

BIGMUN 2026

ECOSOC 3: Commission on the status of Women (CSW)

# Research Report

Topic 2: Emphasising the need for better security for women and children in refugee settlements.



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## Introduction:

There has been the greatest rise in displaced populations worldwide. Among all displaced individuals, refugee children and women remain the most disadvantaged. Limited access to education, health care and social service significantly increases their insecurity and vulnerability. According to UNICEF, 2024 marked a record high, with the most number of children living in conflict zones and being forcibly displaced. UNHCR further reports a global spike in gender-based violence, with conflict based sexual violence increased by 50% in one year. Refugee Children, especially unaccompanied minors, experience higher risks of physical and sexual violence in camps.

By the end of 2024, 48.8 million children were displaced due to conflict and violence<sup>1</sup>. The children frequently experience family separation, trafficking, abuse and exploitation. While women deal with poor facilities and face a higher risk of exploitation and gender-based violence due to weak protection systems.

## Key Terms:

**Women peace and security (WPS):** A UN policy agenda that has been adopted globally which focuses on ensuring women have equal opportunities and can fully participate in peace and security processes. As well as that their protection is guaranteed in conflict and humanitarian settings<sup>2 3</sup>.

**Gender-based violence (GBV):** It is an umbrella term for violence directed at someone because of their gender, or violence that unequally affects a particular gender. It can include physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm. Examples of these types of harms include, but are not

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<sup>1</sup> “Child Displacement and Refugees - UNICEF DATA.” *UNICEF DATA*, 3 July 2025, [data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/displacement/#:~:text=The%20total%20number%20of%20children,%20the%20Congo%20and%20Afghanistan.](https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/displacement/#:~:text=The%20total%20number%20of%20children,%20the%20Congo%20and%20Afghanistan.)

<sup>2</sup> “Gender, Women, Peace and Security | Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.” *Un.org*, 2019, [dppa.un.org/en/women-peace-and-security](https://dppa.un.org/en/women-peace-and-security).

<sup>3</sup> “What Is the Women, Peace and Security Agenda? | UN Women – Headquarters.” *UN Women – Headquarters*, 20 Oct. 2025, [www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2025/10/what-is-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda](https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2025/10/what-is-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda).

limited to, domestic violence, emotional abuse and economic deprivation.

**Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV):** It is more explicitly the harm done to a person due to gender norms and involving sexual components. Examples of these harms include rape, sexual harassment, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, trafficking for sexual purposes.

**Camp security:** Refers to the protection system which keeps everyone in the refugee camp safe. It involved crowd management, early warning system, safe access to food distribution, and protection officers.

### Background Information:

Conflicts of all kinds force individuals to flee their homeland and seek refuge in other countries. The main response is to place displaced populations in refugee camps. However, with millions of refugees arriving in these camps, more than ever before. But there are millions of refugees pouring into the camps more than ever<sup>4</sup>. The facilities have become severely overcrowded and poorly maintained. This results in living conditions deteriorating rapidly, exposing the most vulnerable populations, specifically women and children, to danger of all kinds.

Children are disproportionately affected. UNICEF and UNHCR state that 41% of all forcibly displaced people are children, and by the end of 2024, there have been over 50 million children displaced globally<sup>5</sup>. These children are most likely to lack access to basic needs like food security, clean water and education, making them highly vulnerable to poverty, suffering from ill health, exploitation and violence.

Women face equally severe risks. They are frequently exposed to insecurity, exploitation and

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<sup>4</sup> “Figures at a Glance | UNHCR US.” *UNHCR US*, 2024, [www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr/overview/figures-glance](http://www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr/overview/figures-glance).

<sup>5</sup> “*ACCELERATING INCLUSION of REFUGEE CHILDREN.*” *UNHCR & UNICEF*.

[www.unicef.org/media/142081/file/Accelerating%20inclusion%20of%20refugee%20children.pdf?utm\\_source=copilot.com](http://www.unicef.org/media/142081/file/Accelerating%20inclusion%20of%20refugee%20children.pdf?utm_source=copilot.com)

gender-based violence. According to UN Women, 1 in 5 refugee women experience sexual violence<sup>6</sup>, reflecting the urgent need for stronger protection mechanisms<sup>7</sup>.

