

CHAPTER

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**United Nations  
Children's Fund**

**unicef** 



## United Nations Children's Fund

UNICEF (or the United Nations Children's Fund)<sup>1</sup>, guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), is dedicated to ensuring the rights of all children, adolescents, youth and women, including in the context of migration. As a long-time advocate for children's rights and gender equality, UNICEF works in partnership with governments, local authorities and civil society to promote rights-based policies, capacity development and institution-strengthening. It also supports policies and programmes in the field to address migration and development, as these affect children, adolescents and youth. The situation of the millions of people living outside their countries of birth is complex; they can face significant obstacles to their social inclusion at all stages of the migration process. Globalization and environmental change call for innovative approaches to achieve equity and identify potential opportunities for children, adolescents, youth and women in the context of migration.

UNICEF is currently working in some 63 countries on a variety of migration-related issues that affect equitable outcomes for children, adolescents, youth and women. The Organization monitors human rights and socioeconomic indicators and trends, and works with partners on a wide range of relevant migration and development issues, fostering evidence-based policies and programmes. It is committed to upholding a human rights- and gender-based approach in all of its human development and migration work with GMG partners and country stakeholders.

### 1. Migration and development activities since the 2006 High-level Dialogue

#### The 2006 High-level Dialogue and its aftermath

The 2006 HLD recognized the contribution of international migration to the economic and social development of countries of origin and destination and the increased feminization of migration, and called for migration policies that address inequalities, especially those arising from racial and gender discrimination and from entrenched poverty. However, few references were made to children, mostly only in the context of female migration.

<sup>1</sup> The International Children's Emergency Fund was created in December 1946 by the United Nations to provide food, clothing and health care to European children and their mothers who, after World War II, faced famine and disease. In 1953 the Organization became a permanent part of the United Nations and was renamed "United Nations Children's Fund." UNICEF is mandated by the UN General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, help meet their basic needs and expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which entered into force in September 1990 and is the most widely – and rapidly – ratified human rights treaty in history. The Organization strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children, insisting that the survival, protection and development of children are universal development imperatives that are integral to human progress. UNICEF is active in more than 190 countries and territories. For more information about UNICEF, its history and mission statement, visit [www.unicef.org/about/history/index.html](http://www.unicef.org/about/history/index.html) and [www.unicef.org/about/who/index\\_mission.html](http://www.unicef.org/about/who/index_mission.html).

Since 2006 UNICEF has: (a) addressed awareness-raising and policy dialogue on migration-related issues; (b) facilitated global and country-level research and analysis; (c) identified critical issues, (d) challenges, opportunities, good practices and lessons learned; and (e) brought human rights and gender to the centre of the migration and development conversation, focusing in particular on the social impact of migration on children, adolescents, youth and women. The Organization has worked to increase the visibility of children and women in migration and development policy discussions, acknowledging that children and women are vulnerable in the context of migration and need special protection, while recognizing them as agents of their own migration.

### **Gauging the socioeconomic impact of international migration**

Between 2006 and 2008, UNICEF research, policy and operational initiatives focused on the broad and multifaceted impact of international migration, especially on children and women left behind. The Organization's global and country-specific policy research in this area yielded evidence of both economic benefits to households and psychosocial and behavioural problems.

In 2006 UNICEF and the UN Special Unit for South–South Cooperation (SU/SSC) embarked on a global study of the social impact of migration and remittances on the human rights and well-being of children, adolescents and women left behind. The first phase comprised a comprehensive global literature review of the impacts of remittances. The second phase focused on developing a survey instrument on migration, to be incorporated into the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), as well as other UN household surveys; sampling recommendations for implementation of a country-level migration survey; and a set of guidelines and instructions for country offices. Four new modules were developed as part of the MICS methodology to gauge the impact of international migration on those left behind in four key areas: life satisfaction, health (non-disease-specific), migration and remittances.

With the support of its country offices, the UN SU/SSC and ILO, UNICEF piloted one of the first survey programmes ever designed to collect data on the impact of migration on the well-being of children left behind in their home countries. The research was carried out in Albania and Ecuador; and the Organization's final report, produced in 2009, indicates that those left behind are affected not only materially but also in psychosocial and other non-material ways.

UNICEF has also provided direct technical assistance to the El Salvador (2008–09) and Morocco (2009–10) Country Offices on survey design and implementation. In the Philippines, UNICEF-led research generated key findings in 2008 about the challenges for children of absent migrant parents, including reduced health-seeking behaviours, reduced insulation from the economic crisis and limited involvement in household decisions, alongside some positive effects. The Philippine initiative also led to major inter-agency policy dialogues supported by UNICEF, including the International

Conference on Gender, Migration and Development (ICGMD) in 2008, which brought together more than 430 participants to look at challenges and opportunities for migrant women and their families.<sup>2</sup> The conference endorsed the Manila Call to Action,<sup>3</sup> which highlights the importance of enhancing opportunities and protecting the rights of migrant women and their families.

UNICEF's Division of Policy and Strategy carried out a study in 2010 entitled "Migration, Development and Children Left Behind: A Multidimensional Perspective,"<sup>4</sup> which draws on original field research and an extensive review of scholarly and policy studies, to examine how migration affects a society's economic, social, political and cultural characteristics. The study calls for changes in a wide range of policies affecting migration that would result in more accountable, responsive and transparent institutions.

The Organization also supported the development of a social policy training module on migration,<sup>5</sup> which aims to provide UNICEF staff and partners with a basic grounding in the main concepts and tools necessary for migration policy work at the national and regional levels.

