1. **UNHCR’s mandate**
   1. UNHCR has been entrusted with the mandate to provide international protection to refugees and, together with Governments, to seek permanent solutions for the problem of refugees. Paragraph 8(a) of the [UNHCR Statute](http://www.unhcr.org/protection/basic/3b66c39e1/statute-office-united-nations-high-commissioner-refugees.html) and the Preamble of the [1951 Convention](http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10) confer responsibility upon UNHCR to supervise the application of international conventions for the protection of refugees. The High Commissioner has a mandate with respect to refugees globally, regardless of the location of refugees, whether in emergency or protracted asylum-seeker and refugee situations, as well as in mixed movements involving asylum-seekers and refugees. The activities which the High Commissioner is required to carry out for refugees are set out both in the Statute [in particular paras. 1, 8, 9, and 10] and in subsequent [GA and ECOSOC resolutions](http://www.unhcr.org/united-nations-general-assembly.html).
   2. The United Nations General Assembly and, to some extent, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), have developed the [mandate](http://www.refworld.org/docid/5268c9474.html) further to include returnees, stateless persons and, under certain conditions, internally displaced persons.
2. **Humanitarian coordination**
   1. The UNHCR Statute places the High Commissioner and his Office at the centre of the international refugee response system. The High Commissioner's responsibilities, combined with his advocacy and supervisory role, also mean that he must retain an oversight and monitoring role, within the UN response, over the delivery of services to refugees. UNHCR's refugee response, as set out in the [Refugee Coordination Model](https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/38222/Refugee+Coordination+Model/19221f6e-d83c-409b-bc5e-13027df655ef) (and, for mixed situations, the [Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations](https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/38222/Joint+UNHCR+and+OCHA%2C+Note+on+Mixed+Situations.+Coordination+in+Practice/b8864a77-a91d-4a11-a951-d6bc41669e99)), is an integral yet distinct element in the overall humanitarian coordination architecture.
3. **Data on children**
   1. In 2016, [children constituted 51% of the total refugee population globally](http://www.unhcr.org/5943e8a34), up from 41% in 2009. Children constitute an estimated 31% of the total world population.
   2. Children and adolescent girls and boys constitute a significant proportion of populations on the move across international borders globally:

* Unaccompanied or separated children – mainly Afghans and Syrians – lodged some 75,000 asylum applications in 70 countries in 2016, although this figure is assumed to be an underestimate;
* In the [Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA)](http://www.unhcr.org/children-on-the-run.html), girls and boys, often unaccompanied, are on the move seeking protection from violence. While no detailed statistics of asylum applications by UASC exist for the NTCA, in 2016, over 64,000 UASC were apprehended at the border of the US and Mexico;
* In the Middle East, more than 2.4 million boys and girls have been forced to flee Syria; and
* More than 1 million children have been forced to flee the continued insecurity in South Sudan – children constitute 62% of the refugees from South Sudan.

1. **Protection of children**
   1. Given the high proportion of children among displaced populations and the fact that boys and girls face unique protection risks, responding to their specific needs is a key priority for UNHCR. UNHCR works with children and their families, communities, States and other partners to reduce risks, strengthen child protection systems, and create a protective environment for children. UNHCR’s overall approach to the protection of children is described in its [Framework for the Protection of Children](http://www.unhcr.org/protection/children/50f6cf0b9/framework-protection-children.html). UNHCR’s Framework for the Protection of Children is underpinned by its global strategies on [education](http://www.unhcr.org/protection/operations/5149ba349/unhcr-education-strategy-2012-2016.html), [detention](http://www.refworld.org/docid/536b564d4.html), [sexual and gender-based violence](http://www.refworld.org/docid/4e01ffeb2.html) and a [global plan to end statelessness](http://www.refworld.org/docid/545b47d64.html). In terms of case management and the continuum of care for individual children, UNHCR follows the [Guidelines on Determining the Best Interests of the Child](http://www.unhcr.org/4566b16b2.pdf). More recently, UNHCR has taken a strategic approach combining work in several policy and assistance areas to strengthen the protection of children on the move, as described in the points below.