Compounding these challenges are recent humanitarian funding cuts from the UN and NGOs. Rising operational costs and shifting priorities among member states have led to reduced support for beneficiaries. This has had a direct and damaging impact on programs designed to protect women and children, who are often not prioritized in funding decisions. CARE international global funding level for the refugee response stood at only 22 percent of the requested 10 billion US dollars for 2023<sup>8</sup>. This leaves vital protection services severely under-resourced.

These conditions create an urgent call for action. There needs to be a strengthened protection of women and children in refugee settlements and to ensure sustainable funding so that their safety, dignity and basic needs are not compromised.

### Major Countries and Organisations Involved:

**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)-** A UN agency which works on ensuring the settlement locations are safe and secure for emergency situations. They utilize Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) framework in order to involve women and children efficiently into the decision-making processes about safety. They have a protection Refugee Children framework which indicates that children face violence, abuse, trafficking, recruitment by armed groups. However, in order to combat it they provide child-friendly spaces, access to education and psychological support<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, they have developed a handbook explaining what it requires for protecting women in camps. This includes protecting women from Sexual and gender-based

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<sup>6</sup> “Statement: Centring Women’s and Girls’ Rights and Priorities in Humanitarian Response | UN Women – Headquarters.” *UN Women – Headquarters*, 20 June 2023, [www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/statement/2023/06/statement-centring-womens-and-girls-rights-and-priorities-in-humanitarian-response](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/statement/2023/06/statement-centring-womens-and-girls-rights-and-priorities-in-humanitarian-response).

<sup>7</sup> “Statement: Centring Women’s and Girls’ Rights and Priorities in Humanitarian Response | UN Women – Headquarters.” *UN Women – Headquarters*, 20 June 2023, [www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/statement/2023/06/statement-centring-womens-and-girls-rights-and-priorities-in-humanitarian-response](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/statement/2023/06/statement-centring-womens-and-girls-rights-and-priorities-in-humanitarian-response).

<sup>8</sup> “World Refugee Day: As Crises Swell, Funding for Millions of Displaced People Has Overwhelmingly Failed to Materialize - CARE.” *CARE*, CARE.org, 6 Feb. 2025, [www.care.org/media-and-press/world-refugee-day-as-crises-swell-funding-for-millions-of-displaced-people-has-overwhelmingly-failed-to-materialize/](http://www.care.org/media-and-press/world-refugee-day-as-crises-swell-funding-for-millions-of-displaced-people-has-overwhelmingly-failed-to-materialize/).

<sup>9</sup> PROTECTING REFUGEE CHILDREN. 2023. [www.unhcr.org/us/sites/en-us/files/2023-03/background-guide-challenge-2-protecting-refugee-children\\_0.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/us/sites/en-us/files/2023-03/background-guide-challenge-2-protecting-refugee-children_0.pdf)

violence (SGBV), Safe access to water, latrine and distribution points, secure shelter design, and trained protection staff<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, for the protection of overall women and children they conduct regular safety audits in the refugee camps. And removing barriers that would prevent women and children from accessing services and infrastructure. Furthermore they have the UNHCR protection mandate that provides the legal foundation to give them authority in protecting refugees. As well as creating tangible solutions that make a lasting impact.

**United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)**- UN agency which primarily focuses on children and supports women in regards to protection, education, health, nutrition and water. They have contributed through providing humanitarian supplies in refugee camps. Creating safe and friendly space for the children's leisure. Also supported by suggesting for governments to set in place systems, policies and laws to support the needs of the refugee children and make them more included into the community<sup>11</sup>.

**UN-WOMEN**- The main role is advocacy, research, policy and supporting women's leadership. It has helped advance the Women, Peace and Security (WSP) agenda. As well as pushing humanitarian actors such as UNHCR to include women in decision-making, provide safe space, ensure access to service and address the SGBV risks. They highlight global data about violence against displaced women and girls to show that they face gender based violence to a great extent.

This in turn creates urgency among the governments to act upon the crime and make stronger protection systems within the refugee camps. Moreover, supports women in leadership regarding camp governance. In terms of women-led protection committees, women mediators, women who shape security protocols<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> UNHCR Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls Provisional Release for Consultation Purposes. 2006.

<sup>11</sup> "Migrant and Displaced Children." *Unicef.org*, 2018, [www.unicef.org/child-protection/migrant-displaced-children#:~:text=We%20provide%20life%2Dsaving%20humanitarian,displaced%20children%2C%20helping%20them%20thrive](http://www.unicef.org/child-protection/migrant-displaced-children#:~:text=We%20provide%20life%2Dsaving%20humanitarian,displaced%20children%2C%20helping%20them%20thrive).