## Youth, employment and migration

Since 2007 UNICEF has been active in another initiative related to the socioeconomic impact of international migration: the Thematic Window on Youth, Employment and Migration. This window was created under the MDG-F (MDG Achievement Fund) to promote productive and decent work for young people. As a key partner organization, UNICEF has supported MDG-F joint programmes in 11 countries by providing technical support and funding, and advocating equity- and rights-driven policy frameworks. It also ensures that the joint programmes target areas of critical importance through country-level and needs-based assessments.

UNICEF has also worked jointly with ILO and IOM on the implementation of the Knowledge Management System<sup>6</sup> of this thematic window of the MDG-F, including through the production of two national studies. In partnership with ILO, UNICEF Philippines and Ecuador prepared two country reports highlighting capacity-building activities and policy innovations in the areas of youth, employment, entrepreneurship, gender and migration. Both reports fed into a global publication on *Youth, Employment and Migration*,<sup>7</sup> which provides information on the labour market experiences of

<sup>2</sup> For more details of the ICGMD conference, visit [www.icgmd.info](http://www.icgmd.info).

<sup>3</sup> The document "Resolution and Manila Call to Action" is downloadable from [www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/@ilo-manila/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_124730.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/@ilo-manila/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_124730.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF – Division of Policy and Practice, *Migration, Development and Children Left Behind: A Multidimensional Perspective*, social and economic policy working paper (New York, UNICEF, 2010), available from [www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Postscript\\_Formatted\\_\\_Migration\\_Development\\_and\\_Children\\_Left\\_Behind.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Postscript_Formatted__Migration_Development_and_Children_Left_Behind.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Namely, Module 6: Children and Migration of the "Socio-Economic Policies for Child Rights with Equity" series, available from [http://promotingchildrights.org/web/pdf/Module\\_6.pdf](http://promotingchildrights.org/web/pdf/Module_6.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> For more information, visit [www.mdgfund.org/content/knowledgemanagement](http://www.mdgfund.org/content/knowledgemanagement).

<sup>7</sup> The report is available for download from [www.mdgfund.org/sites/default/files/YEM\\_Thematic%20Study.pdf](http://www.mdgfund.org/sites/default/files/YEM_Thematic%20Study.pdf).

adolescents and youth in origin and host countries. Country policy initiatives within the MDG-F framework focus on a variety of issues related, among others, to youth empowerment and employment, economic opportunities for social inclusion, and reducing inequalities for vulnerable populations.<sup>8</sup>

In consultation with ILO, and based on the MDG-F experience, UNICEF's Division of Policy and Strategy will provide field support on strategies and facilities that develop the capacity of line ministries to promote youth employment and entrepreneurship in countries of origin.

### **Towards a human rights-based and gender-sensitive approach**

Since 2008, when UNICEF contributed to the GMG published report entitled *International Migration and Human Rights*, the Organization has progressively promoted a comprehensive human rights-based approach to migration and development policies. This holistic approach addresses the entire migration process and takes into account age, gender and non-discrimination perspectives. Its rationale is that applying human rights standards to both the fundamental causes and impacts of migration may in the long run reduce human rights violations against migrants by reducing their vulnerability.<sup>9</sup>

Over the past few years, UNICEF has promoted this broad approach by collaborating closely with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the former and current Special Rapporteurs on the Human Rights of Migrants. A large body of work<sup>10</sup> has been developed by OHCHR, the Special Rapporteur, the Human Rights Council, UNICEF and civil society partners on the rights of children, adolescents and youth in the context of irregular migration, with a particular focus on the criminalization

<sup>8</sup> (a) In Albania, UNICEF supported the establishment of three additional Youth Employment Service Centres in the Government-run employment service offices in Elbasan, Fier and Durres, in addition to those established previously in Kukes and Shkodra. (b) UNICEF, ILO, IOM, UNFPA and UNDP have supported the mainstreaming of youth, employment and migration in Ecuador's public policies. UNICEF and ILO produced a report entitled "Youth, Migration and Employment in Ecuador," published in August 2011. (c) UNICEF is supporting MDG-F projects in South Sudan and Sudan. UNICEF Sudan's work is focused on creating opportunities for youth employment for returnees and demobilized soldiers after 21 years of civil war. (d) In China, UNICEF is involved in a MDG-F programme to reduce the vulnerability of young people by increasing access to social services, better implementing existing legislation and improving educational, vocational and life-skills training opportunities. (e) UNICEF, UNFPA, ILO and IOM are partners with the Government of the Philippines in a three-year joint programme, "Alternatives to Migration: Decent jobs for Filipino youth." UNICEF has also supported the development of the Philippine Youth Development Plan 2011–2016. (f) In Costa Rica, the joint programme focuses on young people between the ages of 15 and 24, especially those from rural areas, women and migrants.

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed discussion of this approach, see: UNICEF – Division of Policy and Practice, *The Rights of Children, Youth and Women in the Context of Migration*, social and economic policy working paper (New York, UNICEF, 2011), available from [www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/The\\_Rights\\_of\\_Children\\_Youth\\_and\\_Women\\_in\\_the\\_Context\\_of\\_Migration\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/The_Rights_of_Children_Youth_and_Women_in_the_Context_of_Migration_FINAL.pdf), page 11ff.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example: Report of the former Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, Jorge Bustamante, to the Human Rights Council, 14 May 2009 (A/HRC/11/7); and Study of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Challenges and Best Practices in the Implementation of the International Framework for the Protection of the Rights of the Child in the Context of Migration, 5 July 2010 (A/HRC/15/29).

of irregular migrants, economic, social and cultural rights, and tackling racism and xenophobia.

