



# BEYOND BORDERS

How to make the global compacts on migration and refugees work for uprooted children

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### **Cover**

**On the move:** Three children from the Syrian Arab Republic peer out the window of a train at a reception centre for refugees in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

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## AN HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY FOR REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

*In 2018, world leaders will come together to draft and adopt two landmark compacts that have the potential to impact the lives of millions of migrant, displaced and refugee children.*

*UNICEF has joined the voices of many who have called for the inclusion of policies that address the care and protection of these children.*

*The goal of this report is to show that protecting migrant, displaced and refugee children is not only right in principle, it is also right when put into practice. Indeed, governments and their partners are actively engaged in initiatives within countries and across borders to provide care and protection for uprooted children. Host communities also have employed innovative ways to welcome and help integrate them.*

*Though much has been done, the challenge is to do more. As world leaders come together to agree on the two compacts, UNICEF calls on them to incorporate principles – and practices – that can provide a safe home, a safe passage and a safe destination for every migrant, displaced and refugee child.*



**On the road:** A 16-year-old girl travels with younger siblings in hopes of reaching the United States.

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# Agenda for action

**M**igration has been a part of the human experience throughout history. For many children and families, leaving home to settle in a new community is a milestone in the search for educational or employment opportunity. For some, migration is propelled by a drive for a better life, adventure or a curiosity about new lands and cultures.

Around the world, however, children also are forced from their homes by factors including war, poverty, persecution and climate change.

When children are uprooted – whatever the reason – they embark on a journey. It starts in their communities of origin and continues as they transit within national boundaries or across borders. Children who arrive at their destinations are granted permission to stay, are pushed towards a new land, or are forced to return to their country of origin. Often, they face lengthy immigration procedures. Others remain without the proper paperwork.

Along the journey, the treatment of refugee and migrant children is often shocking. Far too often, children are held in detention centres, separated from family members, deprived of education, forced to work in hazardous jobs, married off as children or pushed into the arms of smugglers or traffickers.

The obstacles presented at each phase in the migration

journey – origin, transit and destination – are not inherent. They are barriers created by policies, practices, behaviours and attitudes that put children in danger.

Removing these obstacles is a matter of choice – a political choice to protect vulnerable children and allow them the chance to benefit from the opportunities that migration can offer.

Deciding to protect and care for refugee and migrant children throughout their journey is the right thing to do for children. But it is also right for nations. Refugees and migrants can address imbalances in the labour market by providing high- and low-skilled workers.<sup>1</sup> They generally contribute more to a country's economy in tax payments and other services than they take.<sup>2</sup> They contribute to their countries of origin, often by sending remittances or returning with new skills.<sup>3</sup> They grow a host community's working-age population and contribute their skills and talents to help economies grow.<sup>4</sup>

## An historic opportunity

Recent large-scale movements of refugees and migrants have drawn attention to the need for global and coordinated action for peaceful, orderly and comprehensive approaches to refugees and migrants.

As a first step towards such global action, United Nations



**Peering out:** A young girl at the Mangaize refugee camp in Niger.

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## Box 1. Beyond labels

*Refugee, migrant, unaccompanied child* are terms used throughout this report. Most have specific legal meanings that correlate to a child's status in a country. But no matter what terms are used, a child is a child.

**Migrant:** A person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a home country regardless of whether the move is voluntary or involuntary and regardless of the length of stay.

**Refugee:** A person who lives outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence and is unable to return because of persecution or fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

**Asylum seeker:** A person who seeks refuge in a country to which he or she has fled because of persecution.

**Internally displaced persons:** People who fled their homes – but not their countries – because of armed conflict, violence, disaster or a violation of human rights.

**Unaccompanied child:** A child who has been separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult legally responsible to do so.

**Separated child:** A child separated from both parents or a previous legal guardian but not necessarily other adult family members.

**Uprooted:** A general, non-legal term used in this report for people who have left their place of origin for any reason. They may be migrants, refugees or internally displaced. Some are forced to leave home; others are not. The term comes from the UNICEF report *Uprooted: The growing crisis for refugee and migrant children*.

**Source:** United Nations Children's Fund, *Uprooted: The growing crisis for refugee and migrant children*, UNICEF, New York, September 2016, p. 14; Inter-agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, *Field Handbook on Unaccompanied and Separated Children*, March 2017, p. 15; United Nations Children's Fund, *Education Uprooted*, UNICEF, New York, September 2017, p. 5.

Member States adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in September 2016.<sup>5</sup> With this declaration, Member States committed to “fully protect the human rights of all refugees and migrants, regardless of status.”<sup>6</sup> They acknowledged the vulnerabilities of uprooted children and committed to taking steps to protect them.<sup>7</sup> Governments also agreed to develop two global compacts – the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (see Box 2).

In 2018, political leaders are expected to draft and adopt these two documents. As governments and their partners come together to strengthen governance procedures for global

migration and establish guidelines for sharing responsibility to safeguard refugees, UNICEF has called on decision makers to put children at the centre of their discussions. Specifically, UNICEF asks that they embrace six essential policies outlined in the UNICEF Agenda for Action (see Page 6).<sup>8</sup>

## Practices in place

The task of providing millions of uprooted children with services and protection can seem daunting at first glance. However, in countries around the globe, national and local governments, volunteers and social service organizations are engaged in these activities every day.

The goal of this report is to highlight their work.

The case studies presented were chosen to display geographical diversity and highlight efforts in low-, medium- and high-income contexts. They show work under way for children in their communities of origin, as they transit across borders, and in countries of destination. Several of the case studies have long track records of success. Others are works in progress, and as a result, a full assessment of their impact would be premature. Still they offer examples of initiatives that are evolving to keep up with changing circumstances and the needs of uprooted children. Most of them can be replicated in different contexts around the world.

As governments grapple with ways to meet the expectations of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants – and fulfil their legal obligations to children established by the



Convention on the Rights of the Child – these case studies can provide inspiration. They offer proof that the six policy asks in the Agenda for Action can be turned into practice.

And they point the way to practical ways to provide a safe home, a safe passage and a safe destination for every child.

## Box 2. The global compacts

As part of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants adopted in September 2016, United Nations Member States agreed to come together to develop two global compacts:

**Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration:** The United Nations' first global agreement governing international migration is being developed by United Nations Member States. Work began in April 2017 and the final document will be presented for adoption by the United Nations General Assembly in 2018.

**Global Compact on Refugees:** The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is developing the compact aimed at improving the way the international community responds to large movements of refugees and protracted refugee situations. The final compact will be presented by UNHCR in its annual report to the General Assembly in 2018. As part of the drafting process, a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework is being rolled out in pilot countries to “ease pressure on host countries,” build refugee’s self-reliance, expand access to resettlement in third countries and foster conditions that enable refugees voluntarily to return to their home countries.

**Source:** United Nations, ‘Compact for Migration’, <<http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/migration-compact>> and ‘Compact for Refugees’, <<http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/refugees-compact>>, accessed 26 October 2017; and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, ‘Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: Delivering more comprehensive and predictable responses for refugees’, <<http://www.unhcr.org/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-crrf.html>>, accessed 4 November 2017.



**Left at home:** Nakisha, 15, lives at home in Honduras with her two younger siblings while her mother works in Belize.



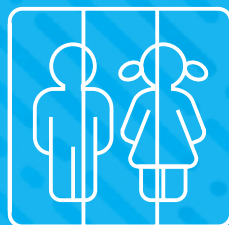
## AGENDA FOR ACTION

UNICEF calls on world leaders to embrace a six-point Agenda for Action that puts children at the heart of the global compacts for refugees and migration.



### Protect child refugees and migrants, particularly unaccompanied children, from exploitation and violence

Introduce measures to strengthen child protection systems, including the training of social and child workers and working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and professional groups. Clamp down on trafficking, not only through enhanced law enforcement, but also by providing better support to migrant children through the systematic appointment of qualified guardians; better access to information regarding their own situation and the management of their cases; and access to legal assistance. Governments should also develop clearer guidance for case officers when determining the migration status of children, to prevent the return of children and families to persecution, dangerous or life-threatening situations, using the 'best interest of the child' principle to guide legal decision-making in all cases.



### End the detention of children seeking refugee status or migrating

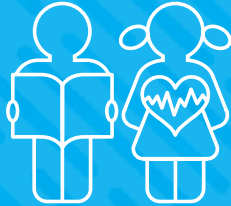
Introduce practical alternatives to detention wherever children (or their families) are involved, given the negative impact of detention on a child's development. Children are particularly vulnerable to physical and psychological violence. Examples of alternatives to detention include: the surrender of passport and regular reporting requirements; guarantors or bailees who may be family members or community supporters; foster care and supervised independent living for unaccompanied and separated children; and compulsory registration with authorities.



### Keep families together as the best way to protect children and give children legal status

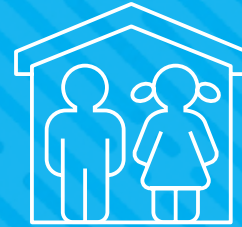
Develop clear policy guidance to keep children from being separated from their parents during border control processing and any migrant legal processes. States should speed-up procedures and make it easier for children to reunite with their families, including with their extended families in destination countries. States should pursue all practical measures to reunify children with their families. Children born to migrant parents need legal identity for their future wellbeing. Governments should provide birth registration and/or other identity documents to enable children to access services and avoid statelessness.





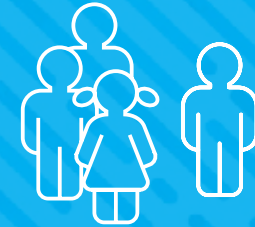
### **Keep all refugee and migrant children learning and give them access to health and other quality services**

An increased collective effort by governments, communities and the private sector is needed to provide education, health, shelter, nutrition, water and sanitation, and access to legal and psychosocial support to these children. This is not only a collective responsibility, it is in all societies' common interests. A child's migration status should never represent a barrier to accessing essential services.



### **Press for action on the underlying causes of large-scale movements of refugees and migrants**

Address the root causes of conflict, violence and extreme poverty in countries of origin. This should include increasing access to education and social protection; expanding opportunities for family income and youth employment; and fostering more accountable and transparent governance. Governments should facilitate community dialogue and engagement towards peaceful conflict resolution, tolerance and a more inclusive society; and should take measures against gang violence.



### **Promote measures to combat xenophobia, discrimination and marginalization in countries of transit and destination**

Coalitions of NGOs, communities, private sector, religious groups and political leaders should take responsibility for influencing public opinion to prevent the rise of xenophobia and discrimination towards refugees.



