



UNICEF – UNHCR Blueprint for Joint Action: A Fair Deal for Refugee Children

Frequently Asked Questions

November 2020

What is the background and rationale for the Blueprint for Joint Action?

There are more than 10 million children living as refugees or asylum seekers and every single one of them has dreams for the future. These children may be among the most vulnerable in the world, but they have a wealth of potential.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put refugee children and their families at even greater risk and introduced new threats to their survival and wellbeing. Securing equitable access to essential services like water, sanitation and hygiene, protection and education has taken on a new urgency in the current crisis and the economic aftermath that will follow.

Our vision is that all refugee children deserve a fair chance in life: they should be safe from physical harm and exploitation, be living in clean and hygienic environments, be able to learn, and be included in national systems that provide them with the same life opportunities as other children.

The rationale for change

More than three-quarters of refugees are displaced for decades, served by under-resourced humanitarian systems designed for the short term, and thus not sustainable in the long-term. They are often unable to access national education, water, sanitation and

protection services on par with host communities and are left behind. The Blueprint is focused on three key areas where UNHCR and UNICEF have the mandate and expertise to make the change: education, wash and child protection.

Currently 3.7 million refugee children are out of school. Every child in a refugee settlement shares a shower with an average of 22 other people. Less than half of refugee households have a toilet, and for each useable water tap there are over 350 users. Refugee children globally are amongst the most vulnerable to violence and exploitation.

The impact of a humanitarian response aimed for the short term – a ‘sticking plaster’ response - is eroded by the lack of a long-term vision. Meanwhile, the development system is calibrated to focus on nationals, and often does not extend to refugees and host communities in remote areas hosting refugees. For too long refugee-hosting states and the international community alike have missed the opportunity to leverage development capacities to build sustainable solutions for these communities.

It’s clear that a third way is needed to fully integrate refugee children into nationally led programmes and the development system that supports them. It will require new approaches and ideas, new alliances and ways of working, risk taking and trial-and error.

How is the Blueprint different?

UNICEF and UNHCR have started a joint initiative to meet the challenge of refugee inclusion and leaving no child behind.

The Blueprint represents a refreshed commitment to accelerate joint efforts to promote and protect the rights of refugee children and the communities that host them, and to support their inclusion and access to nationally led services. Through the Blueprint, we are delivering on the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019, in support of the Global Compact on Refugees.

By working with host governments from the outset, we will concretize the nexus approach. This is not business as usual, UNHCR and UNICEF are innovating and seeking transformative solutions – at scale.

By modelling an innovative, effective and efficient collaboration, the Blueprint also directly contributes to the UN reform. We are expecting to be able to realize substantive cost savings as a result of our close collaboration and commitment to improved efficiency.

The Blueprint is more far-reaching than other partnerships agreements. The Blueprint offers a holistic approach which encompasses education, WASH and child protection, as well as joint fundraising, joint advocacy and a joint approach to data collection and analysis.

Why a 'Blueprint' approach and not a joint UN programme?

The Blueprint is integrated in our daily work and is therefore not set up as a standalone 'programme', but rather a strengthened partnership approach to fundamentally enhance and streamline our collaboration globally. The initial phase of our new partnership spans 11 countries (Bangladesh, Cameroon, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, and Rwanda), which are home to 2.24 million refugee children, 20% of the world's total.

This first phase will form a 'Blueprint' for our onward global partnership from 2022, where we will extend

our reach and new approach to 100% of the world's refugee children, in all countries where we operate.

How does the Blueprint link with the ambition of the Global Compact on Refugees and pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum?

In 2018, Member States adopted the Global Refugee Compact to transform the way the world responds to refugee situations and to improve the lives of both refugees and host communities. Inclusion and solidarity are the key principles to achieve that change. At the Global Refugee Forum, UNICEF committed to accelerate its commitment to the inclusion of refugee children and their families in national systems. The Blueprint puts UNICEF's commitment to support and promote refugee inclusion into action and supports UNHCR's efforts to contribute to the realization of the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees in partnership.

What is the scope?

The Blueprint focuses on asylum-seeking, refugee and returnee children, their families and communities that host them.

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

- Accelerate access to education, protection and WASH services for refugee and host community children at risk of being left behind;
- Deliver a measurably more effective and efficient joint response for refugee and returnee children, their families and host communities; and
- Support refugee hosting governments to include refugee children and families in national systems, policies, plans and service delivery systems where feasible.

Integral to our approach is the effort to ensure that national data systems include refugee children, so that every child is counted, and no child is invisible.

Why now, in the midst of a global crisis?

As the world grapples with COVID-19, there has never been a more important time to support countries with inclusive emergency responses and sustainable early recovery. Millions of children around the world have been driven from their homes and across borders by conflict, violence and deprivation. With the global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the needs of refugee children and their families – including equitable access to essential services like water, sanitation and hygiene, protection and education – have become even more acute. Meeting those needs is key to securing both their wellbeing now and future potential.

Through the Blueprint, UNICEF and UNHCR have committed to urgent action, to place refugee children and their families, as well as the communities that host them, at the forefront of our preparedness, prevention and response to COVID-19. Our work in implementation of the Blueprint provides an important platform in this evolving context, both in the immediate term and by ensuring that national responses to the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic are inclusive of all children, regardless of their status.

How were the focus countries chosen?