UNICEF has focused on the particular human rights challenges faced throughout the migration process by the most vulnerable among migrants, including irregular migrant children and their families, and unaccompanied and separated migrant children and adolescents. With its partners, UNICEF has produced a series of policy papers and tools on the human rights of migrant children, adolescents and youth.<sup>11</sup>

### Recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (February 2013)

Among the results of UNICEF's research and advocacy for a human rights-based and gender-sensitive approach is the decision by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee) to dedicate its 2012 Day of General Discussion (DGD) to the theme "The Rights of All Children in the Context of International Migration."<sup>12</sup> At the request of the CRC Committee, UNICEF played a key role ahead of and at the 2012 DGD, including the elaboration of the background paper and contribution of two substantive written submissions.<sup>13</sup> The 2012 DGD report and recommendations,<sup>14</sup> adopted by the CRC Committee in February 2013, are in many ways the culmination of the work initiated by UNICEF in 2006 and the result of extensive consultation with international organizations, civil society partners and other stakeholders. The CRC Committee's recommendations reiterate the importance for Member States to take into account that children are affected by migration in multiple ways and are very often actors in (and not necessarily victims of) their own migration. Attention should be paid not only to migrant children moving with their families or unaccompanied or separated from them, but to all children in the context of migration, including those left behind by one or both migrant parents and those born to migrant parents in destination countries.<sup>15</sup>

The 2012 DGD recommendations stress that the CRC is a powerful tool for advancing the rights of all children in the context of migration. In addition to legislative and policy

<sup>11</sup> See, inter alia: UNICEF, (2011). *The Rights of Children, Youth and Women in the Context of Migration; Technical Note; Human Rights Standards Relevant to Repatriation Procedures of Unaccompanied and Separated Migrant Children*, New York; *Amicus Curiae* submitted by UNICEF-TACRO to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, February 2012; *Human Rights of Undocumented Adolescents and Youth*, UNICEF, OHCHR, Prof. François Crépeau (Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants), PICUM and National University of Lanús; etc.

<sup>12</sup> More information about the 2012 DGD is available at [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/discussion2012.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/discussion2012.htm).

<sup>13</sup> The titles of the two UNICEF written submissions are: "Access to Civil, Economic and Social Rights for Children in the Context of Irregular Migration and Children in the Context of Migration" and "The Right to Family Life," available from [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/WSDGD2012.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/WSDGD2012.htm).

<sup>14</sup> See: Committee on the Rights of the Child, Report of the 2012 Day of General Discussion: "The Rights of All Children in the Context of International Migration," available at [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/discussion2012/2012CRC\\_DGD-Childrens\\_Rights\\_InternationalMigration.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/discussion2012/2012CRC_DGD-Childrens_Rights_InternationalMigration.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> In countries of origin, children unwillingly left behind by migrant parents often lack social protection and experience psychosocial difficulties due to parental absence. In countries of transit and destination, many children cannot access birth registration or education and health-care services, while others are detained alongside adults in inappropriate conditions, subjected to violence and sexual abuse, or put up for adoption after their parents are deported.

reforms, the CRC periodic reporting mechanisms should be actively used by States and civil society to systematically evaluate implementation of the Convention in relation to all children affected by migration. This should include collaboration between children’s rights and migrants’ rights organizations, and a stronger role for national human rights institutions.<sup>16</sup> Three fundamental tenets should guide actions in this field: (a) non-discrimination,<sup>17</sup> (b) a comprehensive approach that goes beyond categorization,<sup>18</sup> and (c) the principle of the best interests of the child.<sup>19</sup> The CRC Committee’s position is particularly forceful on key issues such as, inter alia, non-detention of children; access to civil, economic, social, cultural rights and social services; right to family life and family reunification; a need for enhanced access to regular migration channels, and protection from violence, exploitation and abuse.<sup>20</sup>

UNICEF and OHCHR will support implementation of these recommendations at the country level through legislative reform processes and CRC/CEDAW monitoring and periodic reporting, as well as through strategic alliances with civil society partners at all levels, including in the context of consultations on the post-2015 development framework.

### Other rights-based work

UNICEF, in partnership with the Human Rights Centre of the National University of Lanús (Buenos Aires, Argentina), also produced the Human Rights, Children and Migration Database,<sup>21</sup> which contains a compilation of excerpts from the concluding observations of UN Human Rights Committees related to children, human rights and migration from the past decade (2000–2010).

UNICEF, IOM and UNHCR have formed a tripartite working group to strengthen coordination on the protection of unaccompanied and separated children in mixed migration flows. UNICEF has also provided technical support for the development of the model for the protection of the rights of migrant and unaccompanied repatriated children and adolescents. In 2012 UNICEF and the OHCHR Regional Office for Europe produced a study on the judicial implementation of Article 3 of the CRC in Europe.<sup>22</sup> The

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<sup>16</sup> As indicated in the Report of the 2012 Day of General Discussion, paragraph 66.

<sup>17</sup> A child is, first and foremost, a child. “States should ensure that the rights enshrined in the convention are guaranteed for all children under a State’s jurisdiction, regardless of their own or their parents’ migration status and address all violations of those rights.” (Ibid., paragraph 57; see also: paragraph 68).

<sup>18</sup> “States should adopt comprehensive human rights-based laws and policies to ensure that all children involved in or affected by international migration enjoy the full protection of the Convention in a timely manner, regardless of age, economic status, documentation status of themselves or their parents, in both voluntary and involuntary migration situations, whether accompanied or unaccompanied, or any other.” (Ibid., paragraph 58).

