

A Defining Moment: Bringing children living in humanitarian contexts into the global fold

The upcoming **Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children (EVAC)** in Bogotá, Colombia, from November 7-8, 2024, presents a landmark opportunity for governments and global stakeholders to commit to protecting children from all forms of violence. But this opportunity will only be realised if children in *all* contexts are considered. As countries prepare to accelerate progress toward Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 16.2—ending violence against children— **it is crucial that the conference meaningfully addresses the protection of children in humanitarian and displacement settings.**

HUMANITARIAN CRISES: WHERE CHILDHOOD IS MOST AT RISK

Humanitarian crises driven by conflict, fragility, climate change, and forced displacement are becoming more frequent, complex, and prolonged, exposing children to significant risks of exploitation, abuse, and neglect. **One in five children worldwide lives in or is fleeing conflict¹**, with millions more uprooted by climate disasters or forced to migrate through dangerous routes. Children affected by humanitarian crises face unusually high risks of exploitation, abuse, neglect, and violence—including trafficking, child labour, recruitment into armed forces and groups, family separation, and sexual and gender-based violence. Gender-based violence (GBV) also significantly escalates in these situations; 12 of the 20 countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage are in severe humanitarian crises².

Without both specialised and broad-based protection efforts, including support for local initiatives, these children face **devastating, long-term impacts** on their social, emotional, physical, mental, and psychological well-being. Their future opportunities are also severely jeopardised.

WHY THE EVAC CONFERENCE MUST INCLUDE A FOCUS ON HUMANITARIAN AND DISPLACEMENT SETTINGS

Though among the most vulnerable people on earth, children living in humanitarian and displacement settings are often invisible or sidelined in global fora, including ministerial conferences. Even the 2030 Agenda itself makes light reference to humanitarian contexts. To ensure real progress, the **EVAC Conference must place children affected by crises at the very centre of discussions, commitments, and outcomes.** The conference

¹ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/children-live-world-increasingly-hostile-their-rights>

² <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-and-humanitarian-contexts/>

provides a unique opportunity for governments to make **concrete commitments** to address this urgent need by focusing on the following:

1. **Conference outcomes integrate a humanitarian focus:** Governments must prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children in fragile and humanitarian contexts by strengthening preparedness, supporting caregivers, and reinforcing child protection systems, in line with the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. The Bogota Agenda and specific pledges must prioritise children in crises, ensuring they are not left behind in global efforts to end violence.
2. **Bring children’s perspectives and humanitarian realities to the forefront and ensuring they are part of the solution:** Member States and other participants must insist throughout the conference sessions that children attending are listened to, not just heard, and that Member States consistently bring in the humanitarian lens to all interventions across Sessions and Events.
3. **Address the root cause of crises:** Governments must tackle the root causes of crises—such as poverty, inequality, political instability, climate change, hunger and lack of access to basic services. This is essential to ending current crises and preventing new ones, ensuring the well-being and protection of children everywhere.

A CALL TO ACTION: PROTECTING CHILDREN IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

Protecting children in humanitarian and displacement settings is **both a moral obligation and an investment in the future**. Children are rights holders and the future of their communities and societies. Ensuring they are safe, supported, and empowered is their inherent right and a pathway to building more resilient societies.

Governments, civil society, the private sector, and donors must work together to create environments where every child—no matter where they live—can thrive in a safe environment free from violence. The EVAC Ministerial Conference provides a vital opportunity to make concrete commitments that address the specific vulnerabilities faced by children in humanitarian crises.

Placing children affected by humanitarian crises at the heart of the EVAC agenda, will create opportunities to reverse the devastating impacts on their well-being and to interrupt cycles of poverty, violence, and instability. Failing to meaningfully address violence against children in these settings, will undermine the global commitment to end violence for all children, as outlined in SDG 16.2.

More information the humanitarian and displacement related events at the EVAC Ministerial Conference can be found [here](#).