



Children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable



While multiple factors create these barriers, a major cause is how data about children with disabilities is collected and mapped. Data collection processes often exclude or under represent the views of children with disabilities and their caretakers.¹ ✕



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According to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, “persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”²

BROAD CATEGORIES OF DISABILITY INCLUDE: communication disorders; learning disabilities; sensory disabilities; developmental disabilities; mental health disorders; intellectual disabilities; and physical disabilities.³

240

MILLION CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

7

MILLION CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES ARE IMPACTED ANNUALLY.

UNICEF has projected there are about **240 million children with disabilities** throughout the world.⁴ Within humanitarian contexts, approximately **7 million children with disabilities are impacted annually.** However, these estimates are likely low. Stigma and cultural contexts that influence how different populations define and view disability often leads to underreporting.⁵

✕ It is important to maintain an awareness of the significant diversity within the population of children with disabilities. An intersectionality of factors (age, gender, ethnicity, race, impairment type, level, and type of support needs) make children with disabilities an incredibly heterogeneous group.



IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER DISABILITY AND THE AFFECTED POPULATION WITHIN A CONTEXT. CONTEXTUAL FACTORS MAY INCLUDE:

Awareness of and attitudes towards disability, including any stigma, in a certain place and the policies/frameworks that protect children with disabilities.

Extent to which pre-existing services in a location are inclusive of and accessible to children with disabilities.

Presence of organisations of persons with disabilities—as well as their experience level and resources—in a particular place.⁶

WHAT PROTECTION CHALLENGES IMPACT CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES?⁷

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES ARE:

- Less likely to have their births registered (additionally, in contrast to children without disabilities, the likelihood that they will be registered does not increase as they age).
- More likely to experience disruptions in education.⁸
- More likely to experience increased economic hardship for their families,⁹ including fewer job opportunities, lower income, and higher debt.¹⁰
- More than twice as likely as their peers without disabilities to experience violence.
- A third more likely than children without disabilities to experience severe physical punishment at home.
- At a higher risk of experiencing online sexual abuse and exploitation, including involvement in child sexual abuse material.
- At greater risk of violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect when they live in residential care institutions.
- At risk of social isolation, violence, abuse, and death due to superstition and cultural practices (in some cultural contexts).



Photo credit: © UNICEF_UN0616157_Catu

1 United Nations Children's Fund, Humanity & Inclusion, and the International Disability Alliance, *Including Everyone: Strengthening the Collection and Use of Data About Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Situations* (New York: UNICEF, 2019).

2 United Nations, *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (New York: UN, 2006).

3 Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies, "Supporting Young Children with Disabilities in Humanitarian Settings" (webinar) (June 28, 2022).

4 United Nations Children's Fund, "Nearly 240 Million Children With Disabilities Around the World, UNICEF's Most Comprehensive Statistical Analysis Finds," <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/nearly-240-million-children-disabilities-around-world-unicefs-most-comprehensive> (November 9, 2021).

5 United Nations Children's Fund, *Children with Disabilities in Situations of Armed Conflict* (UNICEF, 2018).

6 IASC Task Team on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, *Inclusion of Persons With Disabilities in Humanitarian Action* (IASC, 2019).

7 Where not otherwise footnoted, the information presented under this heading is adapted/excerpted from United Nations Children's Fund, 'UNICEF Fact Sheet: Children with Disabilities,' New York, 2022, add hyperlink pp. 41-44.

8 Human Rights Watch, "UN: High Risk in Conflicts for Children with Disabilities," <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/02/02/un-high-risk-conflicts-children-disabilities>, February 2, 2022.

9 American Academy for Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine, "Children with Disabilities in Armed Conflicts: A Call for Humanitarian Actions for Children," <http://www.aacpdm.org/events/current-news/children-with-disabilities-in-armed-conflicts-call-for-humanitarian-actions-for-children>, accessed July 20, 2022.

10 United Nations Children's Fund, *Children With Disabilities in Situations of Armed Conflict* (UNICEF, 2018).