

Children and Migration: Rights, Advocacy and Resilience

Context

Children and young people cross borders – within and outside states – in varying circumstances and for different reasons, both voluntary and involuntary. In a broad sense, economic, socio-political and environmental motivations influence children and young adults to migrate. Poverty has traditionally been one of the main drivers of child migration, particularly from rural to urban locations. However, there is now a recognition that the poorest cannot so easily migrate to another country. Children are also trafficked to provide labour or are forced to move because of political violence or environmental disasters.

Although the internal or domestic migration of children occurs frequently, it is perceived, albeit incorrectly, as an ordinary, everyday phenomenon. On the other hand, international migration of children is now more evident, and because of conflict-induced migration, it is understood as distinct, dangerous and traumatic. Mobility pathways deeply impact on a child's development and, as a consequence, the future of our world. We need to understand migration patterns, because they matter.

Child-sensitive and child-responsive research in this area is incredibly important and can explain the intricate dynamics not captured by more general research on migration. While vast amounts of data now exist chronicling the lives of migrants, we have less understanding of the movement of young people. Historically, receiving, transit and origin societies have been more tolerant of the migration of children and youth for a range of reasons. On the one hand, societies often have an exploitative interest in child migrants, who are valued for their labour, and on the other, there exists genuine compassion and recognition that the international community must commit to supporting child migrants. UNICEF's Young People's Agenda recognises the importance of empowering young people through education, training and employment opportunities, giving them the chance to change the future for them and their societies.

In this context, the Office of Research-Innocenti launched its new migration programme in 2017. This programme builds on Innocenti's existing expertise and UNICEF's work on the ground with children and adolescents in the areas of protection, justice, violence and well-being. A snapshot of our research is provided below.

Normative Basis

The SDG goals and targets¹ codify strategies of engagement on migration. Children's migration is relevant but not limited to SDGs 10.7, 1.2, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.a, 5.2, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, 16.1, and 16.2. Migration is also broadly mentioned throughout the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The best interests principle set forth in Article 3.1 in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) stipulates, 'The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions affecting children'. In addition, Article 2 (non-discrimination), Article 6 (the right to life, survival and development), Article 12 (the right to be heard) and Article 22 (refugee children) are extremely important in the context of children on the move. Finally, CRC



¹ On September 25th 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 accompanying targets as part of a global agenda to promote sustainable development over the next 15 years.

Catching Dreams and Building Hope for Children: Migration Pathways

General Comments, the authoritative guidance to States issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child on interpretation and implementation of the CRC, provide important legal frameworks that respond to the needs of children on the migration pathway.

The phenomenon of migration, and the dimension that it has today, poses new challenges to current international instruments. Article 22 of the CRC addresses refugee children as a special category within children on the move. The CRC does not include any specific reference to the right of children to move, as this is recognized under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights article 13 as well as many other international treaties. However, CRC articles 12 (the right of the child to be heard), 13 (the right to freedom of expression), and 14 (the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion) prescribe respect of children's views and their right to have their opinions taken into account. Innocenti's research program examines the relevance and effectiveness of the CRC in the context of the current migration patterns and pathways of children.

One key question to consider is how we can innovatively approach and resolve the challenges in order to support children whose lives are being shaped by migration, whether voluntary or involuntary.

Using the SDGs and the CRC as the normative frameworks and drawing from the insights of global datasets on children's displacement, we explore the norms and regulations, risks and vulnerabilities, protection needs, and finally the resilience of children as refugees and migrants in the context of global complexities.

Based on evidence, the *four key principles* guiding our migration research efforts include: creating a supportive policy environment; developing an age and gender-sensitive research agenda; promoting knowledge to support advocacy for displaced children; and fostering young people's leadership and participation.

It is important to note that the evolving research agenda largely focuses on understanding the phenomenon of forced migration, and consequently investigates the linkages between displacement of children and humanitarian contexts. In addition, our Gallup Poll research analyses child-related variables in all contexts of migration, including emergencies. Humanitarian contexts include natural disasters, conflict (sudden onset); protracted conflict or natural disaster (slow onset); and contexts of persistent vulnerability and instability. With the exponential rise of increased global interest and investment in research in children's movements, conflict zone dynamics and extensive data (both qualitative and quantitative) our challenge is to narrow this information down to undertake solid, ground-breaking research that will contribute to sound policy.

Given the context of migration, it is important to avoid duplication of research carried out by UNHCR, UNESCO and IOM, especially regarding environmental displacement, drivers of displacement, and integration of refugee and migration children. Our research will draw insights from existing findings, and we will closely collaborate with UNICEF country offices, regional offices, headquarters, and other institutions.

