

2020 Annual Meeting Opening Remarks with Ms. Gillian Triggs, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection (UNHCR)

As Ms. Gillian Triggs welcomed participants to the 2020 Annual Meeting, she highlighted that in today's environment, respecting the centrality of protection and promoting the protection of all persons affected by conflict, displacement and natural disasters, including children, is more relevant and urgent than ever. Yet, we are living through one of the most challenging times for children's rights, where protection norms and standards are being undermined, economies are struggling and education systems have been disrupted on an unprecedented scale.

To guide this year's Annual Meeting on Infectious Disease Outbreaks and the Protection of Children, Ms. Triggs left participants with **five key messages** to consider:

Key Message 1:

What started as a public health emergency has snowballed into a formidable test for global development and for the prospects of today's young generation. Children are not the face of this pandemic, but they risk being among its biggest victims

Key Message 2:

The pandemic has led to the greatest disruption of education systems in history, affecting at its height, 1.6 billion learners, including millions of young refugees and internally displaced persons.

Key Message 3:

Falling into poverty due to COVID-19: An estimated 42 – 66 million children could fall into extreme poverty as a result of the crisis this year, adding to the estimated 386 million children already in extreme poverty in 2019. Worsening socio-economic situations also expose children to a variety of forms of exploitation and abuse, such as child labour, child trafficking, and child marriage.

Key Message 4:

Children are increasingly exposed to violence and exploitation and have difficulty to access protection services. Confinement to home has led to increased violence, including sexual and gender-based violence against children and limited their options to seek assistance.

Key Message 5:

It is possible to turn the tide with a concerted effort of governments, civil society and affected children, their families and communities themselves.

In light of the CPMS, and our collective experience in responding to COVID-19 key priorities to protect children, Ms. Triggs highlighted a number of **key priorities for protecting children**, including collective advocacy and support to authorities for respect of human rights and child rights, technical support to authorities to implement COVID-19 measures to mitigate the risks to children, partnerships for protection, collaboration with other sectors, adequate/predicable funding and quality child protection programming.

“At this historical moment, collaboration and coherent joint action among protection actors, and partnerships between protection actors and other sectors is more crucial than ever. This Alliance meeting provides a unique opportunity to strengthen our collective vision, resolve and capacity to protect children. UNHCR remains committed to supporting this effort in the days and months to come.”