<sup>19</sup> All children in the context of migration, including children accompanied by parents or other legal guardians, must be treated as individual rights-holders. “States should make clear in their legislation, policy, and practice that the principle of the child’s best interests takes priority over migration and policy or other administrative considerations.” (Ibid., paragraph 73. See also: Ibid., paragraphs 72–74.)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., paragraphs 78-81; 86-88; 83-85; 91; and 82.

<sup>21</sup> The database can be accessed at [www.hrcam.org](http://www.hrcam.org).

<sup>22</sup> The document is available for download from [www.statewatch.org/news/2012/nov/rights-the-child-in-europe.pdf](http://www.statewatch.org/news/2012/nov/rights-the-child-in-europe.pdf).



paper reviews judicial decisions from the Court of Justice of the European Union, the European Court of Human Rights and from selected European national courts, which apply the principle of the best interests of the child to cases involving migrant children in irregular situations, including unaccompanied and separated children.

### **Gender dimension**

The gender dimension of migration and development has been a key element of UNICEF's work since 2006. Migration affects gender equality and the empowerment of girls, adolescents and young women in various ways. It can provide new opportunities to improve their lives and transform oppressive gender relations, but also expose girls and women to new vulnerabilities, and reinforce traditional roles and gender inequalities.

In April 2011 UNICEF produced a report entitled "Adolescents' Rights, Gender and Migration: Challenges for Policymakers," which emphasizes that: (a) policies must rely on consistent data and accurate evaluations, and be adapted to specific contexts, given the heterogeneity of adolescents affected by migration; (b) gender equality and empowerment should be promoted in schooling, health and youth employment, to encourage successful transitions to adulthood for adolescent girls; (c) a lack of information on the causes, composition and trends in international migration persists; (d) policy formulation requires an accurate analysis of the local education and health services, and local labour markets, in areas of high emigration; and (e) policy interventions in developing countries should be directed at all adolescents, not just potential migrants.

### **Child protection**

It is through the human rights and gender-sensitive framework that UNICEF has also advanced its work in analyzing and responding to the overlap between migration, illicit cross-border movement and trafficking. UNICEF has been at the forefront of a UN system-wide campaign for universal ratification and effective implementation of the Optional Protocols on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, undertaken in collaboration with the Special Representatives of the Secretary General on Violence against Children and for Children and Armed Conflict, OHCHR, UN Member States, international organizations and NGOs. It was launched by the UN Secretary General, in May 2010. UNICEF provided technical inputs to the Joint UN Commentary on the 2011 EU Trafficking Directive, together with UNHCR, OHCHR, UNODC, ILO and UN Women, to assist Member States in transposing the directive into national legislation. The commentary provides practical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of the EU trafficking instrument.

## Mainstreaming migration into national development strategies

UNICEF has been an active member of the GMG Working Group on Mainstreaming Migration into National Development Strategies since its inception in 2010. UNICEF participated in the production of the working group's first major publication, *Mainstreaming Migration into Development Planning: A Handbook for Policy-makers and Practitioners*, in 2010,<sup>23</sup> providing technical inputs to the leading partners, UNDP and IOM. As a practical follow-up to the handbook, UNICEF and its relevant field offices have participated in the Swiss-funded and IOM/UNDP-led pilot initiative in four countries (see also the IOM and UNDP chapters). A second phase of the pilot is currently being developed. The chapter in the handbook on social protection, developed by UNICEF, subsequently served as the basis for migration section of the agency's Social Protection Strategic Framework.<sup>24</sup>

## Progress in influencing the global conversation

As part of its policy guidance to maximize the positive effects of migration and minimize its negative impacts on migrant families and migrant communities in origin and destination countries, UNICEF has formed partnerships with multiple stakeholders, including national governments, UN Country Teams, the GMG and numerous other actors. Significant progress has been made in building capacity of key institutions and providing technical support to country partners and civil society organizations.

UNICEF, alongside civil society organizations and partner agencies, has advocated for greater visibility for children, adolescents and youth, as well as other vulnerable groups such as women and the elderly, in the global conversation about migration and development. Since the 2006 High-level Dialogue (HLD) on International Migration and Development, a number of Member States have recognized the importance of children and migration for their strategic national development planning, for example in Jamaica, where UNICEF Jamaica is a member of the Children and Family Working Group as part of the development of a national policy on international migration; and the Republic of Moldova, which set up a nationwide network of community-based social workers to address the challenges faced by children left behind by migrant parents.

The heightened visibility of children, adolescents and youth in the international migration–development debate is evidenced by the fact that one of the four round tables at the 2013 HLD explicitly addresses the issue of women and children in the context of migration. In line with UNICEF advocacy, a grouping of more than 100 national, regional and international civil society organizations has featured the rights

<sup>23</sup> The handbook is available for download from [www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/GMG\\_Mainstreaming\\_Migration\\_Handbook\\_Final\\_Nov\\_2010.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/GMG_Mainstreaming_Migration_Handbook_Final_Nov_2010.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> The framework document is available for download from [www.unicef.org/socialprotection/framework/files/UNICEF\\_SPSFramework\\_whole\\_doc.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/socialprotection/framework/files/UNICEF_SPSFramework_whole_doc.pdf).

of migrant children and the best interests of the child prominently in its call for a five-year plan on international migration and development.

### **Filling critical data gaps**

A critical barrier for policymakers in the area of migration and development is data scarcity, a gap highlighted at the 2006 HLD. In response to this, and following repeated requests by Member States since 2006, UNICEF has promoted disaggregation by age group and gender in the information-gathering by governments. In close collaboration with partners such as the Population Division of UN DESA and the Special Unit for South–South Cooperation (SU/SSC), UNICEF launched two projects to improve internationally comparable age- and sex-disaggregated data on international migration. The global work on measurement and statistics informs UNICEF's Regional Offices and partners, and helps set national policy goals and priorities that can make children and adolescents more visible.

