institutional care to support them through a

process of programme re-orientation that focuses on family reunification and the provision of family-based alternative care (see the diagram below). The organisation also recognises the importance of working in partnership with government partners as well as other local actors such as the neighbourhood councils and churches that have knowledge of the vulnerable families in their communities.

The results of their programme include:

- Partners placing a new focus on family reunification and foster care
- The number of children in residential institutions decreased by approximately 42%
- The term 'deinstitutionalization of childhood' was introduced into government department protection programmes
- Better communication between government departments and CSOs
- Influencing government child welfare departments so they now actively look for alternative care settings rather than the use of residential institutions

All three organisations recognise both the historical and current work of the church to support vulnerable communities and families – often when government is unable or chooses not to respond – and how this traditionally included the provision of alternative care in residential settings of various sizes. The organisations also recognise the new opportunities to work with faith-based organisations that will help bring about change and re-focus efforts so that children remain with their families whenever possible, children in care are reunified with their families, and, if necessary, provision of family-based alternative care rather than the use of institutions. All three organisations appreciate the capacity of churches to engage with local communities in a way that can bring a new understanding of child well-being and their best interests, encourage families in the community to offer family-based alternative care, and contribute

to national efforts of deinstitutionalisation. However, they also realise there are challenges which require consideration of the following:

- Understanding how the church responded to the need in what they thought was the best way to care for vulnerable children through the establishment of residential institutions and how a bond and commitment has been built with these institutions
- Realising that for decades, donations from churchgoers have perpetuated the use of residential institutions, and now a challenge is to support change while maintaining the respect of those who have given money for many years in the belief, they were doing a good thing
- Recognising and accepting the challenge that it is easier to raise money for institutions rather than other alternative care settings and prevention of child-family separation programmes
- Recognising the strong incentive to maintain the status quo, especially as change can be frightening
- 'Inviting' churches to engage in a new way of caring for children as this has to be a decision that is not forced upon anyone but opens up opportunities through understanding and learning
- Understanding some new partners may withdraw from programmes if they are not convinced they will work
- Understanding the need to work in partnership with all stakeholders, including local authorities;
- Recognising that government social services are underfunded and often lack sufficient and well-trained personnel. It is important to respect the efforts of dedicated staff who work in such challenging circumstances. Due to these challenges, child welfare departments are also often open to working in partnership with churches and other organisations

- Pushing for long-term solutions and not leaving children in alternative care that should only be temporary. This includes prioritising family reunification, shortening the time judges take to make decisions about children and ensuring children stay in alternative care for the shortest time necessary
- Understanding how difficult it can be to create a new narrative and encourage change and how the 2019 UN Resolution can be used to inform change.

Direct engagement with managers and other staff in residential institutions is also essential. For example, Casa Viva works with the directors of residential institutions to help them adjust their focus from 'managing a facility' to thinking about whether or not they are working in the children's best interests. In such instances, they guide staff towards understanding attachment theory and the essential role of a primary caregiver for each child. They help care providers understand how:

- Environments in which children grow up need to be secure and private – children need to feel safe and able to open up to deal with their experiences
- Every child is unique and so a one-size solution that fits all, such as in residential settings, is not appropriate as these settings do not meet individual children's needs
- We should listen to the children – they will tell us they need a family.

*'I would not have minded living poorly with my family'*

- a child in Honduras

*'Is there no other way to help my mother'*

- a child in Honduras

Viva Denmark has produced a short film illustrating how the organisation works with reintegration of care-experienced children and young people. Please find it at: <https://viva.dk/en/back-to-family-life/> (Viva Denmark helps children: Back to family life | Viva).

