



© UNICEF/UN012792/GEORGIEV

CHILDREN ON THE MOVE

INTRODUCTION

As of 2017, there were 30 million children on the move. Children on the move can be international or internal migrant children, internally displaced or asylum-seeking or refugee children, or children affected by migration such as those left in a community of origin by their caretakers who have

migrated. These children make up one in eight of the world's 258 million international migrants.¹

Of the 30 million children living in forced displacement, 12 million are child refugees and child asylum seekers and 17 million are children living in internal

¹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2017; UNICEF analysis based on World Population Prospects 2018



Of the 30 million children living in forced displacement, 12 million are child refugees and child asylum seekers and 17 million are children living in internal displacement due to conflict and violence.

displacement due to conflict and violence.² Millions of children are migrating inside their own countries, and others are left behind in communities of origin by migrating parents. These children are labelled as refugees, internally displaced, ‘children left behind’ or migrants; but first and foremost, they are children — no matter where they come from, who they are, and without exception, as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Yet children are often treated according to a label first, and their status as a child second. They have unequal access to essential services such as health, nutrition, education, and social and child protection; they need protection from abuse, exploitation and trafficking; they are detained

for immigration purposes; and face discrimination and abuse – and where migration management systems are in place, the fate of many children is decided without considering their best interests.

The benefits of addressing these issues are compelling. Evidence from multiple contexts clearly demonstrates that children on the move – and the generations that follow them – live better lives and contribute to society when they have opportunities to learn and develop wherever they are. When children thrive, both the countries they leave behind and those they settle in benefit from their skills, creativity and diverse perspectives.

DIAGNOSTIC

The following survey will help you determine if you should consider including children on the move³ as part of your situation analysis. If at least one of these questions is answered with “yes”, children on the move should be included in your situation analysis.

- In my country, there are children on the move.
- My country struggles to provide inclusive and accessible education, health, social and child protection services to ALL children, including children on the move.
- In my country, children on the move are not treated equally – they have different access to essential services, such as education, health, and social and child protection.
- In my country, families on the move are separated for extended periods of time before children can be reunified with their families.
- In my country, children on the move are experiencing xenophobia, discrimination and/or marginalization.
- In my country, children seeking refugee status or migrating are held in immigration detention, and my country is not implementing alternatives to detention.
- In my country, children on the move are at risk of being trafficked. There are insufficient means to identify, protect and care for child victims of trafficking.

² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2017; UNICEF analysis based on World Population Prospects 2018

³ Unless otherwise specified, ‘children on the move’ encompasses all of the following categories of children affected by migration and displacement:

- Children who are migrating within their own country or across borders;
- Children migrating on their own or with their caretakers;
- Children forcibly displaced within their own country and across borders;
- Children whether they move in an undocumented or documented manner, including those whose movement involved smuggling or trafficking networks;
- Children affected by migration, such as children ‘left behind’ by their parents who migrated for work.



KEY QUESTIONS

Depending on what criteria apply to your context, consider addressing the following questions to

conduct a rigorous assessment of children on the move in the situation analysis:

DATA

1	What is the approximate/estimated number of children on the move in my country, per category (refugee/asylum-seeking/internally displaced person/migrant/left behind/returnees), by gender and age? (Avoid double counting in mixed migration scenarios where applicable.)
2	In terms of migration dynamics , what is the ratio of internal migration versus international migration in my country? What is the ratio of forced displacement versus other forms of migration?
3	If the government and/or other agencies (e.g., United Nations, non-governmental organizations) are collecting administrative data, which categories of children on the move are already systematically counted , and which types are not counted? What is the frequency of this data collection? Which migration/displacement data systems (of partner organizations or of other parts of the government) exist that could be used to fill gaps? Which kind of migration data is available that can complement Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) data?
4	Is information from my country on children on the move exchanged and aligned, where needed, with information by other countries of the region , with neighbouring country offices or the regional office? Is my country office contributing data into a regional data collection mechanism (UNICEF, inter-agency, etc.)?
5	To what extent does the government use data and evidence to inform its policies and actions?

OVERALL SITUATION

1	What are the root causes that prompt children to move in my country and region?
2	What are the relevant migration dynamics identified in my country and within neighbouring countries that impact my country? What are the latest geopolitical developments within and outside of the country that impact children on the move?
3	Taking into account national, international and geopolitical developments, what is the likely forecast over the five-year country programme document period (continuation of protracted displacement, likely new displacement, ongoing/increase/decrease in migration, potential influence of demographic and economic developments, climatic change and urbanization)?