Since 2008 UNICEF has partnered with UN DESA, SU/SSC and the University of Houston to develop for the first time global estimates of the number of international migrant children and adolescents. As a first step, a database, MigrantInfo,<sup>25</sup> was created to include all publicly available data on international migrant stocks, disaggregated by age and sex. This allows users to select the age and gender profiles of international migrants. The database is regularly updated. UNICEF's work on migration statistics has benefited from the collaboration with country offices and has, in turn, provided those at the field level with a range of user-friendly data to support their policy and advocacy work.

In collaboration with UN DESA, UNICEF has taken the lead in developing a common set of indicators for the Migration Profiles,<sup>26</sup> allowing comparable indicators on population, development and migration to be presented, facilitating inter-country comparisons and comprehensive assessment of migration and development links. UNICEF and UN DESA plan to release a set of South–South migration estimates, by country of origin and destination, and to develop a series of regional factsheets highlighting issues of equity and human development between countries of origin and destination by migrant age and sex.

### **Policy issues for the 2013 HLD and the post-2015 agenda**

#### *Adolescents and youth*

For the last two years, one of the priorities of UNICEF's work in the area of international migration and development has been adolescents and youth. In the first half of 2011,

<sup>25</sup> MigrantInfo official website: [www.migrantinfo.org](http://www.migrantinfo.org).

<sup>26</sup> For more information about Migrant Profiles and the Common Set of Indicators, visit [www.gfmd.org/en/pfp/policy-tools/migration-profiles](http://www.gfmd.org/en/pfp/policy-tools/migration-profiles) and <http://esa.un.org/MigGMGProfiles/MPCSI.htm>.

UNICEF leveraged its chairmanship of the GMG to put children, adolescents and youth in the context of migration on the international agenda. It organized the GMG symposium entitled “Migration and Youth: Harnessing opportunities for development” in May 2011 in New York, which had a direct impact on the outcome document of the General Assembly Informal Thematic Debate on International Migration and Development in the same month, through numerous references to child and youth migration issues.

UNICEF also brought adolescents and youth into Member State discussions at the GA informal debate by means of a joint GMG statement<sup>27</sup> and a GMG Priorities for Action document.<sup>28</sup> The joint statement, delivered on behalf of the 16 GMG Principals by UNICEF’s Executive Director, included a section on the increasing impact of international migration on children, adolescents and young people. The GMG joint statement and the symposium recommendations informed other high-level Member State events throughout 2011, including the General Assembly High-level Meeting on Youth in July 2011 and the thematic meetings, Civil Society Days and concluding debate of the Switzerland GFMD in 2011.

Building on the results of the GMG symposium, UNICEF has collaborated with all GMG member agencies on a milestone joint GMG thematic report entitled “Adolescents, Youth and Migration: Challenges and Opportunities.” UNICEF spearheaded the drafting and editing process of this publication for launching in 2013. The report focuses on the potentially positive impacts that migration could have on youth, as well as their countries of origin and destination. The publication includes perspectives, lessons learned and policy advice from more than a dozen UN agencies and other experts in the field. It is the first of its kind to comprehensively address the multidimensional issue of youth migration and offer practical ideas for all countries to reshape migration policies in such a way as to maximize opportunities and minimize challenges for young migrants.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The joint statement is available at [www.globalmigrationgroup.org/uploads/news/2011-symposium/GMG\\_Statement\\_GA\\_Informal\\_Thematic\\_Debate.pdf](http://www.globalmigrationgroup.org/uploads/news/2011-symposium/GMG_Statement_GA_Informal_Thematic_Debate.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> The document is available at [www.globalmigrationgroup.org/uploads/news/2011-symposium/GMG\\_Call\\_for\\_Action.pdf](http://www.globalmigrationgroup.org/uploads/news/2011-symposium/GMG_Call_for_Action.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> With its focus on adolescents and youth, the GMG report reveals key issues faced by the 27 million young migrants aged 15 to 24. For example, it points to the sharp disparities between conditions in sending and receiving countries – particularly for education and employment, two of the main drivers of youth migration – and the special risks faced by adolescents and young females when they migrate. It suggests how sending countries could open up more opportunities for youth in rural areas; enter into regional or bilateral agreements to protect young migrants; and create incentives for them to return home with new skills and savings to invest. It points to the opportunity for countries with ageing populations to fill the gap by facilitating youth migration. The report also highlights the growing problem of environmentally driven migration, suggesting strategies for job creation through adaptation in sending countries, and urging destination countries to consider this issue in their migration policies. It suggests changes in current policies and practices that violate young people’s social and cultural rights, particularly migrants under 18, ignoring both the protections to which they are entitled and the long-term impact of practices such as family separation and detention.

### *Climate change*

The relationship between environmental change and migration is complex and mediated by social, economic and political factors. Environmental change can interact with the drivers of migration and exacerbate inequalities. Migration plays a highly important role in the context of social resilience, which has become an essential concept for analyzing people's capacity to manage livelihood-related stress resulting from social, political, economic or environmental changes. The ability or non-ability to cope, adapt or even transform a livelihood base – three core elements of social resilience – is crucial, particularly for children and adolescents. The pressures that sudden environmental changes can place on natural resources and food and water security can intensify existing vulnerabilities, and migration may become one of few options available to people. Children and adolescents are not only more vulnerable to the physical effects of environmental change, but they often lack a voice in the decision to migrate or not.

UNICEF, in partnership with the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, the University of Sussex, the Foresight Project on Migration and Global Environmental Change and select UNICEF country offices is currently developing initiatives to promote and protect the rights of children, adolescents and youth affected by environmental change. At the country level, UNICEF Indonesia conducted surveys in 2011 on the probable impact of environmental change on children, under the leadership of the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office.