More information regarding the work of Viva Denmark can be found at this link: <https://viva.dk/en/about-us/>

More information about the work of Casa Viva can be found at this link: <https://casaviva.org/>

**In conclusion**, faith-based organisations can play an important role in raising awareness of the harm caused by the unnecessary separation of children from their families and placement in unsuitable care. Building on their strong relationships in the local community, they are well-placed to help bring about change in awareness and attitudes that promote family strengthening programmes and prevent the use of residential institutions in cases where temporary alternative care is needed for the protection of a child.



### **Additional resources**

Please see:

[Partnering with Religious Communities for Children- UNICEF - JLI \(jliflc.com\)](https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-and-faith-groups-release-new-guidance-how-support-communities-times-covid-19)

[Rethinking-Orphan-Care Website-Version.pdf \(faithtoaction.org\)](https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-and-faith-groups-release-new-guidance-how-support-communities-times-covid-19)

<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-and-faith-groups-release-new-guidance-how-support-communities-times-covid-19>

# 13. Summary and Recommendations

The 2019 Resolution, 'Promotion and protection of the rights of children', clearly calls on States Parties, and other stakeholders to uphold all the rights of children. The Resolution focuses on children without parental care and those at risk of being so. An emphasis is placed on the 'necessity' and 'suitability' principles that require the prevention of any unnecessary separation of children from their care of their families and the provision of only suitable forms of care when in a child's best interest. Efforts should be made, therefore, to prevent situations that could lead to separation, including prevention of violence and an understanding that:

*'financial and material poverty, or conditions directly and uniquely imputable to such poverty, should never be the only justification for the removal of a child from the care of his or her parents or primary caregivers and legal guardians, for receiving a child into alternative care or for preventing his or her reintegration, but should be seen as a signal for the need to provide appropriate support to their family, benefiting the child directly.'* (Article 30, 2019 Resolution)



If a temporary separation is assessed as being in the child's best interests and will protect them from harm, family-based alternative care and, in specific circumstances, placement in small community-based residential care settings should be available. Care in these settings should be of the highest quality possible, and early family reunification should be a priority.

To contribute to the achievement of these goals, the Danish Child Protection Network has undertaken a programme of seminars and other events to promote the implementation of the Resolution. The recommendations below draw on international standards as well as the learning, information and examples of practice that were shared during these events.

#### ► **Advocacy and Awareness raising**

To bring about positive change and necessary child protection and alternative care reforms, all stakeholders must be aware of the importance of preventing unnecessary child-family separation and providing suitable alternative care when needed. Actions that contribute to this goal include:

- Sharing the UN Resolution and other relevant international treaties and guidance with other stakeholders
- Awareness-raising to promote and explain the content of the UN Resolution
- Advocating with government policymakers, donors, and other influencers, so that the content and goals of the 2019 UNGA Resolution are included in legislative frameworks, strategic plans, resource allocation and service provision.

#### ► **Working in partnership**

Every adult is a child rights duty bearer with a responsibility to make sure these rights are realised. To this end, they have a shared responsibility to ensure the 2019 UN Resolution is acted upon. Actions that contribute to this goal include:

- Recognition that many factors contribute to the risk of child-family separation and, therefore, ensuring a multi-sectoral approach to assessing, analysing, planning and implementing effective programmes that support children, families and communities
- Promotion of partnerships between government, non-governmental and community-based organisations and agencies including faith-based organisations at local, regional, national and international levels
- Recognising children, families and communities as important partners with the opportunity for full and meaningful participation in decision-making.

#### ► **Understanding the context of children at risk of losing parental care.**

All projects and programmes should be based on careful assessments of the actual circumstances of children and their families and the factors placing them at risk of separation. For children already separated, including children in care and other unaccompanied and separated children, it is also important to understand their individual needs, circumstances and wishes before making any decisions about their lives. Actions that contribute to this goal include:

- Providing opportunities for professionals, children, families, community members and other stakeholders to participate in multi-sectoral assessments, analysis, decision making and planning
- Supporting the full and meaningful participation of children means providing them with information and opportunities to participate in a manner appropriate for their age, maturity and other circumstances. It means their ideas and opinions are truly listened to and fully taken into account
- Ensuring assessments identify all factors that can lead to family separation, including:
- Wider contextual factors – including the impact of poverty, social exclusion, stigma

and discrimination, conflict, migration, climate change and natural disasters

- Internal family dynamics and circumstances – for example, domestic violence, ill health of caregivers or children, death of a caregiver, disability, migration for work and remarriage
- Providing those taking part in assessments and decision-making with guidance based on internationally agreed standards, including those in the 2019 UNGA Resolution
- Developing and implementing mechanisms that ensure care-experienced children, young people, and their families contribute in a meaningful way to developing national and local child protection and alternative care legislation, policies and programmes of reform.

► **Ensure all children grow up in a safe and nurturing family environment with support provided to families when needed**

The 2019 Resolution clearly promotes the importance of growing up in a safe and caring family environment that provides love, identity, belonging, protection and stability – all factors that are essential for the development and well-being of children. Families, through no fault of their own, may end up in vulnerable circumstances that put them at risk of separation. Actions to prevent separation include:

- Supporting access to, and advocating for, high-quality, free-of-charge, community-based, universal services such as education, health, social services and social protection



- Supporting access to and advocating for specific services such as inclusive education and specialist medical support for children with disabilities
- Providing access to other opportunities such as employment, training and adequate housing
- Developing targeted multi-sectoral family strengthening programmes that help address risk factors while promoting stability and protection of well-being and the rights of children and other family members
- Developing programmes that help prevent and mitigate such circumstances as the impact of climate change on families and children. This includes emergency preparedness and response plans and mechanisms developed with and by local communities.

► **A well-functioning child protection and alternative care system that provides suitable care only when necessary**

The 2019 Resolution urges states to strengthen national child protection systems. Alternative care is an integral component of a national child protection system, and it is important to recognise that all elements of the system are equally important. This system should operate in a way that identifies all children at risk of harm and any potential separation from parental care. It requires investment in:

- A normative framework – legislation, policies, strategic plans, statutory guidelines and standards that promote ‘gatekeeping’ and deinstitutionalisation and is informed by internationally agreed conventions, treaties and standards



- A central body responsible for the coordination and oversight of child protection stakeholders and actions at national and local levels
  - Data management information systems so that planning and activities are based on accurately assessed needs and can be carefully monitored, adjusted and evaluated. This includes developing and monitoring individual support and care plans for children and families to ensure they receive the support they require. Such systems will also contribute to the accountability of stakeholders, including care providers
  - Structures and resources for services delivery at national and local levels, for example, fully functioning child welfare or child protection departments, delivery of education and health systems, judicial and legal services, and access to family support services
  - Sufficient and skilled multi-sector workforce – including strengthening of the social services workforce and promotion of partnership
  - Child protection case management tools and procedures – for example, referral mechanisms, child and family assessments and child care plans
  - The delivery of suitable alternative care provision with a focus on family-based alternative care and community-based small-scale residential settings when needed to protect a child and meet their best interests. Children should be afforded the highest quality care that delivers regulated, safe, non-discriminatory and individualised love and support and upholds all their rights
  - Care leavers should also be offered all the support they need when being reunited with families or transitioning to independent living.
- **Stopping volunteerism in children’s residential institutions**
- There is international agreement recognising the harm volunteerism in children’s residential care settings can cause. Actions that can prevent this practice include:
- Promoting involvement with projects in the volunteer’s own country – perhaps to raise funds to promote the prevention of unnecessary child-family separation, deinstitutionalisation and the use of family-based care, and family reunification in other countries
  - Supporting and using ethical tourism and ensuring other companies and organisations that arrange volunteering stop volunteerism in residential institutions but offer other opportunities to support the local community in their struggles
  - Advocating for and supporting the development of child protection policies and protocols in any organisation that sends volunteers abroad – including educational institutions.



Source: 100% for the Children

