

1. Please provide information on the main challenges that your country is facing in protecting the rights of the child in humanitarian situations.

Protecting the rights of the child in contexts of fragility and crisis provides challenges on various levels. Practical challenges arise due to instability and insecurity constraints as well as unforeseen crises. Security issues and lack of access can hamper the efforts to deliver measures successfully and sustainably. The difficulty of finding appropriate experts and staff, as well as partners for implementation is high. Especially the accessibility to at-risk groups like children is sometimes hindered by security concerns.

Conceptually, it continues to be challenging to systematically mainstream inclusive, child-sensitive approaches in relevant programs. It is crucial that a child-rights approach is integrated into all humanitarian projects, not just those targeting young people. Therefore, there is still a need for sensitization efforts and capacity building within programs to fully implement a child rights-based approach and ensure child protection.

Furthermore, the lack of reliable, disaggregated data is a great challenge, as it impedes development programs to specifically target those who are especially vulnerable or marginalized.

2. Please indicate the current status of your country's legal framework with regard to the protection of the rights of the child in humanitarian situations. Please include information on legal provisions (including Constitutional provisions) which explicitly deal with the protection of children and their rights in humanitarian situations with regard to their physical and mental health, protection from exploitation, and education.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has the status of a federal law in Germany and applies without restrictions since the withdrawal of Germany's declaration on the Convention in 2010. The Convention contains various provisions on children's rights, inter alia the right to be protected from violence (Article 19 CRC is the core article in this context), the right to the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24 CRC), the right to be protected from various types of exploitation (Articles 32-36 CRC) and the right to education (Article 28 CRC).

The protection of children in armed conflicts is covered by Article 38 CRC and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. According to Article 2 of the Optional Protocol Germany ensures that persons under the age of 18 years are not compulsorily recruited into the armed forces. The Federal Republic of Germany declared when depositing the ratification document according to Article 3 (2) of the Protocol that the commencement of voluntary service as a soldier in the armed forces is permissible from the age of 17 onwards. Persons under the age of 18 are recruited into the armed forces solely for the purpose of commencing military training. Participation in hostilities is ruled out. The protection of under-18 volunteers on their decision to enter the armed forces is ensured inter alia by the need to obtain the consent of their legal guardian and the indispensable requirement that they present an identification card or passport as reliable proof of their age.

3. Please provide information on national policies, strategies and plans of action relating to the rights of children in humanitarian situations.

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has recently published the new Action Plan "Agents of Change: Children's and Youth Rights in German Development

Cooperation" (2017), which sets out the position of German development policy with regard to the rights of children and youth and aims to further expand its efforts worldwide. The Action Plan is closely linked to the goals agreed upon by the international community in the 2030. Other sectoral or instrument-specific strategies address the rights of children in crisis situations by placing special emphasis on the commitment to focus on the most vulnerable – oftentimes babies, children and their mothers – and leave no one behind as well as by focusing on measures aiming to ensure basic child rights such as the right to education or food. The Ministry's strategy for its dedicated crisis response instrument for transitional aid, for example, delineates measures such as education infrastructure rehabilitation, nutrition and food support for babies, children and mothers suffering from various stages of malnutrition and places special focus on people on the move, a large portion of which are children.

4. Please provide examples of good practices undertaken by your Government to protect the rights of the child in humanitarian situations, both within your State and internationally

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is undertaking various successful projects to protect the rights of the child in situations of fragility, crisis and violent conflict in the realm of development cooperation. As part of its Special Initiative "Tackling the root causes of displacement, reintegrating refugees", BMZ has initiated a number of projects which address the special vulnerabilities and needs of children and youth in settings of forced displacement and migration. In Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, various projects implemented by GIZ support the access to education for refugee children and children from host communities, thus contributing to the prevention of a "lost generation". The regional project "Sports and Development" in the MENA region uses sports as a tool to improve the situation of children and youth in refugee camps and to contribute to psychosocial support and violence prevention. In cooperation with UNICEF, BMZ is supporting the education and protection of children in Iraq, by building schools, providing learning materials, training teachers and providing psychosocial support for over 20.000 children. In Lebanon, BMZ is one of the largest supporters to the RACE-Program of the Lebanese government, implemented in cooperation with UNICEF and aiming at providing education to all children, Lebanese and Syrian, in the country. In Yemen, Germany is aiming to improve the health situation of children and women and preventing under- and malnutrition by cooperating with KfW and the World Food Programme, so far reaching approximately 760.000 people. A new project to be initiated with UNICEF in Sudan this year aims to directly improve the adherence to child rights by building facilities for child protection officers close to the borders, training officials and providing legal support to vulnerable children and youth.

At the World Humanitarian Summit, Germany joined the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action which calls for age- and gender-sensitive humanitarian programming and a systematic inclusion of youth in all phases of humanitarian action. As a response to this commitment, and in order to systematically address age-specific (protection) needs in its humanitarian assistance, Germany is currently developing a Gender-Age-Disability marker for its humanitarian project funding.

At operational level, Germany funds several projects which particularly address the specific protection needs of children and young people in humanitarian emergencies. In the Lake Chad region, those projects comprise i.a. the establishment of child protection monitoring frameworks, mobile SGBV support units, psychosocial support for children and young people, Child Friendly Spaces, social and economic reintegration programs (targeting children associated with armed forces or armed groups) and the identification of unaccompanied and separated minors.

5. Please specifically indicate how your Government involves children in decision-making processes relating to humanitarian situations – both in terms of planning and implementation.

The ideas, creativity and optimism of children and youth are crucial for building a more peaceful and sustainable world. German development cooperation therefore considers involving children and young people in decision-making processes – including in humanitarian situations - as crucial. Throughout the programmes, we aim to establish participatory processes that guarantee their participation and empowerment and promote cooperation between state and civil society structures.

In Colombia, BMZ is supporting a project empowering former child victims of the conflict and enabling their participation in peacebuilding measures. As part of the civil peace service, Germany is supporting various projects, e.g. in Lebanon, Palestine, Rwanda or Afghanistan, that specifically work with young people and support their involvement in relevant processes. The empowerment and participation of children and youth has proven to be crucial for ensuring that their voices, needs and capacities are taken into account and they have the opportunity to fulfill their potential as agents of change.