### *Equity, migration and the post-2015 agenda: The cost of inaction*

Migration has a significant potential to diminish inequalities and inequities, both inter- and intra-generational. An equity focus can ensure that individuals have equal access to their rights at all stages of the migration process: it prioritizes the most vulnerable by addressing the human rights of children, adolescents and youth in countries of origin, transit and destination, including their right to development. Migration can make children, adolescents and youth more vulnerable by exposing them to risks such as exploitation, abuse, and other human rights violations. But with appropriate social and economic policies, vulnerable groups can be protected, and migration can expand their capabilities and opportunities for human development.

The rights of these vulnerable groups are often not recognized in destination countries. They may also lack social support and face discrimination and the effects of xenophobia. Children, adolescents and youth left behind are vulnerable to the unintended consequences of their parents' migration. In the case of girls and young women, migration can contribute to their empowerment. But it can also reproduce gender inequities among those left behind, since they are more likely to take on household duties and adult responsibilities.

Migration mediates progress towards the MDGs, but can have mixed results in terms of human development and equity outcomes. For example, while remittances can improve access to health, education and social services (MDGs 2 and 3), the out-migration of health workers and teachers can make it more difficult to turn these improvements into effective human development outcomes. The post-2015 agenda will focus on development issues that are intimately related to migration, either as a cause or as a consequence. So far, however, the debate has not recognized the importance of migration as a driver of either equity or inequities.

## **2. Support provided to the GFMD**

UNICEF has actively participated in and supported all GFMD meetings since 2007 through its involvement with partners at the field and Headquarters level. It has involved its country offices in all the regions where GFMD events have taken place, and tried to ensure regional balance and representation. Key documentation from UNICEF field practice was distributed at all GFMD events to promote evidence-based policy advocacy. Senior management have attended some GFMD sessions and actively supported UNICEF participation in the preparations and round tables of the State-led Forum.

Also since 2007, UNICEF has made a special effort to work systematically with civil society organizations in both the global South and North to promote further visibility of children, adolescent and youth issues at all GFMD events. This has created synergies for follow-up work with civil society partners in countries working on migration and development issues (including with UN Country Teams and IOM). Country and Regional Offices have supported field and headquarters with inputs and advocacy (UNICEF Thailand and Panama Regional Offices) and worked with GFMD Chairs to promote children's rights and gender equality and follow up on GFMD outcomes.

Efforts have been made to implement practical solutions to the challenges of migration for children and women. UNICEF Headquarters and Field Offices in select countries, including the mainstreaming pilot countries (namely, Bangladesh, Jamaica, the Republic of Moldova and Tunisia), have supported a stronger focus on migration and social policy dimensions. Particular emphasis has been placed on vulnerabilities, equity and social services for children and women.

UNICEF and UN DESA have also made available their new estimates of the global stock of international migrant children and adolescents by age and gender to the GFMD as of the Philippines Forum in 2008. This work and the partnership with UN DESA also supported the GFMD ad hoc Working Group on Policy Coherence, Data and Research.

UNICEF has participated in and furnished practical field examples to support all GMG efforts to ensure that sufficient attention is paid to the social policy dimensions of migration. The GMG's collaborative involvement in the GFMD process has reinforced

a common policy perspective premised on a comprehensive rights-based and gender-sensitive approach to human development gains for migrants (especially the most vulnerable, including children, adolescents, youth and women). For example, UNICEF and OHCHR were effective in supporting the GFMD preparatory consultation on irregular migration and human rights in El Salvador in 2011.

#### *Specific inputs to the annual GFMD meetings*

At the Brussels GFMD 2007, UNICEF prepared several papers with UNDP for Member States and stakeholders, and collaborated with UN DESA and UNDP on various aspects of the web-based Marketplace event with specific Member States. Jamaica and El Salvador were particularly interested in following up with UNICEF at the country level in the aftermath of that GFMD.<sup>30</sup>

UNICEF provided inputs to the Manila GFMD 2008, some of which were addressed in the conclusions of the three round tables. UNICEF Philippines also worked closely with the Philippine Government and civil society partners at the country level. For example, UNICEF Philippines, along with some other GMG partners, including ILO, provided financial support for the GFMD Civil Society Days. UNICEF also offered technical support for the development of a National Strategic Plan on Migration and Development in the Philippines. The final report of the Philippines Chair of the 2008 GFMD reflects UNICEF's interest and mandate, calling on stakeholders to promote and "protect the rights of women migrant workers, child migrants, and migrants in irregular situations".

The Athens GFMD 2009 saw discussion of migration issues related to young people, including children left behind, at the Government Meeting and Civil Society Days. UNICEF worked effectively in partnership with various GMG member agencies and civil society organizations to ensure the visibility of migration issues related to young people through a gender and human rights lens. This advocacy by UNICEF with civil society partners continued in subsequent years and may have borne fruit with the statement issued by more than 100 international, regional and national civil society organizations calling for a five-year action plan to emerge from the 2013 HLD, in which they highlight the rights of migrant women and call for mechanisms to consider the best interests of the child in the context of migration, including child rights.<sup>31</sup>

At the Mexico GFMD 2010, UNICEF collaborated closely with the Mexican Chair and institutional partners in Mexico, as well as OHCHR, and for the first time the GFMD Chair invited UNICEF, UN Women and OHCHR to participate in one of the main round tables and give a presentation for discussion by Member States. The Mexico GFMD also saw the launch of the GMG Handbook on *Mainstreaming Migration into Development Planning*, produced with substantial input from UNICEF.