Central to Innocenti's research are the notions of justice and hope for children. It is also critical to engage with the data produced in the global South, including some of the grey literature on children's migration that delves into uncomfortable questions (eg acceptable forms of child labour/modern-day slavery). We propose to use an intersectional approach (of race, gender, age, class, caste, religion, sexual orientation, linguistic identity, location, and others), to provide evidence and insights using a multidisciplinary lens in order to inform UNICEF's migration-related functions.

In order to ensure a coherent, principled, and effective response, system-strengthening in humanitarian contexts should aim to better understand the complex realities of children who are displaced; to improve the quality of response by drawing insights from best practices and minimising gaps and duplication; to promote learning and good practice; and to respect humanitarian principles, including the humanitarian imperative, independence, impartiality, and neutrality. In the context of humanitarian challenges, child-sensitive and child-responsive migration policies, and developing an effective migration system require a

Catching Dreams and Building Hope for Children: Migration Pathways

unique approach to understanding evidence-based research, as not only about what works but when and in what way.

Our 2017 research agenda focuses on immediate priorities and knowledge gaps, and our longer-term agenda aims to develop deeper and broader research around the displacement of children.

UNICEF's six policy asks on migration and displacement are:

1. Protect child refugees and migrants, particularly unaccompanied children, from exploitation and violence
2. End the detention of children seeking refugee status or migrating
3. Keep families together as the best way to protect children and give them legal status
4. Ensure all refugee and migrant children are kept in education and have access to health and other quality services
5. Press for action on the underlying causes of large scale movements of refugees and migrants
6. Promote measures to combat xenophobia, discrimination and marginalization in countries of transit and destination.

UNICEF's six policy do's:

1. Innovate our way of working
2. Develop our policy and programming guidance
3. Strengthen our capacity
4. Improve and leverage our data, research and evidence base
5. Create powerful partnerships
6. Influence the narrative and change public hearts and mind

Migration Research 2017 - 2018

Project	Relevant UNICEF Policy Asks/Audience	Outputs
Protected on Paper? An analysis of Nordic country responses to asylum-seeking children	Policy Asks- 1, 3, 5 The Nordic policymakers (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland and Finland) and practitioners	Report based on primary data collection, desk review and in-depth legal research
Towards a child rights-based assessment tool to evaluate national responses to migrant and refugee children	Policy ask 1	Innocenti Brief
Displacement and Child-responsive Communication Strategies in Italy: Connecting Research and Advocacy	Policy Ask-6 Primarily practitioners, media, and policymakers	Innocenti working paper, Blog: Guardianship in Italy A seminar in collaboration with EUI and Osservatorio di Pavia; a news story, blog on hate speech, an event with children in Italian high schools. Workshop with University of Siena/Rondine master students on UASC in Italy.
Child-related concerns and migration decisions: evidence from Gallup world poll	Policy Ask-5 policymakers	Internal Innocenti brief and working paper, feeding into future report card, (depends on access to Gallup data) Blog: Key findings
Not Refugee Children, Not Migrant Children, Children First' –Lack of a	Policy Ask- 1, 4, 5 policymakers	Innocenti Brief Migration box in the report card

Catching Dreams and Building Hope for Children: Migration Pathways

Systematic and Integrated Approach		
Migration and inequality: Making policies inclusive for every child	Policy ask 1, 2, 4, 5 policymakers	Innocenti Brief, Migration box in the report card
Migration-Deportation Nexus Return of Afghans and Nigerians	Policy ask 1 and 2, researchers	Innocenti – Chatham House – Cambridge University paper Chatham House workshop
Strengthening multi-sectorial response to violence, abuse and exploitation (Somaliland, Ethiopia and Sudan)	Policy ask 1, 3, 5 practitioners, policymakers	Multi-country Report 3 country brief blog articles Two workshops

Longer-term Migration Research 2017- 2021

Project	Relevant Policy Asks/Audience	Outputs
Young People Under the Radar: Returned/Trafficked/Smuggled/Left Behind/UASCs/Detained/Statelessness/Disabled/IDPs/ Indigenous/Children in Slavery-like Conditions in Exploitative Labour and Child Marriage	Policy Asks-1,2, 3, 6 Policymakers, practitioners and researchers	Innocenti Brief and working papers, a conference, a special journal issue and an edited book with a reputable publisher
A Moving Landscape: Understanding the Migration-Security Nexus from Sending, to Transit, to Receiving States	Policy Asks-5,6 UNICEF, Policymakers and practitioners	Innocenti e-book based on five papers
Institutionalization of Children in the Systems of Migration	Policy Ask-2 UNICEF and researchers	Innocenti Brief and Special Journal Issue with Griffith University, Australia
Displacement and Identity: Looking through the Lens of Childhood	Policy Ask-6 Researchers and practitioners	A workshop with experts, a living document/ Innocenti Report (such as the Graça Machel Report) on children's identities in the migration pathway authored by a leading figure in child rights and migration advocacy (tbc)

Contact: Bina D'Costa bdcosta@unicef.org and Iolanda Genovese igenovese@unicef.org