



Over the past decades, the issue of migration has considerably increased in Niger. The movement of migrants through the Sahara Desert continues to have a devastating toll on human life with many dying on their way across the desert – a journey which entails severe risks, such as extra judicial killings, death through dehydration and starvation, extortion, torture, sexual violence and exploitation, and forced labor. Children on the move are exposed to multiple risks, which make them extremely vulnerable, especially when they are having to move outside of safe and legal pathways, and are unaccompanied and/or separated.

A SOURCE COUNTRY FOR MIGRANTS TO ALGERIA

Niger is a source country for migrants to Algeria, mostly consisting of adults (often women) accompanied by young children, most of them are from Kantché District in Zinder Region in southern Niger. These children are often used to generate income for the adults through begging. This comes at a high cost for children who are deprived of schooling and beaten if they do not collect enough money. The Nigerien and Algerian Governments signed an agreement in 2014 for their repatriation. Since then, more than 32,000 migrants – including children, have been repatriated to Niger. These children have returned to their region of origin, where basic services such as education and health are fragile or non-existent, where there are very limited livelihood options for young people and few opportunities for income generation.

RETURNEES FROM LIBYA

According to IOM, as of June 2018, about 655,000 migrants have been identified in Libya (mostly in the region of Tripoli), including 52,000 children. Around 4,574 of the migrants are reported to be in detention centres as of July 2019. More than 40 nationalities have been identified, most of them from Sub-Saharan countries (Niger, Egypt, Chad, Sudan, Ghana, Nigeria, Mali, Somalia, Bangladesh, Syria, Eritrea, Senegal, Morocco, Ethiopia, Tunisia and Burkina Faso).

In coordination with IOM, Niger has organized several charters to repatriate its nationals from Tripoli to Niamey. 213 migrant children were sent back from Libya to Niger by charters from January to October 2019. Although few unaccompanied children were amongst the returnees, their return was supported by the Ministry of women empowerment and child protection which partnered with IOM to ensure a safe return home.

A HOST TO ASYLUM SEEKERS RELOCATED FROM LIBYA

As of September 2019, a total of 1,879 asylum seekers were registered in ETM process in Niger. 165 unaccompanied children were evacuated from Libya. 312 unaccompanied children were resettled since the beginning of the ETM process.

NIGER AS A HOST TO OTHER ASYLUM SEEKERS

As of July 2019, a total of 1,581 asylum seekers were still living in Agadez city using their own means of transportation. Out of these, 1,492 are from Sudan. The asylum seekers arrived at various times with a majority arriving in 2018 (82%). As of July 2019, there were a total of 346 children (120 girls) including 127 unaccompanied and separated children.



WHAT UNICEF IS DOING?

Migrant children and women, especially those without documentation, are vulnerable to trafficking, abuse and exploitation. In transit and destination countries, migrants and their families often find themselves victims of discrimination, poverty and social marginalization. UNICEF is working on the ground to ensure that programmes and policies in response to this crisis put the rights and needs of all children first.

PROTECTING CHILDREN ON THE MOVE STARTS WITH BETTER DATA

In 2017, UNICEF conducted a study to better understand the causes of migration of women and children from Kantché District in Zinder Region to Algeria. The study found that this survival strategy has been successful in some cases, as families have been able to earn up to US\$ 15 a day and to buy food, animals and motorcycles. However, this comes at a high cost for children who are deprived of schooling and beaten if they do not collect enough money. These children and women also run the risk of dying in the desert on the way to Algeria, as transporters often drop them off a distance before the border, to avoid being stopped by security forces, and they must walk for up to two days in the desert to reach Algeria. Since the end of 2013, 137 women and children are known to have died this way, but the actual number is probably higher.

An evaluation in 2019 also identified some root causes for migration such as the lack of cultivable land because of the increased population pressure due to the high fertility rate. Additional causes include change in the route due to the security situation in Northern Nigeria; visible improvements in the social and financial status of some returning migrants; the widely-practiced tradition of child guardianship where a child can be given to a foster family for an indefinite period of time; the lack of basic services such as education and health in most villages.

FAMILY TRACING AND REUNIFICATION

377 Nigerien unaccompanied children returning from Algeria benefit from family tracing and reunification services through a partnership with the regional directorate of child protection in Agadez and Zinder. These partners provide temporary care while in transit, non-food items support, psychosocial support and post reunification follow up of children.

UNICEF is working closely with UNHCR within the framework of the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM)

to provide care and support to children in transit while waiting for durable solutions. UNICEF is now supporting 44 children (since the beginning of ETM: 83 children) in three different transit and orientation centers (CTOS) managed by the Niamey Directorate of child Protection while the rest are supported by COOPI. It is evident that almost all children are severely tortured, and abused by notorious human traffickers while on transit in Sahara and in Libya.

TEMPORARY CARE TO UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

In 2019, UNICEF established four One Stop Social Welfare Services and a transit center in the region of Agadez to improve assistance to children on the move across this region. As of November 2019, 377 unaccompanied children received temporary care, 319 of them were assisted through the One Stop Social services.