# Protect refugee and migrant children from exploitation and violence

**W**hen children are uprooted from their homes, they become vulnerable to new dangers. They face the threat of abuse, violence, exploitation, extortion, trafficking, smuggling and discrimination.

Though there are few reliable global data on violence against uprooted children, empirical and anecdotal evidence indicates that it is widespread. Three quarters of the children who arrived in Italy across the Central Mediterranean route report being held against their will or forced to work without pay.<sup>9</sup> And in a 2014 survey of reported cases of trafficking, more than a quarter of the victims were children.<sup>10</sup>

There are dangers presented by the journey itself. Since 2014, 21,000 migrants have died worldwide, though it is unclear how many of them were children.<sup>11</sup>

The first policy ask in the Agenda for Action calls on governments to protect uprooted children. It asks governments and partners to: increase safe and legal channels for children to migrate, crack down on trafficking and expand access to information and assistance that can help keep uprooted children safe.

Though there is a long way to go, countries around the globe

have engaged in efforts to achieve these goals by intervening at different milestones in a child's migration journey. There are cases throughout this report that highlight responses in different parts of the journey. In this section, the case studies show examples of methods for protecting children in a refugee centre in a high-income country of destination and as part of a regional initiative to address the dangers faced by uprooted children.

## Germany: Standards to protect children in refugee centres

From 2015 to 2016, about 1.2 million people arrived in Germany seeking protection and asylum. An estimated 400,000 of them, about 34 per cent, were children, mostly from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.<sup>12</sup>

This large number of refugees and migrants has left the German systems overstretched and created a huge backlog of asylum claims.

As a result, many children and their families have remained in initial reception centres for almost two years, often in conditions that pose significant protection risks, hinder their full development and prevent them from accessing services



**Back to being a child:**

Girls aged 10–12 from the Syrian Arab Republic play in a centre for refugees in Germany.

© UNICEF/UN04026/  
Gilbertson VII Photo



### Box 3. Best interests assessment and determination

Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that governments and partners must act in a child's best interests. Meeting this obligation for refugee and migrant children starts with a rights-based approach that aims to secure children's physical, psychological, moral and spiritual integrity and promote their dignity. The process requires a comprehensive assessment of children's identity including nationality, upbringing, vulnerabilities, protection needs and ethnic, cultural and linguistic background.

Starting as soon as possible from their identification, and at each stage of a child's journey as a refugee or migrant, a best interests assessment should be documented before decisions are made about a child's life.

The best interests assessment, once completed, becomes the foundation for making a best interests determination, which will provide a long-term solution for the child. The assessment and determination processes are informed – but not dependant on – the decision about a child's asylum claim or immigration status, if such a decision is pending.

In Sweden, for example, on-call emergency child protection services are available in cities. These services allow for immediate assessment and emergency placement of unaccompanied and separated children from the moment they are identified. To assess the need of alternative emergency placement, such services also examine the quality of the relationship between separated children and any accompanying adults.

Source: The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child Committee, Treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin, General Comment no. 6, June 2005. p. 8, <<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/GC6.pdf>>; and United Nations Children's Fund and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, *Safe & Sound: What states can do to ensure respect for the best interests of unaccompanied and separated children in Europe*, UNICEF and UNHCR, New York and Geneva, October 2014, p. 27, <[www.refworld.org/pdfid/5423da264.pdf](http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5423da264.pdf)>.

that are essential for their well-being and social inclusion. In addition, there are no nationwide policies and standards to safeguard children in refugee centres.

As shown in the 2017 UNICEF study, *Childhood on Hold*, there are vast inequities between the services available to refugee children depending on the federal state where they have been assigned, their country of origin and their prospects of permanent residence. Refugee children, in general, have less access to services than their German peers.

To protect refugees and migrants living in refugee centres, UNICEF and the German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth launched a national, multi-partner initiative in early 2016. The goal of the initiative is to improve the protection and care provided to refugees and migrants living in refugee centres and support their integration. The initiative focuses, in particular, on vulnerable groups, such as children; adolescents; women; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons; and persons with disabilities.

One major achievement of the initiative is the Minimum Standards for the Protection of Refugees and Migrants Living in Refugee Centres, which were developed in a participatory process that involved over 30 partners.<sup>13</sup> The standards include:

1. Key principles for developing a site-specific protection plan to prevent and respond to violence in refugee centres – a plan based on a risk-analysis that is developed with the active and meaningful participation of centre staff and residents.



2. Key personnel management measures – notably the adherence to a code of conduct – that minimize protection risks and establish clear roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the protection plan in each refugee centre. The measures also outline the centre staff’s obligation to respect diversity, not to discriminate and to do no harm.
3. Internal structures including: house rules; designated contact people for residents affected by violence; an internal complaint mechanism; and a method for providing information in relevant languages and through multiple communication channels on the rights of residents and the kinds of support available.
4. The need for an external independent complaints and counselling body, and the active involvement of local external partners such as schools and day-care centres.
5. Standard procedures for addressing violence and suspected violence that involve a risk assessment and immediate protection and care for survivors. The procedures also call for cooperation with local external partners, including youth and welfare offices and the police when appropriate.
6. Humane and protective conditions that ensure building safety, hygiene and privacy and that make certain that child-friendly spaces and services exist.
7. Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the protection plan.

To put the standards into practice, the German Ministry of Family Affairs funded the position of protection coordinator in 100 refugee centres participating in the initiative nationwide. The protection coordinator helps centre management develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the centre’s protection plan.<sup>14</sup>

UNICEF developed training materials and tools to ensure the effective implementation and monitoring of the standards. Over 2,500 refugee centre managers, protection coordinators and staff in the 100 refugee centres across Germany were trained.

As this case study shows, even in a high-income, high-capacity country, there are challenges. The Government of Germany and its partners responded by strengthening existing protection systems. Critically, they also developed standards for protecting children in refugee centres and strengthened the capacities of service providers to implement and monitor these standards. These standards – and system strengthening approaches – can be replicated in many contexts.

### West Africa: Working across borders to protect children

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional economic zone that includes 15 member states.<sup>15</sup> The multilateral agreements that bind the nations in the region include the 1979 Protocol Relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Residence and the Right of Establishment.<sup>16</sup> The protocol sets a legal framework

#### Box 4. Protecting Mexican children in the United States

In 2017, the Government of Mexico approved a fund of more than US\$47.8 million to assist Mexican citizens in the United States of America.

The fund pays for the expansion of multiple consular services for children and families including initiatives aimed at protecting children's rights. The fund will: provide for workshops for Mexican nationals on a family emergency plan that provides guidance on what to do in case of sudden family separation. The guidance includes the preparation and use of powers of attorney mechanisms to obtain temporary custody of children when their parents are detained or deported. These measures protect children if immigration authorities arrive at their parents' work or home.

These services also will allow easier access to the dual-nationality procedure for children who were born in the United States and whose parents are Mexican. Children of Mexican nationals who are born abroad can, by Mexican law, keep their Mexican nationality and the nationality of their birth. Dual nationality enables easier integration if parents decide to return to Mexico and protect children's rights wherever they are.

At the same time, the Government of Mexico is expanding its training for consular staff with a virtual course at the Institute of Mexican Diplomatic Studies. The course trains up to 100 consular officers a year on the Protocol on Consular Attention for Unaccompanied Girls, Boys, and Adolescents. From January 2016 to November 2017, the Protocol, which is applied in 28 Consulates of Mexico in the United States, was used in interviews of 5,930 children.

The protocol is a protection mechanism that allows consulate staff to conduct sensitive interviews of unaccompanied children, identify vulnerabilities, refer to interventions and protect children's rights. More than 200 consular workers in the United States have been trained in the protocol and the study of this protocol will become a requirement of diplomatic studies for new staff.

**Source:** Government of Mexico Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Directorate for the Protection of Mexicans Abroad, 'Protocol for the Consular Care of Unaccompanied Migrant Children and Adolescents', Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico, 2015 <[https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/109332/Protocolo\\_\\_ING\\_.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/109332/Protocolo__ING_.pdf)>.

for cross-border movement and cooperation.<sup>17</sup> Additional instruments that were established include the 2008 ECOWAS Common Approach on Migration.<sup>18</sup>

These agreements have opened the borders between the Member States. However, movement beyond the region to

states in North Africa and Europe is restricted, which may promote irregular migration as the demand to migrate out of the region exceeds available opportunities.<sup>19</sup>

ECOWAS initiatives on migration include the West Africa Network for the Protection of Children (WAN), a network of governments, civil society organizations and individuals that form the referral mechanism for the protection of uprooted children in West Africa.<sup>20</sup>

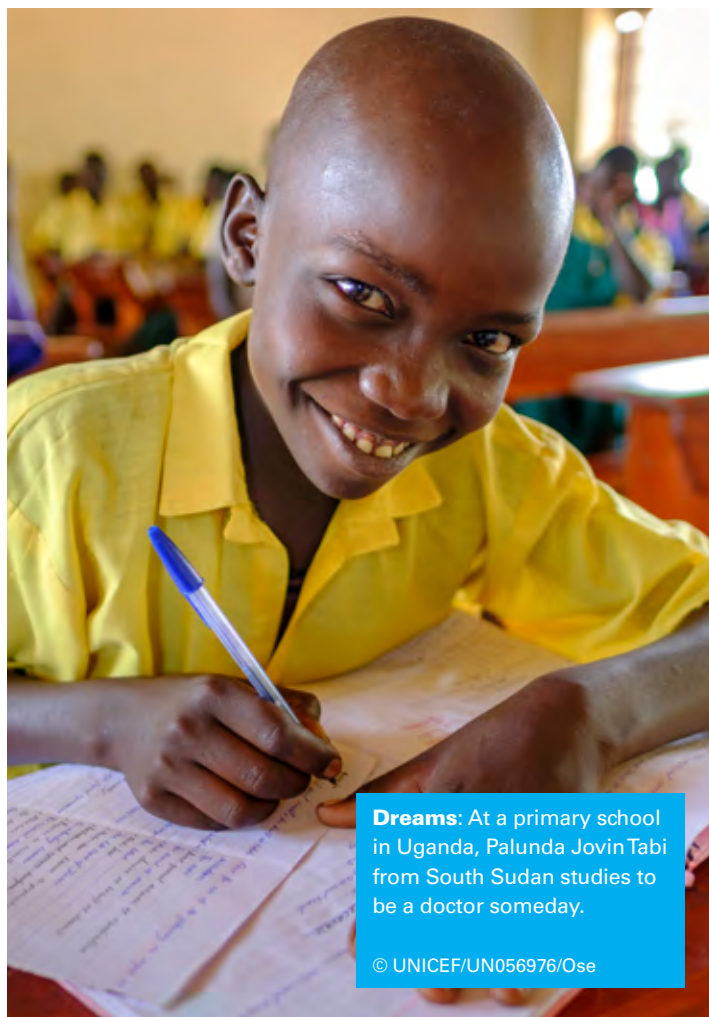
WAN allows coordination between national systems of child protection in ECOWAS states and provides a framework and instruments that support unaccompanied migrant children in transit and when they reintegrate into their communities of origin.<sup>21</sup>

Since it was founded, WAN has assisted more than 6,500 children, two thirds of them children from outside their countries of origin, who were helped to return and reintegrate. The WAN intervention involves the identification of children in vulnerable situations, family tracing and social evaluation prior to facilitating return within an agreed case management tool.<sup>22</sup>

WAN's efforts were strengthened in 2011 with the launch of the ECOWAS Support Procedures and Standards for the Protection and Reintegration of Vulnerable Children on the Move and Young Migrants.<sup>23</sup> These standards established eight qualities of care for uprooted children: identification, emergency support, study of the child's personal situation, family assessment, alternative care, reintegration, monitoring, and family and community support. The eight steps have been incorporated into the ECOWAS basic child protection efforts.<sup>24</sup>



As the countries of ECOWAS demonstrate, it is possible to come together across borders to establish essential mechanisms to protect refugee and migrant children.