<sup>30</sup> Documents from the Brussels GFMD 2007 are available for download from [www.gfmd.org/en/docs/brussels-2007](http://www.gfmd.org/en/docs/brussels-2007).

<sup>31</sup> The action plan may be downloaded from [www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/elevnthcoord2013/Global\\_Civil\\_Society\\_Submission\\_CM11\\_15Feb2013.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/elevnthcoord2013/Global_Civil_Society_Submission_CM11_15Feb2013.pdf).

The Mexico GFMD explicitly addressed human development and the protection of human rights for all migrants, thereby offering key opportunities for UNICEF and other relevant stakeholders to participate on migration and development issues related to the rights of children, adolescents, women and families. The forum discussed the impact of migration on children and adolescents in-depth for the first time in this State-led process, including unaccompanied children and access to basic services for migrant children.

UNICEF's Mexico Office played a critical role in the GFMD Mexico, and the final proceedings report of the Government Days made numerous references to UNICEF's work in promoting the rights of children left behind and young migrants, regardless of their migratory status.<sup>32</sup> The report emphasized "the rights of the child and family reunification as fundamental principles to be included in immigration law."<sup>33</sup> UNICEF's field work in countries such as Mauritania, the Republic of Moldova and Thailand was highlighted at the GFMD Government Days.

For the Switzerland GFMD 2011, UNICEF, in its capacity as the GMG Chair, worked closely with the Swiss Chair-in-Office, who relied on UNICEF and UNESCO throughout the year to coordinate with the GMG and ensure some policy coherence. The Swiss Government requested that UNICEF make high-level technical contributions to four of the thematic workshops organized by the Swiss Chair (in Marseille, New York, San Salvador and Chisinau). The Government of El Salvador worked fruitfully with UNICEF for its workshop in San Salvador on irregular migration.

UNICEF's advocacy efforts and select partnerships with Member States and civil society networks were deemed particularly effective in promoting greater visibility for children and youth within the framework of the GFMD 2011 concluding debate in Geneva. UNICEF partnerships with non-governmental partners ensured that key UNICEF concerns were addressed in the Statement of the 2011 Civil Society Days.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, migrant children and families feature prominently throughout this document (for example, access to education and essential health services for migrant children; family migration and children left behind; the right of children to parental care; and criminalization of irregular migrant children).

In 2012 UNICEF was actively involved in the agenda of the Mauritius Chair-in-Office. This involved consultation with field offices in selected countries to ensure effective participation in the work programme of the Forum. At the request of the Mauritius Chair-in-Office, UNICEF made a commitment to work with OHCHR, UN DESA, UN Women, UNDP, IOM and ILO to support three round table sessions; and in collaboration with UN DESA, took the lead in developing a common set of indicators on migration. Among

<sup>32</sup> Documents from the Mexico GFMD 2010 are available for download from [www.gfmd.org/en/docs/mexico-2010](http://www.gfmd.org/en/docs/mexico-2010).

<sup>33</sup> The Convention on the Rights of the Child was signed 1989, came into force 1990 and was ratified by 194 countries in 2009. See also the Report of the Proceedings of the Mexico GFMD 2010.

<sup>34</sup> GFMD Switzerland (November, 2011) Statement of the 2011 Civil Society Days, available from [www.gfmd.org/documents/switzerland/gfmd\\_swiss11\\_civil\\_society\\_statement\\_en.pdf](http://www.gfmd.org/documents/switzerland/gfmd_swiss11_civil_society_statement_en.pdf).



the Forum's recommendations, were calls for States to recognize the opportunity of the 2013 HLD to integrate migration into the post-2015 development agenda, with particular attention on South–South migration, and to follow up on the links between migration, environmental change and development.

### 3. Challenges identified in carrying out UNICEF work

While UNICEF has made positive strides on migration and development during the last six years with UNICEF country offices and relevant stakeholders, the Organization's experience in the field of migration and development has met with several challenges:

- (a) *Predictability of funding for child and adolescent migration issues.* Lack of predictable funding affects the delivery of results in the field; only minor financial allocations have reached field offices in the last three-four years, except for the ILO-spearheaded YEM programme.<sup>35</sup> The Swiss Government generously allocated seed funds to UNICEF and UNFPA in Tunisia in 2013 for the mainstreaming pilot in that country. This has enhanced UNICEF's effectiveness within the UNDP and IOM-led initiative, and a similar approach could reap dividends in the other three pilot countries where UNICEF is also participating.
- (b) *Need for better migration data.* Despite the advances described above, challenges remain in terms of data on migration flows by age, sex and country of origin, and the magnitude of return and temporary migration. There is also still a need to improve data on the impact of environmental change on migration, and how these effects are mediated by factors such as age, gender, environmental change, and type of migration. Some countries still do not collect, standardize and disseminate data on who migrants are, where they are located, where they came from and when they moved.
- (c) *Improving partnerships and coordination.* Working with other GMG member agencies has revealed some strengths and weaknesses of inter-agency response to migration and development issues. The challenges concern enhancing the existing level of inter-agency collaboration to maximize synergies. UNICEF looks forward to the planned adoption of a common workplan for the GMG, which will have a positive impact on inter-agency cooperation, and, alongside an enhanced funding strategy, would promote a stronger, more responsive and effective GMG that optimizes the use of its assets and comparative expertise in support of country needs and demands. A positive example of collaboration is UNICEF's participation in the World Bank's Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD). UNICEF will co-chair KNOMAD's Thematic Working Group on Migrant Rights and Social Aspects of Migration.

