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Section 1.1 Focus on unaccompanied minors

Deteriorating socio-economic conditions, conflicts and humanitarian funding shortfalls increase the risk of displaced children suffering direct or extreme forms of structural violence, including forced military recruitment. The journey from the country of origin to the country of asylum is typically a traumatic experience, with a heightened risk that children may be subjected to physical and sexual violence, forced labour and exploitation by smuggling networks along the route.38

It is estimated that, in certain cases, as many as one-third of displaced children have developed trauma and a persistent fear for their safety.39

The physical and mental health of children in the context of forced displacement remained a key concern of the international community in 2022. A progress report on the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health, published by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 2022, showed a critical regression of childhood well-being and highlighted that children's prospects of having a healthy and productive life declined sharply.40 Displaced children who often live in overcrowded conditions face the risk of malnutrition and viral diseases, while access to health services may be limited. Their education is often disrupted, which may have an adverse long-term impact on their personal and social development41,42

Multistakeholder cooperation has focused on providing psychological support, creating or improving school infrastructure, including teacher training, and facilitating family reunification in the context of displacement. In March 2022, the UN Human Rights Council held a panel discussion on the rights of the child and family reunification. The Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants observed how separation from families may have detrimental effects on children's mental and physical health and called national authorities in host countries to integrate unaccompanied migrant children into national child protection systems without discrimination.43 The High Commissioner for Human Rights presented the findings of his report on the risks children may face, especially in the context of migration, and offered a series of recommendations to prevent separation and better support family reunification.44

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