**Dreams:** At a primary school in Uganda, Palunda Jovin Tabi from South Sudan studies to be a doctor someday.

© UNICEF/UN056976/Ose

### Box 5. Welcoming refugees in Uganda

For more than five decades, Uganda has provided asylum to people fleeing war and persecution. As of 1 September 2017, Uganda hosts over 1.35 million refugees. About 75 per cent are from South Sudan, 17 per cent are from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 3 per cent are from Burundi and 3 per cent are from Somalia. With an escalation of conflict in July 2016, an unprecedented number of refugees came to Uganda. The country has since become the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa.

Despite the challenges generated by the new arrivals from South Sudan, Uganda maintains one of the most progressive refugee protection policies. In March 2017, the Office of the Prime Minister and UNHCR launched the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).

The CRRF is overseen by a multi-stakeholder secretariat – a milestone for a government-led forum that brings together humanitarian and development organizations, local authorities and the private sector. The CRRF in Uganda addresses five themes: admission and rights; emergency response and ongoing needs; resilience and self-reliance of refugees; the expansion of solutions through resettlement and alternative pathways, such as scholarships and work placements abroad; and voluntary repatriation, which in the current situation focuses on investment in human capital and transferrable skills.

The Government of Uganda also has committed to allowing refugees full access to primary and lower-secondary education and public health services. Refugee families are also granted a plot of land and have the right to work and establish their own businesses.

The Government of Uganda plans to document its experience with the CRRF to guide international initiatives on refugees including the Global Compact on Refugees.

Source: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework Uganda: The way forward*, UNHCR, Geneva, October 2017, p. 3, <<https://ugandarefugees.org/wp-content/uploads/CRRF-Brochure-UPDATED-October-2017.pdf>>; and UNHCR, 'Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework Uganda' Launching Meeting Presentation, UNHCR, 24 March 2017, <[https://ugandarefugees.org/wp-content/uploads/CRRF-Uganda\\_UNHCR-Presentation\\_CRRF-launch-Meeting\\_24.03.17.pdf](https://ugandarefugees.org/wp-content/uploads/CRRF-Uganda_UNHCR-Presentation_CRRF-launch-Meeting_24.03.17.pdf)>.

## CHAPTER 2



# End the detention of refugee and migrant children

In countries and regions around the globe, children are detained because of their migration status. At least 100 countries – from low-income to high-income countries – detain children for immigration reasons.<sup>25</sup> The International Detention Coalition uses a figure of 1 million, though many consider this an underestimate.

Currently, no definitive data exist on the number of uprooted children held in detention facilities for the purposes of migration control.

Detention harms children's health and well-being and undermines their development. UNICEF has repeatedly called for an end to the detention of children because of their migration status and has worked with organizations around the world, including the International Detention Coalition, to call attention to the practice. The coalition also advocates for alternatives such as foster care, supervised independent living or community-based accommodations for families.

There are few countries that have eliminated the practice of detaining children because of their immigration status. Nonetheless, there are some encouraging developments.

Immigration officers in Ireland and Costa Rica immediately link unaccompanied children with child protection services.

In other countries, legislative steps are being taken to either eliminate or greatly reduce the detention of children.

Malta and the United Kingdom have implemented successful alternatives to detention for migrant children and families. Across Europe, civil society organizations are also developing case management-based alternatives to detention and sharing information and best practices through the European Alternatives to Detention Network. In Indonesia and Malaysia, pilot schemes are providing alternative care arrangements for unaccompanied and separated children.<sup>26</sup>

The second policy ask of the Agenda for Action calls for the end of detention by creating practical alternatives. The cases outlined in this chapter show some of the efforts under way.

***Whether a migrant, refugee or internally displaced, a child is a child.***





**Behind bars:** 14-year-old Issaa, who migrated from the Gambia, detained in Libya.  
© UNICEF/UN052682/Romenzi

## Box 6. Working together to end detention of children

The Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) to End Child Immigration Detention is an international alliance that provides governments with support so they can stop the practice of detaining children because of their immigration status. The group's work is consistent with existing international human rights obligations to protect the best interests of the child.

The IAWG is composed of 28 members including United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations, regional human rights systems and civil society organizations. It is led by, and works hand in hand with, the International Detention Coalition. The coalition is a network of over 300 NGOs and individuals in more than 70 countries that provide services, advocacy and research on refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants affected by immigration detention. The IAWG was founded in March 2014 to explore alternatives to detaining children for immigration reasons. It advocates for all refugees, asylum seekers and migrant children. The IAWG's position is that children:

- Should not be denied their liberty
- Need to be protected in compliance with a determination of their best interests
- Should be kept together with their families or cared for in the community

In support of its advocacy work, the IAWG has produced publications that document data on children in immigration detention, provide an overview of normative standards and offer examples of alternatives. Many of the member organizations of the IAWG also support governments and local authorities to implement pilot schemes for alternatives to detention.

**Source:** The Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) to End Child Immigration Detention and the International Detention Coalition, <<https://idcoalition.org/>>.

## Greece: Evidence-based advocacy for uprooted children, including children in detention

Since January 2015, Greece has been the entry point to Europe for more than 1 million refugees and migrants – 37 per cent of them children.

Though the flow of migration has slowed since March 2016,

about 60,000 refugees and migrants remain in the country as of September 2017. About 19,000 are children and more than 2,850 of them, more than 10 per cent, are unaccompanied children – mostly boys between age 14 and 17.<sup>27</sup>

The number of places in shelters for unaccompanied children quadrupled from 300 in March 2016 to more than 1,200 in September 2017. However, more than 1,700 unaccompanied children remain on the waiting list for safe accommodation and care. Hundreds of them are in protective custody, in part, because of the lack of available spaces and viable alternatives to detention.

In the absence of a national system to track and monitor unaccompanied children, the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA), a government agency that manages the national referral and placement system for unaccompanied children in Greece, has emerged as an important monitor of unaccompanied children in detention.

EKKA publishes biweekly updates with data on referrals that serve as a proxy indicator for the number of unaccompanied children in Greece. In addition, the updates present age, nationality, gender and location of children, and highlight the number in detention. EKKA also monitors the time it takes to process referrals, the length of stay in shelters, and the rate at which children abscond. This critical snapshot of unaccompanied children has proved instrumental in informing child protection service providers, policymakers and donors – in Greece and in European Union headquarters in Brussels.

With the arrival of refugee and migrant children to Greece,



### Box 7. Alternatives to detention

Alternatives to detention for children include legislation, policies and practices that keep children from being placed in protective custody because of their migration status.

Around the world, governments have implemented solutions. In some countries, individuals act as guarantors for migrant children and report regularly to an assigned case officer for the child. In other locations, case officers work directly with children who have applied for asylum to identify suitable accommodation in the community and find educational and other activities. The case officer also prepares the child to return to the country of origin when necessary.

Bail and guarantee systems are alternatives in which migrants or their guarantors deposit money with the court as an assurance that the child will appear for immigration proceedings.

Many countries have been working for several years to provide intensive support and supervision for families in open accommodation facilities in the final stages of complex appeals of unsuccessful asylum decisions. These accommodations do not restrict a child's movement, but allow authorities to monitor where migrants live.

Though there are multiple alternatives, each successful option requires that governments seek innovative solutions and commit to supporting and supervising migrant and refugee children and families in community settings.

Source: International Detention Coalition, 'There Are Alternatives: A handbook for preventing unnecessary immigration detention', revised edition, IDC, Melbourne, 2015, p. ii, 59–60 68, 69, 70, <<https://idcoalition.org/publication/there-are-alternatives-revised-edition>>.

the Office of the Greek Deputy Ombudsman for Children's Rights, an independent authority, has enhanced its child rights monitoring capacity and engaged in evidence-based advocacy on behalf of uprooted children, especially those in detention.

The office has increased the number of child rights monitoring visits to dozens of locations across the country, including detention facilities and reception, identification centres and hotspots. It has also established a network of NGOs, bringing together over 20 child protection actors that monitor rights violations and advocate for children. Building on these efforts and with thorough data analysis, the Ombudsman's office has been a critical advocate on behalf of uprooted children and has effectively worked to remove children from protective custody.

In the absence of sufficient space in shelters for unaccompanied children, Safe Zones were created in camps that provide around-the-clock supervision and comprehensive care to unaccompanied children for up to three months until placement in suitable shelter can be found. As of October 2017, 240 temporary places were available in eight Safe Zones. Most of the children housed in them were referred from prisons, reception and identification centres on the islands of Greece, and facilities that were closed.

Detaining refugee and migrant children is a violation of children's rights with grave consequences for their health and well-being. The practice has drawn widespread criticism.

Despite the severe economic crisis in Greece, the Government has made incremental steps to improve the quality of care in shelters for unaccompanied children, expand the number of places, establish new shelters, and move towards new models of community-based care, including foster care and supported independent living. The challenges remain great. But with support, alternatives can be employed and improved to protect and care for every migrant and refugee child.

