

QUADRUPLE THREAT

HOW URBAN FRAGILITY, CLIMATE CHANGE, GENDER INEQUALITY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION ARE DRIVING CHILDREN DEEPER INTO EXTREME VULNERABILITY



Humanity is on the move. Driven from their rural homes by conflict and climate change, people are heading to the cities in a mass migration that is changing the landscape of poverty.

Today the world's most vulnerable children aren't just in remote villages or active war zones. Increasingly, they are hidden in places you won't hear about on the news. Forgotten places where no one wants to live. On the outskirts of the city. Along drainage channels and train lines. Next to waste dumps. In the margins.

Children are being pushed deeper into poverty and further out of sight, by the compounding effects of urban fragility, conflict, climate change, social exclusion, and inequality.

And they are more vulnerable than ever.

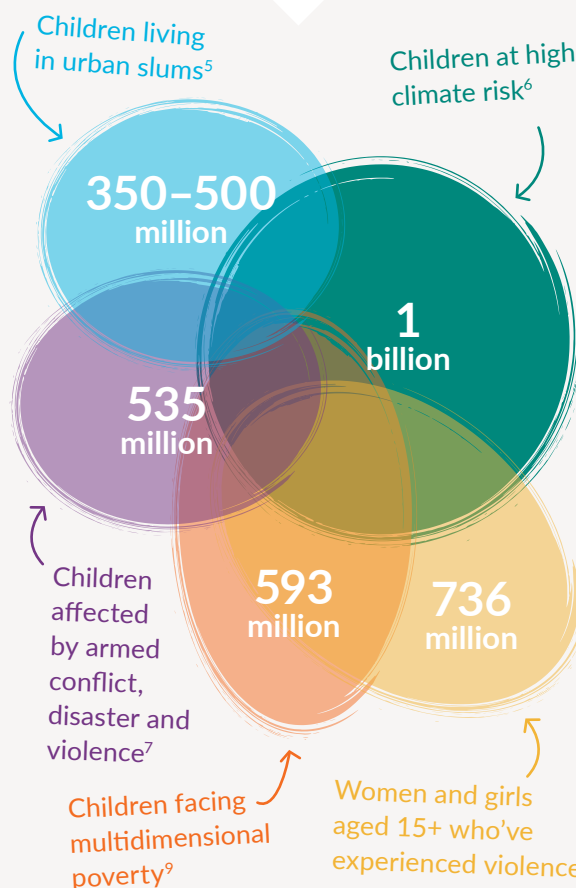
- **1 in 6 children** are growing up in slums.¹
- **1 in 4 children** live in countries affected by armed conflict, disaster and violence.²
- **1 in 2 children** live countries at extremely high risk of climate change and environmental hazards.³
- **56% of children with disabilities** in urban areas* live in moderate multidimensional poverty, which is higher than children without disability.⁴
*among countries with available data

URBANISATION

Rapid and unregulated urbanisation is making cities more dangerous. As people stream in, informal settlements and slums are growing. Social tensions, inequality, and lack of social networks and support lead to increasing crime and violence.

FRAGILITY

The World Bank estimates that by 2030, up to two-thirds of the world's extreme poor could be living in fragile contexts. These are places characterised by conflict, where children suffer from extreme levels of violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. Conflicts currently generate 80% of all humanitarian needs.



CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate refugees are fleeing to cities, where they're met with more climate-related shocks, including water scarcity, pollution, and extreme heat. Nearly 58% of cities are at high risk of at least one of six main natural hazards – cyclones, floods, droughts, earthquakes, landslides, and volcanic eruptions.

GENDER INEQUALITY & SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The way people are impacted by climate change and fragility in urban contexts is not equal. Some are disproportionately impacted due to deep-rooted inequality and exclusion linked to gender, age, disability, poverty, migrant status, ethnicity, religion, language, health status, or a combination thereof.

JAMILA'S STORY, AFGHANISTAN

* Names changed and face hidden for protection

“For several days now we haven't had any flour to bake bread. I managed to collect these carrots because the children were crying and asking for food.”

– JAMILA'S FATHER ZAKI

“We are starving. All of us. We survive by picking food from the garbage. That's why it's better to sell one of my daughters so that my other four children can survive.”

