

Until Every Child is Safe: Childhood Should Not End With Displacement

World Refugee Day | 20 June 2026

"To those who endure the wait, the shade will come."

This proverb belongs to the [Sahrawi](#) people of North Africa that have spent over [50 years](#) in exile, with [over 180,000](#) living in refugee camps today, still waiting on a future. They are not alone. Every minute, [20 people](#) leave everything behind to escape war, persecution, or terror. Every year on 20 June, the world marks World Refugee Day, honouring the courage of people forced to flee their homes in search of safety. This year's theme, "[Until Everyone is Safe,](#)" marks [75 years](#) since the [1951 Refugee Convention](#) made a promise: that people forced to flee have the right to seek safety. That promise is still being tested. At the end of 2025, of the [117.8 million](#) forcibly displaced people worldwide, an estimated [45 million, 38%](#), were children under 18. In Eastern and Southern Africa, the scale of need is severe. By May 2026, the region hosted: [25.1 million](#) forcibly displaced people, [6.3](#) million refugees and asylum seekers and [17.1](#) million internally displaced people. Yet even in displacement, children remain children. They laugh at jokes, ask curious questions, and imagine impossible futures. They deserve not only to survive, but to thrive.

Every Child Deserves Well-being

[2.4 million children](#) were born as refugees, between 2018 and 2025, an average of [305,000](#) children were born as refugees every year. Each carries an innate need to feel safe, seen, and valued. When children are displaced, losses extend far beyond homes and familiar surroundings. Routines disappear. Friendships are cut short. Fear and grief become part of daily life. While food, shelter, and healthcare remain urgent priorities, emotional well-being cannot be an afterthought. Play, [storytelling](#), music, and [creative expression](#) help children regain a sense of normalcy and agency. Even in the middle of a crisis, keeping children in school safeguards their future. It gives them safety, structure, and a space to heal and dream again. Well-being must be incorporated into educational design for children with refugee status.

Every Child Deserves to Be in School

The school-aged refugee population was estimated to stand at [12.4 million](#) in 2025. Of those children, [46%](#) are estimated to be out of school – that means approximately [5.7](#) million refugee children are missing out on an education. For girls and children with disabilities, the barriers are often the sharpest. Cultural stigma around [menstruation](#) contributes directly to school absenteeism among displaced girls, with many lacking access to menstrual products, safe sanitation facilities, and basic reproductive health education, pushing them out of classrooms and out of sight. At Standout Foundation, our SRHR education work addresses this directly, because a girl who cannot manage her period safely cannot fully participate in her own education. Supporting children's well-being means recognising that well-being itself is not only physical. It is emotional and social.

Every Child Deserves the Chance to Develop Their Potential

With nearly [20 million](#) people forcibly displaced or stateless as of April 2026, according to the latest UNHCR West and Central Africa Regional Trends Report., displacement numbers are high in the region. In West and Central Africa alone, an estimated [61%](#) of refugee children aged 6 to 17 are out of school but displacement does not erase a child's gifts. Within that number are future teachers, innovators, artists, and community leaders, children whose potential will never show up in an enrollment chart if we do not act now. When a child tells a story, [paints](#) a picture, or learns to make a [film](#), they are not passing time. Refugee communities are, in UNHCR's own words, "[highly resilient and very creative](#)," and the most transformative thing we can do is allow children to take ownership of that creativity. At Standout Foundation, this conviction sits at the heart of everything we do. Our digital skills programming gives children tools to build with. Our life skills work gives them the confidence to lead. Our teacher training ensures that the adults around them are equipped to nurture young minds, not just manage them.

How can you invest today?

This World Refugee Day, solidarity is not a feeling. It is a choice, and it is overdue. These children are more than the hardships they have endured. They possess strengths, talents, and agency. As [UNHCR's 2025 Refugee Education Report](#) makes clear, without sufficient support for humanitarian and development aid, we will be putting hard-won progress for these children at direct risk. Their future is at stake without adequate support to provide children with access to quality learning, teacher training, and the digital tools they need to build futures. Advocate loudly for funding that reaches girls, children with disabilities, and communities that displacement has pushed furthest from view. Through collaborative effort, we can invest in a child today. With scholarships to keep them learning. Training that equips teachers to protect their well-being and a commitment to amplifying their voices.

Our commitment

At Standout Foundation, we believe: A refugee child deserves more than survival. They deserve well-being. They deserve dignity. They deserve the chance to be a child.

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