## Zambia: Steps towards alternatives to detention

For decades, Zambia has been a stop on the journey for refugees and migrants from countries including Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia on their way to other destinations.<sup>28</sup>

In 2015, crises in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo propelled increased arrival of refugees and migrants into Zambia. And in December 2016, Zambia had 29,350 refugees, 3,320 asylum-seekers and 24,540 former refugees.<sup>29</sup>

In Zambia, migrants without the proper paperwork are repatriated to their country of origin. However, a lack of places in dedicated shelters can mean that unaccompanied children are held in detention centres until the repatriation process is completed.<sup>30</sup>

As part of efforts to address this situation and protect children, in 2014, the Government launched *Guidelines for Protection Assistance to Vulnerable Migrants in Zambia*. These guidelines established identification, referral and service procedures for first-line officials including police officers and immigration authorities. The goal is to equip these officials so they can deal sensitively with vulnerable refugees, including trafficking victims, unaccompanied and separated children and stateless migrants. The guidelines:<sup>31</sup>

- Identify the immediate- and long-term needs for categories of migrants including victims of trafficking and unaccompanied and separated children

- Underscore rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights including prohibitions against torture and freedom of movement
- Outline core principles for service delivery including respect of rights, confidentiality, consent and non-discrimination
- Describe the importance of the best interests determination for child refugee and migrants
- Provide principles for assisting unaccompanied and separated children that include family unity
- Identify protection needs including case management, needs assessment and identification of different kinds of vulnerabilities

The guidelines also include a National Referral Mechanism, a procedure for assisting vulnerable migrants, including children. The referral mechanism defines vulnerable migrants as refugees, asylum seekers, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied and separated children, stranded migrants and stateless migrants. It also establishes protocols that govern how frontline officials assess migrants' and refugees' status and vulnerability and connect them with services through the Zambian Department of Welfare.

In countries around the world, governments face challenges as they seek alternatives to detaining migrant children. The *Guidelines for Protection Assistance to Vulnerable Migrants in Zambia* and the National Referral Mechanism are steps towards providing the protection children need – protections that can be replicated in other countries around the world.





**Ready to go:** Louay, 7, plays on a suitcase with friends at a refugee camp in Greece.

© UNICEF/UN057920/Gilbertson VII Photo



## CHAPTER 3



# Keep families together and give children legal status

**T**here are many reasons that refugee and migrant children become separated from parents or caregivers. Separation can occur in the early period of displacement, when conditions are dangerous, or after long periods on the move. Sometimes children set off on migration journeys alone. Other times they are left behind when their parents leave to pursue work and opportunity in other countries.

Keeping families together is most often in the best interests of a child. Too often, however, families are separated during the migration processes, especially when a child does not have documentation, such as a birth certificate. Separation from family can leave children more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation or neglect when they are travelling and when they arrive at their destinations.<sup>32</sup>

Protecting children requires keeping them with their parents or caretakers and fast-tracking procedures that reunite them with family members in destination countries and countries of origin.

Policy Ask 3 in the Agenda for Action calls for stronger policies that prevent children from being separated from their families and faster procedures to reunite them. The case studies in this chapter highlight countries that are

working towards achieving this goal and proving that it can be accomplished in complex circumstances.

## Afghanistan: Protecting returning children and reuniting them with family

The return of unaccompanied children to their families is part of a complex situation as large numbers of Afghans have returned from Europe, Pakistan and Iran in recent years.

There have been many challenges, especially as unaccompanied children and children with families are returned to Afghanistan after attempting to migrate. Human rights and child rights organizations have called on governments and the international community to do more to protect migrant children returning to Afghanistan. This case study focuses on children returning from Iran. In the first 10 months of 2017, about 350,000 Afghans returned from Iran.<sup>33</sup>

According to a 2011 study, unaccompanied children attempting to migrate to Iran were mostly boys between age 13 and 17.<sup>34</sup> Most were driven by poverty and inequity to search for employment to help support their families. In 2011, 63 per cent were illiterate.





**Connecting:** In South Sudan, Bhang Wan, 15, (in blue) and siblings (from left) Nyagoa, 6, Nyalat, 9, and Kerwan, 10, will be reunited with their mother after two years apart.

© UNICEF/UN014008/Rich

## Box 8. Registering the birth of refugee children in Thailand

In 2010, Thailand lifted its reservation to Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As part of the country's new Civil Registration Act, the government committed to registering the birth of all children within its jurisdiction.

Under the revised law, children born in Thailand are entitled to be registered at birth even when their parents are not Thai nationals. The law was an important step towards preventing statelessness among a new generation of refugees.

Birth registration does not confer nationality on refugee children. But by establishing a legal record of their parents and place of birth, a birth certificate can be used to prove the right to acquire nationality if a child returns to the parent's country of origin.

The law came into effect in 2010 and in the years since, Thai civil registration authorities have worked with partners to address the backlog of registration for children born in refugee camps.

**Source:** United Nations Children's Fund, *A Passport to Protection: A guide to birth registration programming*, New York, December 2013, p. 9, <[https://www.unicef.org/protection/files/UNICEF\\_Birth\\_Registration\\_Handbook.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/protection/files/UNICEF_Birth_Registration_Handbook.pdf)>; Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 'Birth Registration', Child Protection Issue Brief, UNHCR, Geneva, August 2013, <<http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/523fe9214.pdf>>.

The journey to Iran can be dangerous, and it often involves violence and police detention. When children return, they often need psychosocial support to deal with experiences of abuse and exploitation. Many have missed out on years of school.

Protecting children returning from Iran and reuniting them with family is a critical task undertaken by Afghanistan's Directorate of Refugee and Repatriation and Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs in cooperation with international and local NGOs. A key part of the initiative is training government officials and border police in child protection protocols and principles.

At the border, there are standard operating procedures that were developed as part of an initiative on Strengthening the Reception and Reunification System for Unaccompanied and Separated Children returning from Iran. The procedures call for trained police officials to board buses that arrive in Afghanistan from Iran and identify unaccompanied children.<sup>35</sup> Once identified, unaccompanied children are escorted to a

centre at the border, where they are provided a meal, first aid and, if necessary, clothing. At this centre, the registration and family-reunification process begins.

Once these first steps are complete, the children are transported to the Gazargah Transit Centre in Herat. At this transit centre, unaccompanied children are provided psychosocial counselling and officials help determine the follow-up steps that are in the best interests of the child. Information is also gathered to help reunify a child with family members in Afghanistan.

After children's families have been located, a social worker from the transit centre in Herat accompanies the children to their communities of origin and places them in the care of local case workers who connect children with families and conduct follow-up monitoring.

From July 2016 to October 2017, more than 3,000 children were reunified with their families.<sup>36</sup>

Though improving processes at border crossings is an essential element of protecting unaccompanied children, partners in Afghanistan also emphasize the importance of addressing the root causes of migration so children are not propelled to take on dangerous journeys in search of work.

## South Sudan: More than 5,000 children reunited with their families

In South Sudan, a newly independent country with little infrastructure and spotty telephone service, reuniting



families and children is often a long and difficult process. Despite the challenges, as of October 2017, international and local organizations have reconnected more than 5,000 children with family members.<sup>37</sup>

A 17-year-old boy who had fled to Western Bahr El Ghazal was the 5,000th reunification. After nearly four years, he was reconnected with his mother.<sup>38</sup>

Massive displacement of children and families has occurred since the resurgence of conflict. More than 2 million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries including Ethiopia and the Sudan. More than 1 million refugees have settled in Uganda.<sup>39</sup> As of October 2017, nearly 1.9 million people were internally displaced from their homes. Estimates indicate that at least half of them are children.

The dangers for unaccompanied children displaced from their homes are great. They include recruitment into armed groups, gender-based violence, exploitation, famine and extreme psychosocial harm caused by insecurity and conflict.<sup>40</sup>

Reuniting families is one of the most effective ways to protect unaccompanied and separated children in conflict settings. But reuniting them requires that multiple local and international partners work together to manage cases, locate family members and reunite them with their children. It needs case management support to each of the registered unaccompanied and separated children.

In 2014, a working group with multiple partners started to reunite children with families. It has grown in strength and

efficiency since then.<sup>41</sup> The group members use the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS), an offline tool that allows them to share information, make referrals for service and follow up on the progress.

CPIMS allows partners to safely and securely relay information about unaccompanied and separated children and family members using an established information sharing protocol (ISP). A NGO transfers the information to the appropriate agency and follows up to keep track of progress.

Tracking family members across the country means that the working group connects mostly by phone before proceeding with family verification. When a child is identified for reunification and the information is verified, the working group shares information, interviews the family members, verifies the details, and uses the CPIMS to confirm a match for reunification.

Once the connection has been made, children fly home to their families. Since all flights must come through Juba, children often have to stay overnight in a secured facility managed by one of the working group members. UNICEF is directly responsible for the booking of flights for all children verified for reunification across the country.

Though the working group on reunification has successfully reunited more than 5,000 children with their families, more than 6,000 children still require family tracing and case management support.<sup>42</sup>



### A true story

*This conversation was adapted from an interview Domitilla de Luca Bossa, an 18-year-old student from Italy, conducted in September 2017 with an 18-year-old migrant from West Africa. The interview was held in English and was part of UNICEF's Voices of Youth blogging internship programme. This version has been condensed.*

I'd like to introduce you to an 18-year-old boy, who I will call Ulysses, the most famous traveller. I will not mention his real name, but I can tell you he was one of the many who crossed the Mediterranean to reach Italy on one of the more dangerous journeys. My hope is that you will see him as a person who has been influenced by his experience as a migrant, but who cannot be defined only by it.

Let's start!

**Question:** How would you describe yourself in three words?

**Answer:** The first word I would use is lucky, because, although I have encountered difficulties in my life, I am fortunate to have survived and moved on. I also consider myself a fighter. I have struggled and keep struggling for myself and others. Lastly, I see myself as someone who seeks change and new experiences.

**Q:** When did you leave your country? How old were you?

**A:** I left in 2015. I was 15 years old.

**Q:** Could you share one memory of human kindness during your journey?

**A:** The majority of them are bad memories, and they remind me of many negative moments. One of these is when I saw someone being shot in his right leg because he wouldn't keep quiet when he was told to do so. Nevertheless, there were also some small moments of kindness. One of these moments was when I was offered by a man to stay with him and he would take care of me instead of me going to Italy. I rejected because you shouldn't trust people too easily.

**Q:** Did you find Italy different from what you expected?

**A:** I found it different because I had never experienced this level of racism. One of my friends was walking in the street and suddenly a man on a motorbike stopped and spit on him. It was shocking.