– JAMILA'S MOTHER MASSOUMA

Since 2005, nearly 33,000 children in Afghanistan have been killed or injured because of conflict. 3.5 million people have been forced out of their homes by conflict and climate change. And now children are facing deadly hunger, made worse by natural disasters, the impact of COVID-19, and the Ukraine crisis. 13,700 children have starved to death in Afghanistan since January 2022. Six out of 10 have stunted development due to hunger – impacting their bodies, brains, and immune systems for life.

Three-year-old Jamila* lives on the outskirts of Herat City. Thousands shelter here. All of them desperate. All of them looking for a way to survive. It's dangerous for children.

Jamila's family set up camp here before she was born. Her home is a one-room mud hut her father built, just big enough for the family of seven to squeeze into. It's freezing cold in winter and stifling hot in summer. It's always dark. Jamila was born here, on the dirt floor.

Like so many others, drought drove Jamila's family from their rural home to the city. Rain stopped falling. Wells ran dry or turned salty. Rivers dried up. They left their farm and everything they knew because there wasn't any water.

Things aren't much better where they live now. Water systems in the city are broken – unreliable at best. And water pipes don't run to the settlement where Jamila lives. No one has safe water to drink.

No one has enough to eat.

Today, Jamila's parents couldn't fight off hunger anymore. She's eating carrots her father found in the garbage. It's enough to stop the pain in her stomach, for now. Jamila doesn't know this could be the last time she eats with her family. Her parents faced an impossible choice: sell a child to survive; or die from hunger. There are always strangers lurking around the camp, waiting to pick up a child for cheap. It was a quick deal. No paperwork. No numbers exchanged. Just – here's where we live. Come and get her. Jamila is too young to fear her fate. A fate worse than hunger.

World Vision is on the ground in hunger hotspots like Herat, providing life-saving assistance, protecting children like Jamila from harm, tackling malnutrition, providing clean water, and helping families improve their livelihoods. Our [Global Hunger Response](#) is targeting 25 countries where children are facing starvation and other dangers hunger brings.

HOW WE'RE MEETING CHILDREN IN THE MARGINS

URBAN PROGRAMMING

Globally, 13% of World Vision programmes are in urban or peri-urban areas. Through our [Citywide Self-Sustaining Model](#), we're working to transform the lives of the most vulnerable children in urban areas, including in fragile cities. We're engaging communities and partners to promote safe, healthy, inclusive cities where children can thrive.

CLIMATE ACTION

World Vision has implemented 1,100 projects on environmental sustainability and climate action, including climate-smart agriculture, [Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration](#), community-based disaster risk management, integrated water resource management, and energy-efficient technologies.

FRAGILE CONTEXTS

As part of World Vision's global strategy, we've made it a priority to reach the most vulnerable children and families living in the most difficult and dangerous places. Our [Fragile Context Programme Approach](#) brings together emergency response, long-term development, and peacebuilding to achieve lasting, transformational change for children.

GENDER EQUALITY & SOCIAL INCLUSION

We recently launched a new approach to gender equality and social inclusion. It responds to the barriers children face due to gender, [disability](#), and other social factors. The focus is on challenging the root causes of vulnerability, such as restrictive socio-cultural norms, unequal power relations, and disempowering systems.

Endnotes

1. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (n.d.) [Urban policy](#), UNICEF, accessed 8 December 2022.
2. UNICEF (2016) [Nearly a quarter of the world's children live in conflict or disaster-stricken countries](#), UNICEF, accessed 8 December 2022.
3. UNICEF (2021) [The climate crisis is a child rights crisis](#), UNICEF, accessed 8 December 2022.
4. UNICEF (2022) [Seen, counted, included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities](#), UNICEF, accessed 8 December 2022.
5. UNICEF (n.d.) [Urban policy](#).
6. UNICEF (2021) [The climate crisis is a child rights crisis](#).
7. UNICEF (2016) [Nearly a quarter of the world's children live in conflict or disaster-stricken countries](#).
8. UN Women (2021) [Facts and figures: Ending violence against women](#), UNICEF, accessed 8 December 2022.
9. Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) (2022) [Global MPI 2022](#), OPHI, accessed 8 December 2022.