<sup>12</sup> Nations, United. "Women, Peace, and Security | United Nations." *United Nations*, 2025, [www.un.org/en/peace-and-security/page/women-peace-and-security](http://www.un.org/en/peace-and-security/page/women-peace-and-security).

**The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**- A UN agency focused on sexual and reproductive health. During conflict it is an essential protection factor for women and children. As it provides safety, dignity and protection in the camps. They make and run a programme called Women and Girls safe spaces (WGSS). This allows protection from physical protection and emotional support. Moreover, they have skill building, psychological support and confidential reporting for violence. It gives opportunities for women to leave their children in a safe environment while they receive service. This creates a space for women to seek help and protect them from SGBV. They also support by protecting them from gender-based violence through advocacy for their rights and safety<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, they provide Sexual and Reproductive Health Services (SRH) in the camps. This includes safe childbirth, family planning, clinical management of rape, support for pregnant refugees and protection of adolescent girls<sup>14</sup>.

## Relevant UN resolutions

### [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1208 \(1998\):](#)

UN resolution focusing on the importance of refugees being protected and that the humanitarian character of refugee camps be preserved. The Security Council recognised the experience African countries had in dealing with refugees and refugee camps. The recognition of insecurity in some camps due to the presence of armed groups who did not qualify for international protection, differences within the refugee population, crime and the flow of weapons. It emphasised the need to assist African countries to provide security for refugees, maintain the humanitarian character of refugee camps and protect vulnerable groups such as women, children and the elderly.

### [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1265 \(1999\)](#)

Resolution which focused on the vulnerability of women, children refugees and displaced populations to violence within armed conflicts and stressed on the importance of protection of these categories of populations.

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<sup>13</sup> “We Must Stand by Women and Girls in Crises in 2025.” *United Nations Population Fund*, 2025, [www.unfpa.org/press/we-must-stand-women-and-girls-crises-2025](http://www.unfpa.org/press/we-must-stand-women-and-girls-crises-2025).

<sup>14</sup> “Policy for Reproductive Rights and Sexual and Reproductive Health.” *United Nations Population Fund*, May 2008, [www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/policy-reproductive-rights-and-sexual-and-reproductive-health](http://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/policy-reproductive-rights-and-sexual-and-reproductive-health).

### [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 \(2000\)](#)

Adopted by the UN security council on the 31st of October of 2000 and stressed the need to require parties in a conflict to prevent violations of women's rights, to support women's participation in peace negotiations and in post-conflict reconstruction, and to protect women and girls from wartime sexual violence.

### [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1820 \(2008\)](#)

UN resolution focusing on and condemning the use of sexual violence as a tool of war, and declares that “*rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide*”. The adoption of the resolution marked the first time that the UN explicitly linked sexual violence as a tactic of war with women, peace, and security issues.

### [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1889 \(2009\)](#)

UN resolution focusing on the protection and participation aspects of 1325 and explicitly calls for respecting the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps, ensuring protection for women and girls against all forms of violence and secure humanitarian access.

## [Previous attempts to solve the issue](#)

### **UNHCR Measures against Exploitation and Abuse:**

- Victim Care Team, consultations with victims on tackling sexual harassment, UNHCR's global network of 400 peer advisors which also provides critical support in tackling sexual harassment in operations, particularly in preventing and mitigating tensions and grievances, supporting colleagues, and promoting better workplaces.

### **UN Special Representative Statements on Child Protection:**

- A call for comprehensive, child-centred responses that uphold the dignity and rights of every child. The EU underscores the importance of removing legal and structural barriers to essential services such as education, healthcare, housing and social protection to ensure that age, gender and disability-responsive child protection systems are inclusive and trauma-informed.

**Humanitarian Advocacy and Monitoring:**

- Manual created by the UN on humanitarian advocacy and monitoring (multiple chapters, updated frequently)

**Possible Solutions**

1. Creation of an international police or military organisation tasked with monitoring and protecting refugee populations
2. International cooperation and negotiations between alliances and states focusing on the reception and protection of refugee populations, in particular those concentrating an important amount of women and children
3. Cooperation initiatives emphasising on the security and protection of refugee populations, especially
4. those located in vulnerable areas or areas with current geopolitical and military tensions.



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