**Q:** What do you like the most and the least about Italy?

**A:** I like the fact that Italian people honour their culture and religion. They never forget them.

What I like the least is in the answer to your previous question. But I know not everyone is racist; in a society, there are good and bad people.

**Q:** What did you do in your country on a normal day?

**A:** I used to go to school, and then I used to play football or volleyball with my friends or go into the forest to be in nature. Every other Saturday I also took part in a radio programme focused on theatre. I am an actor.

**Q:** What do you do in a normal day now?

**A:** Usually I go to school. Last year I got the *licenza media* (middle school diploma) and I will start high school. I am also part of associations helping migrants in one way or another.

**Q:** What issues are you passionate about?

**A:** I think the first issue I am passionate about is social inclusion and defying the image of migrants given by media. They make it seem as if migrants were all bad people and if we do something negative it is always on the first page. In line with this, I am very passionate about fighting racism and discrimination. In my view, they have to be eradicated, as they are really hindering the development of the world.

**Basketball fan:** 14-year-old Zein Al-Faraji from Iraq talks and spins a basketball at a refugee housing centre in Austria.

© UNICEF/UN0120126/Gilbertson VII Photo

**Q:** What would you like to become in the future?

**A:** I would like to work in the media sector, possibly becoming a journalist.

**Q:** What would you say to those who wish countries would prohibit refugees from entering their borders?

**A:** I think my words for them would be: Everyone is a migrant. The world is created for us to explore it. We are all equal everywhere we go and we should be treated as such. You never know, you might find yourself having to migrate in the future. We should not allow borders to be closed, we owe it to our young generation.

**Q:** At the end of the interview I was feeling quite emotional. When Ulysses brought up the point of racism in Italian society, I felt ashamed. When he answered my last question, I was surprised. It was the same idea expressed by Kant, whose *Perpetual Peace* I had recently read in school. Kant formulated a concept of hospitality and world citizenship from his studies. Ulysses arrived at it from his experience.





## Keep refugee and migrant children learning and healthy

For many children, migration to a different country can offer opportunity – for better health, education, employment and social services.

But for far too many refugee and migrant children, legal, procedural, financial, cultural and social barriers keep children from accessing services. For example:<sup>43</sup>

- Refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than other children
- Only 50 per cent of refugee children are enrolled in primary school
- Less than 25 per cent of refugee youth are enrolled in secondary school

A child's migration status should never be a barrier to accessing services. Around the world, governments and partners are engaged in efforts to provide children with the services they need to create better lives for themselves.

In education, for example, governments have developed comprehensive efforts to improve learning opportunities for migrants and children in host communities. Turkey for example, expanded access to education for more than

588,000 Syrian refugees.<sup>44</sup> In Germany, early childhood development and learning programmes were provided.<sup>45</sup> In Greece, efforts were made to provide language training to new arrivals.<sup>46</sup> In Jordan, social services and social welfare benefits, including cash transfers have helped Syrian refugee families and children.

Linking children with services is essential for their well-being, but many children shy away from seeking help out of fear of being reported to immigration authorities. In cities including Geneva, Munich and Seoul, the solution has been to establish 'firewalls' that keep information from being shared between service providers and immigration authorities. These firewalls promise confidentiality and security that can encourage migrant and refugee children – even those without the proper paperwork – to access quality services without fear.<sup>47</sup>

The Agenda for Action, in Policy Ask 4, calls for governments to provide refugee and migrant children access to services including education and health care. Three case studies are outlined below. They look at a comprehensive effort in Lebanon to provide quality education to refugee children and children from host communities; an initiative in the United Republic of Tanzania to engage community-based health workers to deliver services to refugees and communities;



**Building together:** Lebanese and Syrian adolescents at an architecture workshop at a university in Lebanon.

© UNICEF/UN0127585/Khamissy



## Box 9. Education Cannot Wait

In response to the growing need to provide education for children in emergency settings, world leaders came together to establish a dedicated fund and a movement of support. Launched in May 2016, Education Cannot Wait seeks to generate greater shared political, operational and financial commitment to fulfil the educational needs of children in emergencies.

In December 2017, the Secretariat for Education Cannot Wait is hosted by UNICEF with support from partners including Australia, Canada, Denmark, Dubai Cares, European Union, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Education Cannot Wait raised US\$151.3 million as of November 2017 and is working to promote access to quality education for 3.4 million children – including 1.4 million girls. Its efforts also include promoting support for nearly 20,000 teachers in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Madagascar, Nepal, Peru, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda, Ukraine and Yemen.

Education Cannot Wait features three funding windows: First Response Grants, which are offered at the onset or escalation of crises; the Multi-Year Resilience Windows, which provide sustained funding in protracted crises to bridge the relief and development gap; and the Acceleration Facility, which makes targeted investment in global research and learning activities.

**Source:** Education Cannot Wait, <<http://www.educationcannotwait.org/>>.

and a comprehensive programme of services in Jordan that features a cash transfer system for disadvantaged Syrian refugee families and children.

### Lebanon: Strengthening education systems for all children

When large numbers of refugees escaping the war in the Syrian Arab Republic arrived in Lebanon seeking shelter, the Government of Lebanon faced the challenge of accommodating hundreds of thousands of children in a public school system already under strain.

With the support of international partners, the Government of Lebanon showed leadership and turned challenge into opportunity. Rather than providing education in camps or

informal settlements, Lebanon's Ministry of Education and Higher Education embarked on an ambitious plan to integrate refugee children into the public schools while strengthening the education system for all students. Donors and the government worked together to develop human resources, infrastructure, curricula and services that led to upgrades in Lebanon's education system – many improvements that would not have otherwise been possible.

The programme, Reaching All Children with Education (RACE), was launched in 2013 and has become an example of ways to bridge the divides between national development and humanitarian response.

RACE was initiated and led by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in close coordination and with the support of the international community and United Nations agencies. In addition to efforts to include refugee children in the public school system, RACE focuses on improving access to education for Lebanese children, improving the quality of learning opportunities, and strengthening the administration and governance systems.<sup>48</sup>

Already there has been some success. RACE has helped the public school system handle an increase in student enrolment, which has doubled from 2011. In the 2016–2017 school year, 204,000 Lebanese children and 195,000 non-Lebanese children attended public school.<sup>49</sup> Now, in its second phase, RACE expects to provide education to about 470,000 Syrian children aged 3 to 18 over the next four years.

The growth was possible, in part, because the Ministry of

Education and Higher Education increased the number of 'second shift' schools from 88 in 2013 to 314 in 2017. Non-Lebanese children in second shift schools have an 86 per cent attendance rate, which is near the region's average attendance rate of 90 per cent. And nearly 60 per cent of refugee children who took Grade 9 exams passed in 2016.<sup>50</sup>

Enrolment also grew because the Government of Lebanon waived school fees in public schools for Lebanese and Syrian children, increased efforts to reach out-of-school children, incorporated child protection referral programmes for children who are victims of violence, and offered education grants that allowed economically disadvantaged families to choose school over labour for their children.

The effort to include refugee children in the public schools also benefited from a strong Accelerated Learning Programme, which was accredited by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The programme was a joint effort with Lebanon's education ministry and local and international non-governmental organizations. It reached out to Syrian children aged 7 to 17 who had missed at least two years of school and prepared them to join the formal education system.<sup>51</sup>

The Accelerated Learning Programme offered a condensed version of the Lebanese curriculum that focused on the core subjects of math, Arabic, English and French. The three-to four-month programme also provided comprehensive modules aimed at providing psychosocial support, life skills and assistance for children with acute health, psychological and social problems. It was designed to facilitate students'

transition into the formal public education system. In 2017, 20,000 children are expected to attend the programme. The goal for 2018 is to reach 22,000.<sup>52</sup>

Evaluating progress and collecting data were also part of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's plans with an online platform that allowed administrators to collect information on children enrolled in the Accelerated Learning Programme and the second shift classes.

Despite the efforts, at least 100,000 registered refugee children of primary school age were not able to access formal education in the 2015 – 2016 school year. Many of the children who miss out are children with disabilities and children who face multiple disadvantages including forced labour and child marriage.

## United Republic of Tanzania: Community health workers reach refugees, save lives

Providing health care services to women, newborns and children can be a challenge in a refugee camp, where language and culture barriers exist along with overburdened and inadequate facilities, especially for health, water and sanitation.

In three refugee camps hosted by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, the challenge is met with comprehensive health care services supported by 295 Health Information Teams that reach out to refugees with vital health and hygiene information.<sup>53</sup>





**Painting:** A young boy at the Blue Dot Family Centre in Greece.

© UNICEF/UN030637/Gripiotis

The members of the health teams are recruited from within the communities of refugees that have developed in three camps, Mtendeli, Nduta and Nyarugusu. The community health teams are trained to disseminate information and provide referrals to the camps' health facilities.

In each of the camps, the teams visit households and schools and organize public meetings to offer information and guidance on prenatal, newborn and child health care. The teams promote good hygiene, breastfeeding, vaccination, growth monitoring, insecticide-treated mosquito nets, antenatal services and healthy infant and young child feeding practices – all life-saving interventions. They are also able to bridge language and culture divides. They are trained to spot signs of malnutrition and common childhood

illnesses during home visits so they can refer children and families to health care facilities.

The Health Information Teams are coordinated by the Tanzania Red Cross Society with support from UNICEF. They

#### **Box 10. A comprehensive crisis response - Strengthening the education system in Turkey for all children**

The war in the Syrian Arab Republic meant that many millions of refugees and migrants moved to Turkey. Indeed, more than 1.4 million Syrian children aged 0 to 17 years – more than 976,000 of them of school age – arrived in the country.

Though the sheer numbers and varied needs of refugee children presented major challenges for Turkey's Ministry of National Education, they also presented an opportunity.

Working closely with international and national partners, the Ministry of National Education embarked on an initiative to build a more inclusive and resilient education system that would meet the needs of all students – refugee or not.

The strategic pillars of the program include: safeguarding equitable access to relevant forms of learning for all Syrian and other refugee children; strengthening the capacity of education authorities; and promoting inclusive quality education and learning environments for all children.

As of September 2017, over 588,500 Syrian refugee children have benefited from the enhanced education system and were enrolled in temporary education centres and Turkish public schools across the country. For the first time since the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic began, more Syrian children are in school than out of school in Turkey.

Source: UNICEF Turkey

are part of a comprehensive set of services provided, in cooperation with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, by a cluster of international agencies and local non-governmental organizations including UNHCR, UNICEF, the World Food Programme and Doctors Without Borders.