<sup>35</sup> For more information about the programme, download the official brochure from [www.ilo.org/manila/whatwedo/publications/WCMS\\_173279/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/manila/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_173279/lang--en/index.htm).

## 4. Gaps evident within the migration and development sphere

Following are some key gaps identified by UNICEF in the migration and development sphere, which would require the attention of all players at local, national and global levels:

- (a) *Migrants as positive agents of innovation with human rights.* Research on this topic should include working closely with the media to communicate a positive image of migrants.
- (b) *Focus on the most vulnerable.* Policies and practices on the ground need to be comprehensive and address the particular vulnerabilities of those most affected by international migration – including children and adolescents – while recognizing that migration can be an empowering experience for them.
- (c) *Migration data gaps.* UNICEF has worked effectively with the GMG working group on Research and Data, led by IOM and UN DESA, and has also committed to work with IOM and UN DESA on the proposed *Handbook on Improving Data on Migration and Development: A GMG Guide*.
- (d) *South–South migration.* The development implications of South–South migration, especially from and to middle-income countries, have been under-researched and not fully understood. The GMG could play a useful role by elaborating on these implications for stakeholders in the global South.
- (e) *Environmental deterioration, climate change and migration.* Not enough research and policy work has been done to assess the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on migration and vulnerable populations, in particular, children, adolescents and youth.
- (f) *Local authorities and migration.* Local authorities are often responsible for providing social services key to migrant integration, such as education, health care and social protection. The migration and development dialogue would need to actively engage local authorities in finding innovative ways to address the developmental needs of the most vulnerable populations affected by migration, such as children, adolescents, youth and women.
- (g) *Global governance of international migration.* The international community has made some progress since 2006 in this regard, especially thanks to the GFMD and regional consultative processes. Further inter-agency cooperation among GMG members is required to: (a) create a common advocacy platform and more solid consensus; (b) identify critical issues, opportunities, challenges, weaknesses, gaps and best practices in relation to international migration and development; (c) achieve practical impacts at the field level; (d) act on the UN

System Task Team's highlighting of migration, including South–South migration, as one of the key issues to be considered in efforts to promote inclusive, people-centred sustainable development in the framework of the post-2015 agenda; and encourage further participation of relevant stakeholders in migration policy dialogue and programmes.

## 5. Recommendations for the 2013 High-level Dialogue

### Content recommendations and outcomes

The 2013 HLD should lead to concrete outcomes. The HLD should revolve around a very limited number of themes that respond to the needs and interests of Member States in maximizing the benefits of migration while minimizing its associated costs.

The HLD should conclude with a strong consensus around one key message: migration can only lead to development when the human rights of all those affected by migration are respected, protected and realized. Linked to this strengthened human rights- and gender-based approach, the HLD could address vulnerabilities, discrimination, inequity and access to social services, especially for vulnerable groups such as children, adolescents, youth, women and the elderly.

The GMG and the UN system could contribute to this objective by focusing on the areas where it has a comparative advantage and can be most effective. The HLD could, for example, agree on a basic set of core normative standards and messages on ethical issues that would prompt Member States to uphold the rights of the most vulnerable migrants, including children, adolescents, youth, women and the elderly. There should also be a renewed focus on changing public perceptions of migration and migrants through close collaboration with the media, educational institutions, young people and women.

With regard to the GFMD, the HLD should impress upon Member States that the discussion of migration and development is changing rapidly and will be shaped differently in the next decade: in part by the growth of South–South migration and the increasing relevance of emerging economies. Despite considerable progress made by the GMG there is still a long way to go in terms of inter-agency coordination.

### Process recommendations and outcomes

The HLD should aim for the following practical outcomes at the process level:

- (a) *Stronger, meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders at all stages of the migration and development policymaking process.* This involves ensuring the active participation of the most vulnerable, such as children, adolescents, youth, women and the elderly affected by migration.

- (b) *A robust inter-agency mechanism on international migration post-2013.* The agreed reforms to the GMG (as suggested in the Draft Internal GMG Discussion Paper prepared by the UNICEF and UNESCO Chairs in 2011) should strengthen the GMG's capacities to fulfill this role. Negotiations with Member States by some GMG members need to be more transparent, and no side events should be planned for the HLD without the full participation of GMG members. UN agencies and IOM need to focus on two or three critical social policy themes, including human rights.
- (c) *More robust institutionalization of the GMG Data and Research Working Group.* This should be accompanied by practical joint initiatives with members of the GMG and the World Bank's KNOMAD. This group should be given a chance to evolve beyond small, ad hoc projects.
- (d) *A work stream on human rights and migration,* for example highlighting youth, children and gender concerns, needs to be established.
- (e) *Innovative, inter-agency, results-oriented GMG initiatives at the field level.* A GMG focus on post-2015 priorities could galvanize initiatives and give more concrete focus to mainstreaming, including sustainability.
- (f) *A more coherent and sustained approach with civil society towards 2013.* The GMG must play a role in supporting greater involvement by field-based civil society and grassroots organizations.
- (g) *Practical, field-based human rights initiatives.* These could involve different stakeholders, such as GMG agencies, Member States, national human rights institutions, academia, civil society and grassroots organizations (including the private sector, diasporas and social networks), and provide policy insights for Member States.
- (h) *A more predictable funding mechanism.* A burden-sharing arrangement should be adopted to sustain a small permanent secretariat under a GMG umbrella, so that the agencies can focus more on substantive tasks.
- (i) *Joint funding.* It is critical to the sustainability and policy relevance of the GMG for these to be established and made available for the UN family, and IOM and the World Bank.
- (j) *A side event at the HLD.* The GMG could organize this event on the theme of upholding the rights of all those affected by migration within the context of the post-2015 development framework.