

Dear FAAE committee members,

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the International Rescue Committee. It was an honor to be able to address you directly.

In our testimony, IRC called for Canada to prioritize a **comprehensive agenda for children**, particularly those living in **humanitarian contexts**. In the 40 crisis-affected countries where the IRC works, **COVID-19 did not create the burden, stress and trauma** of living in uncertainty faced by children and their families; **it only deepened it**. COVID-19 has sharpened our awareness that children in these settings need action and attention **now** to ensure they have healthy and safe childhoods that prepare them for bright futures.

To follow-up on questions posed by the FAAE and provide additional details, I have put together some points below as well as a few key resources at the end. **We would be happy to discuss in further detail as the needs of children** – from their earliest years through adolescence – are complex and require nuanced interventions.

Q&A Follow-up:

- As noted by the committee, IRC and Sesame Workshop are implementing [Ahlan Simsim](#), which provides several prime examples of how we have shifted to reach children during the pandemic.
 - Since 2018, Ahlan Simsim has reached over **215,000 children and caregivers, and aims to reach 1.5 million** through IRC's programs and in partnership with national systems led by ministries and civil society organizations.-
 - See a [clip](#) and the attached resource on how it has adapted to COVID.
- The **costs of inaction are high** for children. Learning loss is estimated by the World Bank to reach **10 trillion USD**. The economic impact of school closures does not fall to students alone as income losses extend through families and households, with disproportionate weight falling on women, who doing more than **75 percent of total hours of unpaid work** globally. We remain concerned about the millions of children, particularly girls, who are unlikely to return to school after the COVID crisis subsides.
- This does not include the **immeasurable weight of layered risk from the "shadow pandemic" of violence affecting women and children on top of crisis contexts**, which already received limited commitment to prioritize and fund protective responses. Resulting in back sliding on progress attained by the MDGs and SDGs over the last 30 years, resulting poorer nutrition; extreme poverty; social isolation; mental health consequences and drastic increases to the risk of violence.

Canada, as a leader in the humanitarian sector, can and should **strengthen inclusion of holistic services for children and families in both standing humanitarian crises and crises deepened by the impact of COVID**. We reiterate our calls for an increase to ODA and humanitarian assistance, as well as maximizing policy leadership through opportunities like the "Together for Learning" Campaign, G7 meetings, Global Partnership for Education replenishment, and others where support for children in crisis is not yet getting the attention necessary.

We acknowledge the Committee's concerns about Canadians struggling at home. But we call your attention to the significant evidence that demonstrates strong economies in low income countries are an engine for the global economy. COVID provides a prime example of a threat elsewhere having a reverberation around the world.

Once again, IRC commends the House of Commons on holding this meeting and its commitment to strong, actionable solutions for children. We stand ready to partner and support its future direction.

Resources

- [Still Unprotected: Humanitarian Funding for Child Protection](#), The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and Save the Children
- Child Protection COVID situation monitoring, April – July 2020, IRC - attached
- [Beyond the Lost Year: Five Ways to Improve Education for the Most Vulnerable in 2021](#), IRC
- Ahlan Simsim's COVID-19 Response Update in May 2020, IRC – attached
- [Supporting Adolescents and their families in Emergencies](#), IRC
- [Girl Shine](#), IRC
- [Analysis of international aid levels for early childhood services](#), Moving Minds Alliance
- [Simulating the Potential Impacts of the COVID-19 School Closures on Schooling and Learning Outcomes](#): A set of Global Estimates, World Bank
- [COVID-19 has revealed the cost of disrupted education and child care inequality](#), Atlantic Council
- Call to Action: Technical scans of the March, May and June COVID Global Humanitarian Response Plans, University of Virginia and Sesame Workshop – attached

Best

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