# DEFINITIONS

**A child** means any person under the age of 18, unless under the (national) law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier (Convention on the Rights of the Child, or CRC, Article1).

**Separated children** are those who are separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members.

**Unaccompanied children** (also called unaccompanied minors) are children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.

**Orphans** are children, both of whose parents are known to be dead. In some countries, however, a child who has lost one parent is called an orphan.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**N.B. ‘Separated children’** can be used as a generic term to cover both separated and unaccompanied children.

**A child-headed household** is one in which a child or children (typically an older sibling), assumes the primary responsibility for the day to day running of the household, providing and caring for those within the household. [[2]](#footnote-2)

**A refugee** is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.

**An internally displaced person, or IDP**, is someone who has been forced to flee their home but never cross an international border. These individuals seek safety anywhere they can find it—in nearby towns, schools, settlements, internal camps, even forests and fields. IDPs, which include people displaced by internal strife and natural disasters, are the largest group that UNHCR assists. Unlike refugees, IDPs are not protected by international law or eligible to receive many types of aid because they are legally under the protection of their own government.

**A stateless person** is someone who is not a citizen of any country. Citizenship is the legal bond between a government and an individual, and allows for certain political, economic, social and other rights of the individual, as well as the responsibilities of both government and citizen. A person can become stateless due to a variety of reasons, including sovereign, legal, technical or administrative decisions or oversights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights underlines that “Everyone has the right to a nationality.”

1. Above definitions are taken from the *Interagency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated children, 2004* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Save the Children Child Protection and Care Related Definitions, 2007 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)