In addition to community outreach, health services in the camps include two hospitals that provide standard services and antenatal clinics equipped to offer antenatal monitoring, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, newborn delivery and comprehensive and emergency obstetric care. Upon arrival at the camps, children are vaccinated against measles, rubella and polio. Afterwards, children younger than 1 year are enrolled in the Tanzanian national immunization programme and nutrition programmes for routine services available for mothers and children.

There is evidence that the health teams are effectively connecting with communities in the refugee centres. In the first half of 2017, the health teams reached 135,000 people in the Mtendeli and Nyarugusu camps and reached 120,000 people with information about Ebola prevention following an outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>54</sup> From July to September, the teams reached 86,569 refugees with messages about malaria and the importance of treatment.<sup>55</sup>

The Health Information Teams are also credited with providing information about healthy antenatal and birth practices. It seems that the messages are being received.

From July to September, 7,404 antenatal visits were conducted for pregnant women, and 98 per cent of 1,227

deliveries in the camps were attended by skilled health workers in the health facilities.<sup>56</sup> These efforts have contributed to maintaining the under-five crude mortality rate within the acceptable standards for emergencies in all three refugee camps.

### Jordan: Addressing social protection needs for vulnerable refugee children

Seven years since the war in the Syrian Arab Republic forced millions to flee their homes, Syrian refugees in Jordan face new adversities: dire poverty and deprivation, which lead to growing risks for children.<sup>57</sup>

Most Syrian refugees live in Jordan's disadvantaged communities where rents are affordable. Others must endure the country's extreme weather in informal tented settlements where they can live rent-free in return for labouring on local farms. With limited work opportunities and depleted savings, refugee families are turning more frequently to coping strategies that negatively affect their children. As a result, children drop out of school, are compelled to work, or forced to marry.

To address these risks, the Government of Jordan has embraced a Cash+ programme – a comprehensive package of social protection interventions that help vulnerable families, irrespective of nationality or refugee status, to meet their basic needs and keep their children in public schools. The goal of the programme is to strengthen resilience to



## Box 11. Blue Dots – A sign of continuing support

Starting in 2015, one of the largest mass movements of children and families in recent history arrived in countries across Europe. More than 1 million refugees and migrants – mostly from the Syrian Arab Republic – passed through the Western Balkans on the way to western Europe. At the height of the movement, upwards of 10,000 people a day would transit through some locations.

To improve the protection of children, UNICEF, UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross joined forces with governments to establish Child and Family Support Hubs. The hubs were known as Blue Dots, as they were branded with a blue dot so that children and their families could recognize them and immediately know what kinds of services would be available – whichever country they were in. They featured a package of services that, at a minimum, included a safe space for children and their families, reunification services, safe areas for children to play and to identify children at risk, private areas for breastfeeding, and legal and psychosocial counselling. Staff and volunteers at the centres followed standardized operating procedures – which included referral mechanisms for unaccompanied and other vulnerable children to national child protection services when needed, and training undertaken to ensure that frontline workers supporting children were providing quality support.

At different times, Blue Dot centres operated at 18 key locations on the migratory route from Greece through to Slovenia, including in Croatia, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The Child and Family Support Hubs were conceived to be flexible enough to respond to the changes in migration routes that followed border closures and changes in policy towards refugees and migrants in countries across the region. When families found themselves stranded, the hubs were adapted to provide children with catch-up educational activities, psychosocial support and other forms of service provision more suited to populations that were, at least for the foreseeable future, unable to move onwards.

The Blue Dot model provides an example of a one-stop approach to providing services and support for uprooted populations. It is a model that can be replicated in other instances of mass movements of refugees or migrants.

economic shocks so families do not have to resort to coping mechanisms that place their children in danger.

Cash+ offers a comprehensive package of social protection initiatives including cash assistance, case management and service referral mechanisms. It also includes behaviour change communication and monitoring of children's enrolment and attendance in school.

The origins of Cash+ go back to 2015 with a Child Cash Grant programme initiated by UNICEF Jordan. That programme

addressed the needs of the most vulnerable Syrian families living in host communities who were registered as refugees. As part of this programme, US\$28 per child per month was transferred to help families meet their children's basic needs and prevent them from resorting to negative coping strategies. While the cash transfer was unconditional, it was made clear to families that the purpose of the grant was to contribute towards their children's expenses.

From February 2015 to November 2017, monthly assistance was provided to 55,000 girls and boys from 15,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian families registered as refugees.

Monitoring results have shown that these cash transfers have improved the lives of Syrian children and their families. The transfers allowed families to meet critical survival needs and avoid harmful coping strategies that put their children at risk. The cash transfer even allowed families to increase spending on their children's schooling and health. As a result, academic performance improved for some of the most vulnerable refugee children. Cash transfers also helped to improve intra-household relationships by reducing family stress.

Cash grant programmes such as Cash+ have been among the most important social protection tools in Jordan. They have offered examples of ways to connect humanitarian responses to longer-term development goals. The many lessons from Cash+ are now being applied to child- and equity-focused social protection reform in Jordan.



**In it together:** Hikmat, 12, and his friend Abdullah, 11, who helps him when the going gets muddy in the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan.

© UNICEF/UN056395/Herwig



# Memories of School in a refugee camp BY ALI SULEIMAN

My passion for education began at a young age, probably just before I was 6 years old. But this passion didn't start with a love of learning. It began with a little curiosity and a feeding programme in the Dadaab refugee camp where I grew up.

Even before I was old enough to attend classes, I used to follow my cousins to a school in the camp, grab a cup, and sneak into the line and wait my turn to be served the milk given out to students. I longed to one day intermingle with my peers and join the fun and entertaining life in school.

Though my parents did not have an education, they understood its value. So, when I was 6, I joined a group of about a dozen children, mostly relatives and neighbours, who were taken to the first day of school by my maternal uncle, who happened to be a pupil in Grade 6.

School was so much fun – playing football and kite running with my peers. I longed for the physical education period and, when the bell would ring, I would rush to the field and set the stage for the hide-and-seek game, my favourite physical activity. I also enjoyed playing with toys. I used to make animals out of soaked clay. This not only helped me pass time, it also helped me to be creative and understand the lessons.

Those days, it felt like the refugee education system in Dadaab was of quality. We were taught by trained and experienced teachers from other parts of Kenya – teachers who spoke English and Swahili, Kenya's two official languages. Learning the languages helped me understand the lessons and communicate with other Kenyans.

The school uniforms were offered for free. Textbooks, exercise books, pens and other learning materials were not a burden for parents and guardians. During the academic day, there were lots of rewards in categories such as academic performance, good conduct and punctuality. Bright pupils who shone in the exams used to go home with rewards including non-food items such as utensils.

I felt the schoolchildren in our camp had a bigger advantage than our counterparts who were not in school.

The firm foundation I got in primary education in the Dadaab refugee camp helped me transition into secondary school in the camp – and succeed.

Now I am pursuing a degree in political science at the University of Nairobi. I hope one day to be a policymaker, focusing on quality education. I treasure my success so far and I am grateful to my exceptional parents and all those who gave me a helping hand as I attended primary school in a refugee camp.

When most of the people hear about refugees, an image of hunger and a life of destitution swiftly comes to their mind. But with support and selfless well-wishers, the refugee experience can be life-changing.

As world leaders come together to write the compacts that will affect the lives of refugees and migrants, I urge them to remember that education in a refugee camp can change lives. And I remind them that every child has the right to receive not only education but also a quality education – whether a refugee or not.

Through effective policies and smart investment each country can offer quality education in pursuit of Sustainable Development Goal 4. Refugee children rely on the international community. In this sense, I would like to request world leaders to emphasize refugee children's education and provide refugees with the necessary material, and psychosocial and nutritional support to cope with their education.



**Learning:** A girl from South Sudan in primary school at the refugee settlement in the Adjumani District.

© UNICEF/UN026674/Everett





# Press for action on the causes that uproot children from their homes

In countries around the globe, governments and partners are working to address some of the root drivers of migration – including poverty, conflict, violence, limited job opportunities, and a lack of education, health care, water and sanitation services. Many of these efforts are linked to programmes and policies aimed at achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In the Agenda for Action, Policy Ask 5 calls for greater efforts to address the root causes of migration. Though there are many interlinked drivers of migration, the initiatives highlighted in this chapter were chosen because they address two major root causes – violence and natural disasters. Each involves governments and their partners. But the initiatives also rely on the energy and expertise of children, teachers and communities.

## Countries of Central America: Rebuilding safety at home

In El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, the northern region of Central America, gang-related violence seeps into children's lives – into their schools, their families and their communities.<sup>58</sup> Gangs' violent tactics place children and their families at risk of extortion, forced recruitment, assault and death.

The pervasive violence in the region is compounded by poverty, inequity and limited access to quality education, social services and employment.<sup>59</sup> Although these elements all influence children's decisions to embark on dangerous journeys in search of safety and opportunity, many children say gang violence compelled them to leave their communities of origin.<sup>60</sup>

In 2016, nearly 60,000 unaccompanied children were apprehended at the border of Mexico and the United States. Most of them were from countries in Central America.<sup>61</sup>

To address the root causes of violence and inequity that push children towards migration, the Governments of El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala are working with partners to reduce inequities and violence.