The Blueprint countries are home to 2.24 million refugee children, 20% of the world's total. The learning and proven approaches developed in this first cohort will inform our onward global partnership from 2022, where we will extend our reach and new approach to 100% of the world's refugee children, in all countries where we operate.

Countries for the first cohort were selected by UNHCR and UNICEF in consultation with their country and regional-level leadership, with the aim of learning from a wide variation of contexts in terms of geography, economic stability, size of the refugee caseload, and types of challenges faced.

How are governments involved?

Governments are our most key and critical partners. In focus countries we are working with national leadership, relevant ministries and sub-national authorities to develop country-specific solutions,

which meet the unique needs of their country, and build national capacity.

At the same time, UN member states are key allies in bringing their influence and bilateral official development assistance to bear in support of this joint action, in line with the commitment to more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing, set out in the Global Compact on Refugees, recognizing that a sustainable solution to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation.

How does the Blueprint complement sovereign national policies on refugee inclusion?

Recognizing that national governments are the primary duty bearers responsible for ensuring that the rights of all children on their territory regardless of status, the Blueprint focuses on building and supporting the capacity of national governments to provide equitable services to all children.

In several countries, including some Blueprint countries, there are sensitivities around the inclusion of refugees in national plans, budgets, and systems.

The Blueprint approach is context-specific, recognizing the need to programme according to national context, population size and complexity. Joint advocacy for refugee inclusion forms an important part of the Blueprint, and advocacy approaches are tailored to country-specific political contexts, and needs.

How is the work for refugee children divided between UNHCR and UNICEF?

The UNICEF and UNHCR Blueprint is our joint commitment to ground-truth the pledges we made at the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019.

The Blueprint is not about our agencies “handing over” one or more sectors to one or the other; rather, it is about ensuring we work collaboratively and more predictably to ensure refugee and returnee children are better supported.

The Blueprint leverages the complementary strengths of UNHCR and UNICEF, to achieve results that could

not be achieved by one agency alone. For example, by combining UNICEF's expertise in social policy, public financing for children, child rights and systems strengthening with UNHCR's expertise in refugee protection and frontline delivery of tailored services for refugees, we can help build sustainably funded, strengthened national service delivery systems that are accessible to and appropriate for the most vulnerable children, including refugee children and their families.

UNICEF will continue to focus on both humanitarian and development work whereas UNHCR remains primarily a humanitarian organization. UNHCR is however committed to working closely with development actors such as UNICEF in order to ensure that refugees are included in national systems, enjoy their full rights and can live up to their potential through long-term solutions.

What will this mean for International NGOs, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) who have existing partnership agreements with UNICEF/UNHCR?

NGOs/CSOs play an important role in supporting national system strengthening and service provision in many contexts, under the coordination of national governments. They are therefore important partners for the Blueprint. UNHCR and UNICEF count on the continued support of our NGOs/CSO partners at country level to help us realize the ambitious Blueprint agenda. We look forward to exploring how the capacities, voices and expertise of our NGO / CSO partners can contribute to the Blueprint ambition.

Can other UN agencies get involved in this partnership?

Yes. This joint action between UNICEF and UNHCR follows directly on from UNICEF's pledges at the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019. But we welcome interest from all UN agencies, particularly at country level. We need the support of the whole UNCT in Blueprint countries to achieve our goals and hope to draw on others' ideas, expertise, innovations and influence. We hope you share our goal of including refugee children and their families in all new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. After the inception phase

we will be very open to building a wider partnership around common areas of focus.

How much does this cost, and where will the resources come from?

While there will be cost efficiency gains from a more collaborative, efficient partnership, significant additional resources are required to support the transformation envisaged during the Blueprint in the short term.

To achieve the goals of the Blueprint, sufficient funding is required to enable the full range of planned activities in Education, Wash and Child Protection for both agencies, and governments, in the Blueprint countries. Within this broader envelope, USD 244 million is required specifically for UNICEF and UNHCR to achieve the ambitious 18-month agenda.

We seek support from donors who want to partner with us to achieve this kind of transformative change for refugees and host communities, and as part of this we are encouraging all potential resource partners to help ensure that our appeals are fully funded and that gaps in resourcing do not curtail our ability to deliver.

At the same time we call on all development partners to bring their influence and financing to bear to support and promote refugee inclusion in national systems, and to strengthen those systems, in refugee-hosting countries – particularly in places that are economically depressed or marginalized in sub-national budgeting and financing processes.

Both UNICEF and UNHCR are allocating existing funding in support of the Blueprint, fully funding the inception and planning phases, as well as several global level workstreams.

Is it realistic to try to achieve transformative results in under two years?

The Blueprint phase covers a two-year period, but our intention is to work towards a transformational goal of overall inclusion of refugee children and their families in regional frameworks and national development plans, budgets and data systems. This will take time, and there will likely be many incremental steps along the way, such as strengthening national systems, supporting governments to secure development or national financing, and maintaining complementary systems in the interim.

Setting out ambitious, costed plans to accelerate results for refugee and host community children in each context has been the first step. The next step is to realize this ambition and seek the support of the international community in doing so.

How will you capture learning to inform the partnership beyond 2022?

A real-time evaluation of the partnership is being conducted as the Blueprint rolls out- to capture best practice from the focus countries and to enable proactive learning during the Blueprint phase, which will then inform global scale-up from 2022 onwards.