ACCESSING SERVICES & RESPECTING RIGHTS

1	Which legal and policy frameworks exist that address the issues of children on the move in my country and in the region? Which legal or policy frameworks either ignore or lead to risks of neglect/harm of the rights of children on the move?
2	What are the basic humanitarian needs of migrant and displaced children that are not met in my country? What are the specific vulnerabilities of children on the move?
3	Where children on the move face service gaps, to what extent is that a consequence of service gaps for all children in your country in various sectors (child protection, social protection, education, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health, early childhood development, nutrition, etc.)? To what extent is it a consequence of a child's migration status (e.g., unequal treatment of a non-national versus a national child)? ⁴ To what extent is it a consequence of practical barriers (e.g., lack of knowledge on existing services and/or rights, language barriers, cultural or religious barriers)?

⁴ E.g., the Convention on the Rights of the Child covers all children *in* a territory, not *of* a territory. All children have the right to access all rights as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.



ACCESSING SERVICES & RESPECTING RIGHTS

4	Are service providers in my country obliged to ask about migration status or proof of birth certificates/citizenship, effectively hindering the ability of undocumented or stateless children to access services ? To what extent does my country provide an agreed plan with concrete measures to respond to these barriers?
5	Does my country integrate all children on the move into the national education system , allowing them to graduate with a nationally-recognized diploma? Where necessary, do newly arrived children receive support to integrate into the school system, such as language assistance?
6	Is the birth of children on the move registered with a civil authority in my country? Are there obstacles during the registration process for different categories of children on the move (e.g., internally displaced person/s, returnees)?
7	Are families in my country separated for extended periods of time before children on the move can be reunified with their families? Does my country have a reliable and integrated family tracing and reunification system, guaranteed by law and operated consistently based on the best interests of the child? Are provisions of alternative family-based care available for children on the move before reunification? In a case where families cannot be traced, do provisions exist for permanent care?
8	To what extent does my country have systematic best-interest determination procedures in place? To what extent does my country provide child-sensitive procedures and recourse mechanisms in legal proceedings to afford children on the move the right to be heard, regardless of their age or status? Does my country provide appropriate care and protection to unaccompanied children on the move?
9	To what extent does my country cooperate with child protection and other relevant authorities of other countries along key migratory routes to ensure the rights, protection, care, support and access to services for children on the move at the regional level? Is the data of children on the move confidential and well protected? Where are the potential gaps? To what extent is my UNICEF country office involved in cross-border case management/continuum of care?
10	Does my country detain children on the move seeking refugee status or migrating? Does my country have legal provisions to end the immigration detention of children? Is my country implementing alternatives to detention? Did my country adopt and start implementing national plans to end child immigration detention?
11	If migrant or displaced children are experiencing xenophobia, discrimination and/or marginalization in my country, to what extent does my country promote measures to combat xenophobia, discrimination and marginalization? Does my country have public bodies in charge of successfully implementing non-discrimination, social inclusion and equality policies that demonstrably benefit displaced and migrant children, alongside other vulnerable and stigmatized groups?

PARTNERS & COORDINATION

1	To what extent is migration considered as a cross-sectoral issue in my country (e.g., are there inter-ministerial bodies working on migration, and do they involve the ministries in charge of social welfare, youth/family, and education)? To what extent is it considered a cross-sectoral issue in my country office (e.g., do multisectoral coordination mechanisms exist)?
2	What is the existing institutional capacity of government, United Nations and civil society partner organizations to address the rights and needs of children on the move? Where are the gaps?
3	Moving beyond UNICEF's traditional government counterparts, which other relevant authorities does the office need to engage with to effectively work on the rights of children on the move (such as those responsible for migration management, detention, border control and asylum services)? To what extent are we directly engaging mayors and local authorities who are at the forefront of service delivery for children on the move? To what extent are we engaging with children and young people on the move themselves to get their views?