In Honduras and El Salvador, governments are working to protect children from violence by focusing on education, health and child protection.<sup>62-63-64</sup> The initiatives with governments and local partners aim to keep children in school, make schools safer, strengthen community centres, and collaborate with local government, community partners and NGOs to provide specialized child protection services to children affected by gang violence. Ultimately, the goal is to create a community in which no child is forced to migrate because of gang violence.<sup>65</sup>



**On return:** Robert Rodriguez, 15, at the Nuestras Raices shelter in Guatemala after an attempt to migrate north.

© UNICEF/UN027502/Volpe





In El Salvador, the governments in five municipalities – Ciudad Delgado, San Marcos, San Martín, Santo Tomás and Soyapango – are engaged in a pilot programme to address the high rates of violence and child migration. The goals are to improve availability and accessibility of violence prevention programmes, increase educational opportunities, and improve the capacity of local government to prevent and respond to violence. Key among the initiatives is a Child Protection Surveillance and Warning System. The warning system's main purpose is to identify the most at-risk children and refer them to appropriate protection services, such as psychosocial support, vocational training and second-chance learning for out-of-school children and returning child migrants. The programme also focuses on revitalizing public spaces, turning them into safe, child-friendly areas that offer children sports, theatre and other recreational activities.<sup>66</sup> So far, about 3,500 children, adolescents and community leaders have benefited from the results of these interventions even as the programme continues to roll out across the country.<sup>67</sup>

In Honduras, the Ministry of Education has worked with partners to find solutions to school-based violence. After an assessment of the violence in the schools, the education ministry embarked on the Strategy for the Construction of Peace, Coexistence and Citizenship.<sup>68</sup>

The strategy places children, schools and communities at the centre of efforts to reduce violence. It includes five essential components:

1. Increase community participation in the schools
2. Identify potential student leaders and provide support as

they build school-based committees engaged in theatre, arts, music and sports

3. Diagnose schools' security issues through interviews with students, teachers and parent associations and work with community members and school officials to address them
4. Train teachers to interact with students
5. Provide guidance on school administration and governance

The five elements of the strategy are integrated into schools' workplans and implemented by the school administration. The programme has reached 45,000 children in 70 schools, all in regions with high crime rates.<sup>69</sup>

Students including 13-year-old Katherine from Choloma are instrumental to the success of the strategy.<sup>70</sup> Katherine serves as the president of her school's Committee for Peace, Coexistence and Citizenship. In her role, she is putting the concept of peacebuilding into practice in the schoolyard by calling attention to situations before they escalate to violence and giving informational talks in classrooms. "Most importantly, we try to lead by example," she said.

## **Viet Nam: Child-centred disaster risk reduction**

Since 2014, severe drought, water shortages and salt intrusion have affected approximately 2 million people in the South-Central Coast, Central Highlands and Mekong Delta regions of Viet Nam. As of May 2017, more than a quarter of them were children.<sup>71</sup>

In Viet Nam, one of the countries most susceptible to the long-term effects of climate change,<sup>72</sup> children are exposed to consequences that can impact their nutrition, health, education and social protection.

Indeed, children are often disproportionately affected by slow onset disasters such as those experienced in Viet Nam.<sup>73</sup> In addition, children too often have little chance to voice their concerns about the climate change-related issues that affect their lives, especially in their early years.<sup>74</sup>

To address children's vulnerability, the Government of Viet Nam and partners including UNICEF embarked on a child-centred vulnerability mapping in 2016. The mapping highlighted the environmental and climate change-related risks that exacerbate vulnerabilities and inequities among Viet Nam's children. The mapping also showed that these disasters were among the reasons children and their families were forced to migrate within Viet Nam.<sup>75</sup>

The child-centred mapping exercise was part of multiple initiatives to address emergency responses and efforts to reduce the risks children face from disasters and climate change. In 2016, efforts included a large-scale response to drought and saltwater intrusion caused by the El Niño weather pattern.<sup>76</sup> The response reached 153,488 beneficiaries with nutrition interventions.

In addition, UNICEF and Viet Nam's Ministry of Labour, Invalids, and Social Affairs co-led a child-protection assessment of Ninh Thuan, one of the most drought-affected provinces in the country. The assessment identified protection concerns caused when parents were forced to migrate in search of work,

leaving children with other caregivers. Recommendations from the assessment highlighted the need to establish a short-term foster-care model to protect children when their parents are forced to migrate.

In the aftermath of the emergency response efforts in 2016, the *Joint Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)-UNICEF Vision and Positioning Note on Child-Centred Disaster Risk Reduction for Viet Nam* was developed. The positioning note established a framework for child-centred disaster risk reduction in Viet Nam. The framework linked short-term humanitarian responses with long-term development objectives to build children's and family's resilience to climate change.<sup>77</sup> The framework also focused on children's vulnerabilities in the face of disaster and provides a platform for sharing the practices that can reduce the risk.<sup>78</sup>

The child-centred framework prescribed a multi-stakeholder approach that focused on: strengthening child and social protection systems to address the underlying inequities and deprivations that force migration; engaging children's families and communities in disaster risk reduction efforts; and providing guidance on behavioural change, communication and life skills education.

The framework has also been recognized as a valuable contribution to placing children at the centre of efforts to achieve the goals set out in Sendai Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals. The framework will also be used to strengthen national disaster risk reduction efforts,<sup>79</sup> and it can serve as a model for child-centred disaster risk reduction throughout the region.<sup>80</sup>

## Refugees Welcome: A story about fear and love BY PIA FLEIG

About a year ago, Europe was shattered by a couple of terrorist attacks, especially in France and in Germany.

I'm from Germany and, let me say, we were all immensely scared. No place – not even a little church in the countryside – seemed safe anymore. Germany had taken in a million refugees and it seemed that things got out of control.

Please believe me, I'm the last person to develop right-wing thoughts. But after the attacks, I came to know fear and how it can create a hostile mindset. Fear clouded my perception of how things actually were, and it made me jump to false – and dangerous – conclusions.

Many people here in Germany wanted to stop taking in more refugees. They wanted to feel secure again. I wanted that, too.

For some time now, I have volunteered in a refugee camp. To get into the old military base I have to pass security, show my worker badge and cross brick walls and barbed wire fences. From the outside, it seems almost a little dangerous, and you're not sure what is going on behind those walls.

Well, let me say this: It is very peaceful. Different cultures, different religions and different values live

there together – and nothing bad has ever happened so far. Behind every face there is a story, an excess of nightmares and a will to live.

I absolutely love going to work. The children and young adults teach me valuable lessons: How to communicate without words; how to be friends no matter your background or your belief; how to laugh loudly; how to be enthusiastic; and how to love.

Every morning, the small children run to you and hug you, and you play games with them without knowing the rules. The elder ones teach you how to play volleyball and you teach them German words. It is like a huge family. I wouldn't know a reason why I should not like them, why I should perceive them as a disturbance, let alone a threat.

To be honest: I haven't experienced so much peace and compassion in a long time. If only our society would see behind the dark hair and the harsh sounding language – we could learn a lot.

Terrorism is a real threat in this world. But we cannot meet extremism with extremism. We cannot judge an entire crowd because of one human being. Just from reading one piece and listening to some loud politicians we shouldn't jump to a conclusion that can have bigger consequences. It can create unnecessary conflict.

Instead of letting fear be my motor, love should be. I know this now. At a giant firework display that took place in Cologne, there was an official minute of silence for the victims of the terrorist attacks. And I swear you couldn't hear a sound in the entire city.

It was a truly powerful action and it was led by love, not by fear.

Though I, too, experienced moments of fear, I am grateful that I can also interact with refugees and learn from them. Now more than ever, I can say: Dear refugees, you are still very, very welcome.

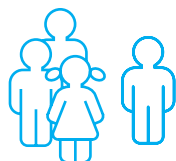
*Pia is a 20-year-old from Germany who volunteers in a refugee centre and attends medical school.*



**Tickles:** Tesfit, 25, and  
Bettie, 3, both from Eritrea  
at a reception centre in Italy.

© UNICEF/UN020042/  
Gilbertson VII Photo





# Combat xenophobia and discrimination

Leaving home is only part of the migrant and refugee journey. Once a child has arrived, the challenge becomes integrating into new surroundings. Even in countries of destinations, children struggle with poverty and lack of access to services.

Too many children confront xenophobia and discrimination even as they try to learn a new language and integrate into a new culture. In Germany, for example, there were 3,767 attacks on refugee seekers in 2016.<sup>81</sup>

There are many initiatives underway around the world that provide children with assistance as they navigate the complications of integrating into new surroundings. In New York City, the mayor's office and partners from the public and private sectors reach directly into immigrant communities to link children with the services they need to feel at home.

## New York: It takes a city

Each year, thousands of unaccompanied children flee gang violence and poverty in Central America and make the hazardous journey to the United States in search of a better life.<sup>82</sup>

Since 2013, more than 200,000 unaccompanied children have migrated to the United States.<sup>83</sup> From October 2013 to September 2017, 17,488 unaccompanied migrant youth were released to sponsors in New York state.<sup>84</sup> For those arriving in New York City, many faced the challenges of integrating into big city life while navigating the complex procedures for securing the appropriate immigration status.<sup>85</sup>

For children without the appropriate documents, finding services in their new surroundings was hampered by the constant fear of deportation and the stigma associated with their immigration status.<sup>86</sup>

To combat the stigma and link unaccompanied children with services, the New York City Mayors Office of Immigrant Affairs works with city agencies and a network of local and national NGOs to reach out to unaccompanied and undocumented migrant children and connect them to crucial services. The city's interventions include: helping immigrants up to age 21 enrol in classes tailored to their specific learning needs; connecting them to public health insurance for immigrant children and pregnant mothers; and linking immigrants to legal services to assist with claims related to their immigration status, including asylum. In addition, the city distributes comprehensive information on available services and providers for recently arrived immigrants.



**Seeking safety:** Jalil, 15, from Afghanistan kicks a ball outside a shelter in Greece.

© UNICEF/UN057943/Gilbertson VII Photo







**Taking a break:** A 17-year-old from the Gambia, who lives in a shelter for asylum seekers, during a walk through town.

© UNICEF/UN020027/Gilbertson VII Photo

Among the efforts is ActionNYC, a program funded by New York City that provides free and safe immigration legal services in neighbourhoods, public schools and New York City's public hospitals system.

New York City funds a variety of programmes that provide free legal assistance and representation to immigrants, including immigration legal services targeted at youth and young adults, children in foster care and unaccompanied children living in New York City. Since 2014, New York City has supported the Unaccompanied Minors Initiative and the Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Effort (ICARE), a public-private partnership that provides free legal and social services to unaccompanied children living in New York City.<sup>87</sup> The New York City Council currently funds ICARE, which consists of non-profits that came together in 2014 to address the surge of immigrant children living in New York City.

In New York, Terra Firma also represents unaccompanied children. The organization formed in 2013 as a partnership between Catholic Charities, the Children's Hospital at Montefiore and the Children's Health Fund. Terra Firma provides holistic psychosocial support, health care and legal services for undocumented migrant children. The model is based on an understanding that migrant children often experience trauma, which can affect their health and legal status.

In addition, Terra Firma offers English, nutrition, and exercise classes, and fields a soccer team. These activities allow migrant children to have a more stable adolescence, facilitating their confidence to integrate into society, build friendships and confront discrimination and stigma.<sup>88</sup>

From 15 children in 2013, Terra Firma now serves more than 400 immigrant children and is expanding its services to include recently arrived immigrant families, many of whom are young mothers with children fleeing extreme violence.



### Italy: Legal protections that foster integration

Uprooting from home is only part of the migrant and refugee journey. Once a child has arrived, the challenge becomes integrating into new surroundings.