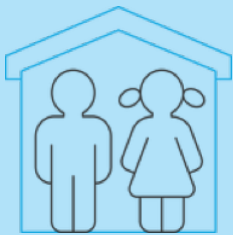
PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

UNICEF is working for an urgent psychosocial support while a durable solution worked out. UNICEF is implementing an emergency education programme that takes into account the diverse education grades and ages of the children. This tailor-made package would be essential in keeping the children learning and will help them better cope with their extended stay in transit and prepare them for their future. Technical and financial support continues to be given to the government partner for alternative care. In addition, UNICEF is actively involved in the BID panel established in Niamey. To respond to the needs of children on the move, UNICEF reinforces its partnership with IOM, IRC, DRC to improve referral pathways in Agadez for better support to children on the move along the transit route.

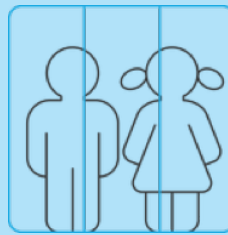
UNICEF NIGER ISSUE BRIEF



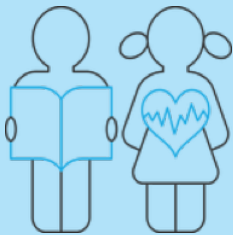
AGENDA FOR ACTION: UNICEF IS CALLING FOR A SIX-POINT PLAN TO KEEP REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CHILDREN SAFE



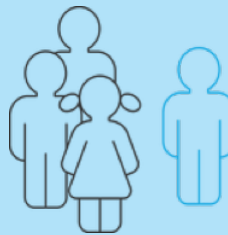
Press for action on the causes that uproot children from their homes



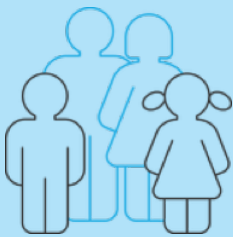
End the detention of refugee and migrant children by creating practical alternatives



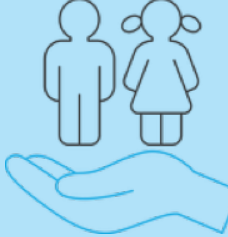
Help uprooted children to stay in school and stay healthy



Combat xenophobia and discrimination



Keep families together and give children legal status



Protect uprooted children from exploitation and violence

UNICEF is concerned over existing gaps that deprive children of their fundamental rights as agreed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. No matter where they are and regardless of their refugee status, all children have the right to be protected, to be safe, to keep learning and to receive the care and support needed to reach their full potential.

Stand with children uprooted. **A child is a child.** It's time to act now!



45,859

Nigerien migrants repatriated from Algeria to Niger from 2018 to 2019

8,318

of them are children



8,047

Migrants repatriated from Lybia from 2016 to 2019

761

of them are children



3,117

refugees and asylum seekers arrived in Niger via Lybia since 2018

310

of them are unaccompanied children



MORE SUPPORT NEEDED

Guided by the six UNICEF policy asks regarding children on the move, UNICEF Niger seeks additional support to help the Government of Niger provide timely, predictable and quality support to children transiting through or returning to Niger.



STRENGTHENING EXISTING CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS

Strengthen existing national child protection systems to better respond to the needs of child migrants and child asylum seekers. The response to child migrants will be integrated into existing responses to vulnerable children which will enable migrant children to benefit from all the child protection interventions available in this context.

PROVIDING SUPPORT AND CARE TO UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

Protection of child refugees and migrants, particularly unaccompanied children, from exploitation and violence. This includes the provision of information, temporary care, as well as case management support (including the Best Interest Determination process). UNICEF and partners have a system in place for temporary care, family tracing and reunification and post reunification follow-up for unaccompanied children returning to Niger. The extended care for children in transit will increase the costs of provision of psychosocial support services and lifeskills training. Provision of educational programmes tailored for children asylum seekers during their stay are crucial.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR ACTORS IN CONTACT WITH CHILD MIGRANTS

Actors in frequent contact with child migrants such as police, border officers and social workers are equipped to better protect children on the move. UNICEF in collaboration with UNHCR and IOM and other organizations involved in migrant programming coordinate capacity building activities targeting government agencies in frequent contact with child migrants.



ONE STOP SOCIAL WELFARE SHOPS

Four “One Stop Social Welfare Shops” were set up with UNICEF support. Inspired by the concept of Blue Dots set up by UNICEF and UNHCR in Europe, the Shops have been re-adapted to the national context to address the needs of child migrants transiting through Niger through provision of key information, direct support for children and pregnant women, referrals to other services including an option to return home.

SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION OF RETURNED MIGRANT CHILDREN

In 2019, thousands of migrant children have been repatriated from Lybia or sent back to Niger from Algeria. UNICEF and partners enhanced Government social services capacities to provide temporary care and support family reintegration of returned migrant children. Despite this progress, opportunities for sustainable reintegration remains low and more attention needs to be paid to the reinforcement of national capacities to support sustainable reintegration of returned children in Zinder, Tahoua and Maradi.

Children who are uprooted from their homes lose much more than the roof over their heads. Many lose family members, friends, safety and routines. Without any support, they risk losing their futures.

*DISCLAIMER :The content of this Issue brief represents the views of the author only and his sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

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For more information

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