2. **UNHCR is working with states to strengthen protection & solutions for children on the move as a follow up to the** [**New York Declaration**](http://undocs.org/A/RES/71/1)**, ensuring that children’s rights and voices are at the heart of the Global Compacts**
   1. UNHCR is working with NGOs, States and international organizationson the [Initiative on Child Rights in the Global Compacts](http://www.childrenonthemove.org/) to ensure that child rights are at the heart of the two global compacts. This includes consultations with UNHCR’s Youth Advisory Council (currently being established together with the Women’s Refugee Commission and other partners involved in the organization of the [Global Refugee Youth Consultations](http://www.refworld.org/docid/57ff50c94.html)) on the elements to be included in the Programme of Action for the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees.
   2. The protection of refugee children will be an important component in the Global Compact on Refugees.The outcomes and recommendations of the [2016 High Commissioner’s Protection Dialogue](http://www.unhcr.org/high-commissioners-dialogue-on-protection-challenges-2016.html) will be fully integrated into the development of the comprehensive refugee response and the Global Compact on Refugees to be adopted in 2018. Good practices, identified gaps and proposed corrective actions will be documented and form part of the comprehensive refugee response.
3. **Working with Governments to strengthen policies and practices in relation to unaccompanied and separated children**
   1. UNHCR has worked with a number of States to strengthen policies and practice for separated and unaccompanied children on the move. These include:
      1. The European Union, where UNHCR is working with Governments and civil society on a [“Roadmap to Strengthened Policies and Practices for UASC”](http://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2017/7/59634ac74/europe-new-roadmap-improve-situation-unaccompanied-separated-refugee-migrant.html) following extensive consultations, including with unaccompanied children themselves, in 2016;
      2. In the [Middle-East](http://www.alnap.org/resource/21362), UNHCR works with countries like Jordan to strengthen protection of refugee children with inclusion in their national systems, enabling their access not only to health care and education but also to formalised alternative care, an important safeguard for UASC;
      3. Also in the EU, where UNHCR continues to work with States on the recommendations made in “[Safe and Sound](http://www.refworld.org/docid/5423da264.html)” (2014), with specific roundtables with Governments in Northern Europe; and
      4. Work with the Government of Mexico to strengthen Best Interests Procedures for UASC as part of the enactment of the Child Rights Law and Regulations, which create a National Child Protection System with a new Federal Office for the Protection of Children’s Rights.
4. **Strengthening protection and assistance, including education, for separated and unaccompanied children in first countries of asylum**
   1. From 2014-2016, UNHCR implemented a regional child protection initiative (“[Live, Learn & Play Safe](http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=56ced0d64)”) in Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen - the first child protection initiative developed by UNHCR for regional, rather than national, implementation. The initiative targeted, in particular, children on the move across the Horn of Africa to address their protection, assistance and solutions needs. It also aimed to better inform and protect children against dangerous and potentially life threatening actions including onward movement and including trafficking. The Regional Initiative demonstrated that the strengthening of child protection systems in different locations has had a positive impact on the well-being of individual children and strengthened the overall child protection response.
   2. It also highlighted that [education](http://www.unhcr.org/missing-out-state-of-education-for-the-worlds-refugees.html) is an essential component of protection and assistance for children on the move. Children on the move should have access to quality education within a few months of their arrival.Quality education plays a protective and transformative role, and can bring hope to children, youth and their families on the move. Education can provide knowledge and competencies to participate fully in communities and society and can also provide protective networks of peers and mentors.
5. **Participation of children**
   1. A key objective of UNHCR’s [Age, Gender and Diversity Policy](http://www.unhcr.org/protection/women/543b922a6/age-gender-diversity-policy.html) is to ensure that all children and youth of concern enjoy their rights on an equal footing, and are able to participate fully in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of members of their families and communities.
   2. The 1,500 participating youth in the UNHCR and Women’s Refugee Commission run [Global Refugee Youth Consultations](http://www.refworld.org/docid/57ff50c94.html) –emphasized the importance they gave to meaningfully engaging in decision-making processes and having opportunities to develop their leadership potential. [Participatory assessments](http://www.unhcr.org/protection/children/50f6d1259/listen-learn-participatory-assessment-children-adolescents.html) conducted with youth also reflected the same emphasis on the need to expand opportunities for youth to participate and be represented in community structures.