At the beginning of this year, UNHCR and UNICEF agreed on an ambitious two-year Blueprint for Joint Action. The Blueprint represents a commitment to accelerate joint efforts under a transformational agenda in line with the Global Compact on Refugees, focused on promoting and protecting the rights of refugee children and the communities that host them through supporting their inclusion and access to services.

An expanded, more effective and predictable response is needed now more than ever, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic when business as usual is not an option. This reality underpins the transformative actions of the Blueprint that bridge the humanitarian and development divide, in an effort to ensure that no refugee or vulnerable host community child is left behind.

Building on our strong and established global partnership, the Blueprint focuses on a first group of 11 countries that are home to 2.24 million refugee children – over 20 per cent of the global total – with a view to global scale-up of proven approaches to reach all refugee children worldwide from early 2022.

Blueprint focus countries: Bangladesh, Cameroon, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya¹, Lebanon, Libya and Rwanda.

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¹ Kenya will join the initiative by late 2020.
The reality for refugee children in Blueprint countries

- Nearly 1.5m refugee children in Blueprint countries do not have access to primary or secondary education, either because of COVID-related school closures or because they are out of school.
- Over 1.1 million refugee children are at risk of violence.
- 112,000 refugee children require individualised support due to family separation, abuse, violence, exploitation or neglect.
- Over half a million refugee children are in need of psychosocial and mental health support.
- Less than half of the refugee children born in the last year have birth certificates.
- Over 3 million refugees do not have sufficient access to basic water services or safely managed sanitation at the SDG target level of service.

The proposition

In the first group of Blueprint countries, the objective is to:

- **Support refugee hosting governments to include refugee children and families in national systems, policies, plans and service delivery systems where feasible;**

- **Accelerate access to education, WASH and Child Protection services** for refugee and host community children at risk of being left behind; and

- **Deliver a measurably more effective and efficient joint response** for refugee children, their families and host communities.

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2 "Basic" is a level of service defined by the WHO/UNICEF JMP which the current WASH service levels do not yet reach.
The results

Joint work is underway to ensure that in Blueprint countries, by 2021, we:

- Reach up to 10 million refugee children, their families and host communities with essential services such as education, clean water, sanitation and hygiene.\(^3\)
- Achieve a significant increase in provision of clean water, safely managed sanitation services, and hand hygiene services for refugees and host communities.
- Secure access to hand hygiene for more than 1.2 million refugees within the first year through the Hand Hygiene for All initiative.
- Ensure access to learning for nearly 1.8 million refugee and host community children and youth.
- Double the number of children, adolescents and caregivers accessing child protection services and increase by threefold the number of staff trained on key issues.
- Effect an 88 per cent increase in refugee births registered.
- Strengthen national data systems to ensure refugee children are no longer invisible, but are counted and can be included in plans and budgets.

Efficiency and effectiveness

By modelling an innovative, effective and efficient collaboration, the Blueprint also directly contributes to UN reform.

At country level through strategic use of complementary expertise and human resources; the use of joint premises; consolidating common processes such as assessments of partners; and aligned procurement and distribution pipelines the initiative can, by 2021, secure cost efficiencies to the UN system. Further, globally agreed data sharing and analysis practices will add value and generate efficiencies in support of country level programming and facilitate the provision of timely, effective protection and assistance.

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\(^3\) This figure, which represents an increase of 68 per cent in service delivery to children in Blueprint focus countries, is an aggregate figure based on targets per delivery of each service rather than per child.
In water, sanitation and hygiene

Our vision is that all refugee children and their families will have access to safe and clean drinking water, and adequate sanitation in accordance with agreed standards.

Currently, the WASH needs of refugees are not usually included in national plans and budgets. Refugees living in camps and settlements often rely on parallel systems that are inadequate, costly and unsustainable. In poor urban settings, refugees are often excluded from access to safe and affordable water and sanitation services.

In Blueprint countries, by 2021, we will:

- Increase access to clean water and safely managed sanitation services for refugee and host community populations by two thirds, reaching nearly 2 million people with clean water and nearly 1.8 million people with sanitation services.
- Double the number of people in refugee and host community populations accessing basic hygiene services, to nearly 2.8 million.
- Reach over 1.2 million people in refugee and host community populations with critical WASH supplies (including hygiene items) and services.
Our acceleration strategies are:

- **Where applicable, engage in policy dialogue** with governments, providing technical support for transformative change through inclusion of refugees in national WASH plans and budgets, national monitoring and reporting systems, and hygiene programmes.
- **Apply programme approaches that deliver equitable results which are financially, environmentally and economically sustainable**, moving away from short-term, emergency interventions. This includes investing in durable institutional arrangements and infrastructure solutions and using pro-poor financing and affordable tariff models.
- **Leverage the efforts and resources of a wider group of stakeholders** through the “Hand Hygiene for All” initiative: a multi-stakeholder platform bringing key individuals and groups together to address the barriers to accessing hand hygiene services.
- **Promote affordable innovations** in partnership with the private sector, including low-cost hand hygiene products and services.
- **Foster social cohesion** through inclusive approaches, such as delivery of WASH services and innovations that serve both refugee and host communities equally, noting that WASH coverage is often equally poor among host communities.
- **Collect data on service levels and service provider performance related to refugee populations living outside of camps and settlements, generating evidence** for their inclusion in SDG monitoring programmes.
- **Create efficiencies and cost savings** by further extending the use of shared supply chains, logistics vendors, warehouses and transportation systems.
In education

Our vision is that all refugee and returnee children of pre-primary, primary and secondary school age will have access to accredited quality education focusing on inclusion into national systems; and refugee youth will have significantly better access to tertiary education or skills and vocational training opportunities.

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has exponentially increased the risk of exclusion from education for refugee children. Up to 10 million more girls could be out of secondary school globally when the pandemic is over: Malala Fund’s analysis of UNHCR data suggests that half of all refugee girls enrolled in secondary school will not set foot in a classroom after the pandemic. For countries with a net enrolment rate of less than 10 per cent, such as Ethiopia and Pakistan, this could be true for all girls.

In many cases, refugees are missing out on efforts to continue learning during school closures: they are half as likely as the general population to have an internet-enabled phone, and 29 per cent of refugees have no phone at all. The challenge of ensuring continued access to learning for refugee children (through technology or otherwise) in a way that facilitates and encourages re-entry into school, is crucial.

A South Sudanese boy smiles as he shows what he has learned at a primary school in Jewi refugee camp, Ethiopia. © UNHCR/Eduardo Soteras Jalil
In Blueprint countries, by 2021, we will:

- Reach over 800,000 children and youth with individual education learning materials through nationally supported systems in pre-primary, primary and secondary levels – a 64 per cent increase.

- Restore access to education to a level that exceeds pre-COVID rates by 17 per cent, and ensure that close to 1 million children in communities affected by displacement are enrolled in pre-primary, primary and secondary education.

- Expand access to tertiary level technical and vocational education by 20 per cent.

Our acceleration strategies are:

- Engage at a planning and policy level on inclusion of refugees in national education systems whilst leveraging development financing to address gaps.

- Build on and help strengthen national systems in our response to the current COVID-19 crisis, ensuring that digital learning and content align to national systems and curricula and that they facilitate and encourage (re-)entry of refugee children into formal education.

- Expand the reach of GIGA\(^4\) to include refugees in all relevant Blueprint countries and fast-track efforts to improve connectivity and access to meaningful, quality education through digital approaches.

- Look for efficiencies in the education sector through strategic use of each agency’s complementary expertise, adapting as appropriate to each context.

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\(^4\) GIGA is UNICEF’s global initiative to connect every school to the internet, and every young person to information, opportunity and choice by 2023.
In child protection

Our vision is that all refugee children will have access to birth registration services, child protection systems and child friendly refugee protection; and all refugee women, girls and boys affected by gender-based violence (GBV) will be supported with appropriate services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a steep increase in violence against children associated with anxiety, financial stress and movement restrictions. The decimation of livelihoods has also put millions more children at risk of exploitation and abuse as a result of negative coping mechanisms such as child labour and child marriage, with refugee children being amongst the most vulnerable. In addition, low rates of birth registration in refugee populations put children at risk of statelessness and can limit their access to basic services such as education and further increase their exposure to exploitation and abuse.

In Blueprint countries, by 2021, we will:

- Reach an additional 100,000 refugee and host community children with community-based child protection and mental health and psychosocial support services.
- Close the gap in birth registration by registering 36,000 new-born refugees, an increase of 88 per cent to address the low birth registration rates in some Blueprint countries.
- Increase to 75 per cent the proportion of vulnerable children who receive timely, individual care and support through Best Interests Procedures from 50 per cent.
- Ensure that GBV mitigation measures are systematically integrated into every refugee response plan.
- Strengthen the capacity of over 3,000 government and civil society partners to provide child protection and psychosocial support to children and families.
Our acceleration strategies are:

- **Strengthen national child protection systems and child-friendly refugee protection** to better respond to the needs of refugee and host community children, building on strong joint experience to date.

- **Build on and further develop national capacity**, supporting efforts to systematically plan, develop, and support a social service workforce that is inclusive of refugees and provides individual Best Interests Procedures for children at risk.

- **Accelerate provision of GBV prevention, mitigation and response** programmes for refugee and host communities.

- **Invest in universal and accessible birth registration systems** and address the specific barriers that refugee children face in accessing birth registration.

- **Scale up community based, local mechanisms to protect children** and provide mental health and psycho-social support for refugee and host community children and their families.

- **Strengthen the delivery of protection services to vulnerable children** by improved data sharing and system interoperability between UNHCR and UNICEF.