Providing equal treatment under the law for uprooted children is essential if they are to integrate into new societies. To protect children from discrimination, attack, abuse and neglect, the Italian parliament passed the *Legge Zampa* (Provision of Protection) law in March 2017 after a two-year advocacy campaign by child rights organizations.<sup>89</sup>

The law creates a legislative framework to protect refugee and migrant children and is the first comprehensive act for unaccompanied children in Italy. Significantly, it includes budgetary provisions and six principle measures:<sup>90</sup>

1. Unaccompanied and separated children will not be subjected to a return to a country of origin that may cause them harm
2. Reduce the time children spend in first-line reception centres
3. Promote guardianship for children by using trained volunteers from the regional child and youth agency and promote the use of foster care and host families
4. Harmonize and improve procedures for age assessment in a child-sensitive manner
5. Establish a structured and streamlined national reception system with minimum standards in all reception facilities
6. Roll out extensive use of qualified cultural mediators to communicate and interpret needs of vulnerable adolescents



## CONCLUSION

**A**round the world, an estimated 50 million children migrated across borders or were forcibly displaced in 2015. More than half – 28 million children – fled the horrors of conflict, violence and insecurity.<sup>91</sup> For millions, the journey to safety was harrowing.

Far too many did not make it. Others survived and, with the right support, have thrived and contributed to the peace and prosperity of their new homes.

In 2018, United Nations Member States and their partners will finalize two global compacts – the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration – which will set international standards for how governments and communities deal with the refugees and migrants who arrive at their borders.

The issues addressed in the compacts will not just be about borders, workforces and security. They will be about people. And they will impact the futures of millions of children – children of all ages, all backgrounds, all cultures and all abilities.

The details of the compacts can guide Member States as they embrace the responsibility to protect and care for some of the world's most vulnerable children – migrant, displaced and refugee children.

As this report shows, the task of protecting and caring for children throughout their journeys as refugees and migrants is possible and practical. It can be achieved when governments work hand in hand with their neighbours, host communities, volunteers, and international and local partners.

### Box 12. The Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts

Leading up to the adoption of the global compacts on refugees and migrants, the Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts was founded by a coalition of organizations to raise awareness about the rights of uprooted children and children whose lives are affected by migration.

The initiative draws on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and guidance from the Committee on the Rights of the Child to advocate for a common approach to protecting uprooted children in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees.

At the Global Conference on Children on the Move, held in Berlin in 2017, representatives from governments, civil society, multilateral institutions and the private sector came together to establish a strong global strategy to protect children's rights.

At the Berlin conference, international organizations agreed on recommendations for inclusion in the compacts. The recommendations included: integrated child protection care and services throughout a child's journey as a migrant or refugee; recognition of the specific needs of unaccompanied and separated children; and equal access to education, health care and social welfare for migrant and refugee children. The recommendations also underline the importance and benefits for migrant and refugee children – and host communities – of combating discrimination and xenophobia, and increasing the regular migration pathways available to children and families.

**Source:** Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts, <<http://www.childrenonthemove.org/>>; Bhabha, Jacqueline and Mike Dottridge and Amy Hong, 'Child Rights in the Global Compacts: Recommendations for protecting, promoting and implementing the human rights of children on the move in the proposed global compacts', Working Document, Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts, 30 May 2017. <[http://www.childrenonthemove.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Draft-2-of-working-document\\_clean\\_5-June-2017.pdf](http://www.childrenonthemove.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Draft-2-of-working-document_clean_5-June-2017.pdf)>

The cases presented in this report outline some key factors that can help governments and their partners translate the Agenda for Action into practice. They highlight the importance of:





**A wide world:** Adolescent migrants describe their route to a centre for asylum seekers in Italy.  
© UNICEF/UN020011/Gilbertson VII Photo



### Box 13. Guidance for making the global compacts work for children

Following over two years of extensive consultations with civil society organizations and migrant and child rights associations, in September 2017, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families adopted four complementary Joint General Comments. The documents address the protection of migrant workers and their families and outline governments' obligations regarding the human rights of international migrant children in countries of origin, transit, destination or return.

The joint general comments aim to protect children's rights, which are particularly vulnerable in the context of international migration. The comments: draw governments' attention to guidelines for developing policies that protect children and their rights when they are migrating internationally; promote a clearly articulated interpretation of relevant provisions of the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families and Convention on the Rights of the Child; assist in the continued implementation of these conventions; and highlight the relevance of a rights-based approach to addressing the needs of children who migrate internationally.

The guidance contained in the joint general comments is equally applicable to all State Parties of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Protection on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

#### 1. Investing in strong national child protection systems to protect uprooted children from exploitation and violence.

The global compacts should urge Member States to provide appropriate and integrated child protection care and services for all refugee and migrant children starting when they first arrive at the border. As the example from Sweden shows, protection begins the moment a child is identified and continues as local child protection services provide a dedicated case worker to each unaccompanied child. In Germany and West Africa, authorities use existing child protection systems to build protective services for refugee and migrant children.

As these examples show, when countries invest in child protection systems, they establish a foundation of support and care for uprooted children. Essential to creating this foundation are workers who understand the importance of children's rights and are trained to assess risks and implement standards of care and protection. The case studies also underline the importance of cross-border cooperation and mechanisms that protect children, regardless of where they are.

#### 2. Political commitment to moving progressively towards ending the practice of detaining children because of their immigration status.

The compacts need to build on and strengthen the commitments that Member States made in the New York Declaration to progressively work towards ending the detention of children for immigration control purposes. With the support of United Nations agencies and civil society organizations, governments need to identify and implement alternatives to detention that respect children's rights, are enacted in their best interests, and allow refugee and migrant children to remain with their family members or guardians while their immigration status is resolved. Reliable evidence and data on children in detention are crucial to ending the practice. The examples in this report also illustrate how independent human rights organizations can monitor the situation and advocate for political commitment to providing alternatives to detention for migrant and refugee children.

### 3. Birth registration and reunification mechanisms to keep families together and give children legal status.

States need to extend their existing birth registration services to include migrant and refugee children, take measures to provide multiple avenues for granting migrant and refugee children residence status, and enact explicit legal provisions that confirm children's right to participate in the decisions that concern them. The global compacts should reiterate the commitments of the New York Declaration to provide child protection and immigration authorities with the skills and resources they need to identify and screen vulnerable children, especially unaccompanied and separated children, and undertake the necessary steps to reunite them with their families. As the examples from Afghanistan and South Sudan show, reuniting vulnerable children with family members requires shared referral mechanisms, cross-border cooperation and clear procedures for determining the status of migrant children.

### 4. Comprehensive care and access to services that help uprooted children stay in school and stay healthy.

Children who have been uprooted from their homes have the same needs and rights as all children. Governments already are engaged in efforts to provide health, education and social care for all children in their countries. But the Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees these rights to children regardless of where they are and what their migration status is. This guarantee to protect and care for vulnerable refugee

and migrant children was reiterated in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. To meet these obligations, the global compacts can include concrete measures to:

- Provide all refugee and migrant children with protection, shelter, nutrition, education, water and sanitation
- Offer psychosocial care to those who have experienced upheaval or trauma
- Establish firewalls between service providers and immigration and law enforcement authorities to build trust with children most in need
- Encourage cross-border collaboration and cooperative involvement of all development and humanitarian response sectors

As this report shows, these recommendations can be put into practice. In Lebanon, partners from government and the international community acted ambitiously to prevent Syrian children from missing vital years of education because they were refugees. At the same time, the Government of Lebanon strengthened the public school system for Lebanese students. The Education Cannot Wait initiative demonstrates the commitment of donors to provide similar opportunities for other children affected by emergencies around the world. As the case in the United Republic of Tanzania shows, reaching refugees is enhanced when communities are engaged in the efforts.



**5. Addressing the causes that uproot children from their homes to ensure that migration takes place by choice, and not necessity.**

The global compacts must do more to encourage cooperation and investment in initiatives that support sustainable development and create communities where children are not forced from their homes. For far too many children, migration is the only escape they see from the pervasive violence or protracted crises that surround them and the only alternative to a future of limited learning and job opportunities. Poverty also drives children to seek better opportunities. Indeed, the reasons children leave are often interlinked and complex.

In addition to addressing the situations that cause children to leave their homes, the compacts need to focus on expanding the range of safe and regular pathways to migration – especially for children.

To provide children with peace, order and opportunity in their communities of origin, international and national efforts need to focus on resolving protracted conflicts, addressing the breakdown in the rule of law and combating the pervasive violence that blights too many communities. The initiatives to address these challenges begin in communities themselves.

As the examples from Central America show, with financial and technical support, communities, schools and children can engage in creative methods of preventing and responding to violence. In Viet Nam,

the Government worked with children, families and communities to identify ways to prepare for and respond to the effects of climate change. As climate change continues to adversely impact communities, similar initiatives will be needed so that children no longer believe migration is their only choice for survival.

**6. Actively supporting integration and inclusion through collective action to protect uprooted children from discrimination and xenophobia.**

Despite its long history, refugee and migrant children are still often greeted by discrimination and xenophobia – during their journeys and in their new surroundings. Forward-thinking communities have recognized that working to integrate and include migrant and refugee children and families as soon as they arrive helps everyone. It is beneficial for children, families and nations. Governments need to establish strong national laws, such as those in Italy, that promote the inclusion of migrants. In New York, local government, community leaders, religious organizations, NGOs and the private sector have come together to welcome migrants and refugees with a range of support services designed to integrate them. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework recognizes the importance of including host communities as equal partners in programmes that respond to refugees and underlines the importance of identifying the benefits of inclusion and integration – for all.



**A look towards the future:** Sidra, 7, outside her shelter in the Za'atari refugee camp.  
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As government officials and experts draft the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, they have an unparalleled opportunity to marshal the resources, commitment and political will needed to protect and care for refugee, migrant and displaced children. They have the chance to embrace a shared responsibility and invest in uprooted children and the host communities where they build their new homes. They can choose to reach across borders to protect children from their country of origin to country of destination, and often, back again.

The two new global compacts have the power to establish safe, sustainable and well-managed pathways for children as they move in search of protection and opportunity. For migrant, displaced and refugee children, these pathways do not simply run within and across borders. They are pathways to the future – theirs and ours.



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*Everyone is a migrant. The world is created for us to explore it. We are all equal everywhere we go and we should be treated as such. You never know, you might find yourself having to migrate in the future.*

*18-year-old migrant from West Africa*



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