METHODOLOGIES

Key programming and policy documents:

- » **UNICEF Six Point Agenda for Children on the Move:** UNICEF calls for six actions to protect all children on the move.
- » **Global Programme Framework on Children on the Move:** Comprehensive programming guidance for country offices, unpacking the UNICEF Six-Point Agenda for programmatic action.
- » **Children Uprooted - What Local Governments Can Do:** Unpacking what local authorities can do to realize the UNICEF Six-Point Agenda, including best practises.

DATA SOURCES

UNICEF INTERNAL LINKS

- » **Knowledge Domain on Children on the Move:** Site to find and share documents, news, events and training opportunities related to children on the move. In addition, there is a Global Practice Group on Children on the Move, composed of more than 200 UNICEF staff from around the world, which coordinates more closely. The Practice Group is open to any colleague to join; please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Key data and research:

UNICEF flagship reports

- » **Uprooted:** Presents comprehensive global data about children on the move, highlighting major challenges in every region.
- » **Beyond Borders:** Provides an overview of promising practices on how to make the global compacts on migration and refugees work for uprooted children.
- » **Harrowing Journeys:** Reveals the interplay of factors that render children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and trafficking.
- » **A Child is a Child:** Report shows how the lack of safe and legal pathways for refugee and migrant children feeds a booming market for human smuggling and puts them at risk of violence, abuse and exploitation.

Further key data and research

- » **Data Brief on Children on the Move:** Key facts and figures on children on the move.
- » **UNICEF's data portal on migration and displacement:** Further data on children on the move.
- » **A Right to be Heard:** Interactive data visualization of the youth pool. Select a question and find out how young migrants and refugees answered.
- » **UNICEF Office of Research Innocenti:** Several publications on the topic of children and migration.
- » **The Children on the Move Agenda in MENA:** An overview of key data, issues and priorities for children on the move in the Middle East and North Africa region.
- » **Data Gaps and Mixed Migration between West and North Africa and Europe:** A snapshot on data gaps.
- » **Central American Child Alert:** Central American children's dangerous journey to the United States of America.
- » **Rohingya Child Alert:** Rohingya refugee children face a perilous future.
- » **Central Mediterranean Child Alert:** A deadly journey for children on the central Mediterranean migration route.

EXTERNAL LINKS

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

- » **UNHCR Operational Portal:** UNHCR global data on refugee situations.



- » **UNHCR population data:** All UNHCR populations of concern (excluding United Nations Relief and Works Agency data on Palestinian refugees).

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

- » **IOM Global Migration Data Analysis Centre:** Migration data portal
- » **IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix:** Displacement data portal
- » **Missing Migrants Project:** Tracks incidents involving migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, who have died or gone missing in the process of migration towards an international destination.

International Displacement Monitoring Center

- » **Global Internal Displacement Database:** Interactive platform to explore, filter and sort internally displaced person data to produce graphs and tables and export them in several different formats.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

- » **International migration data and policies**
- » **Integration policies and indicators**
- » **Annual migration outlook series**

International Labour Organization

- » **Migration database: Focusing on labour migration**

World Bank

- » **Data on migration and remittance sending and receiving countries**
- » **Net migration data**

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

- » **Trafficking data**

United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs/Population Division

- » **International migration:** Global migration trends
- » **World population prospects**

Other resources

- » **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Several SDGs and SDG indicators directly or indirectly concern children on the move.
- » **Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative:** Global data hub on human trafficking
- » **Mixed Migration hub:** Produces knowledge on the human rights protection issues faced by people on the move in North Africa.

Other research and policy-related sites

- » **Migration Policy Centre**
- » **Migration Policy Institute**
- » **Oxford University Refugee Studies Center**

EXAMPLES OF THEMATIC ANALYSES

UNICEF Policy Briefs Series on tricky issues:

- » **Family Unity in the Context of Migration:** Outlines the importance of family unity along the migration cycle and identifies policy solutions, such as: preventing family separation in the first place by enabling families to move together, discussions around family reunification, and family unity considerations in return decisions.
- » **Alternatives to Child Immigration Detention:** Identifies policy solution to end child immigration detention and establish alternatives to immigration detention of children, in which countries of origin, transit and destination play a role.
- » **Children Left Behind:** To be published in 2019
- » **Access to Education:** To be published in 2019

CONTACTS

- » Saskia Blume, Policy Specialist Migration and Displacement (sblume@unicef.org)
- » Verena Knaus, Senior Advisor Migration (vknaus@unicef.org)