



KEY ASKS

2021 • SDG National Reviews

SDG TARGET 10.7: CHILDREN IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION & DISPLACEMENT

30 million children live outside their country of birth and among them are 12 million refugees and asylum seekers part of mixed migration flows. Tens of millions of children are also left behind by migrating parents. Further, more children than ever before are displaced within their own countries, with approximately 19 million children internally displaced by conflict and violence at the end of 2019. Making migration a choice that is safe and empowering for children and young people is not only a challenge, but a tremendous opportunity. Well-managed migration that both addresses the drivers of forced displacement and mitigates against the risks of migration will be key to the achievement of the SDGs.

The close link between sustainable development and international migration is also reflected in the Global Compacts for Migration and Refugees. Both the 2030 Agenda and the Global Compact for Migration recognize migrants as integral members of our societies and key contributors to sustainable development and inclusive growth. Similarly, the Global Compact on Refugees aims at leveraging the development potential of refugees for their host communities. **The 2030 Agenda and both Global Compacts are deeply intertwined – progress on the former cannot be achieved without implementation of the latter. The Global Compacts offer a roadmap to ensure that migrants and displaced people are not left behind.**

The onset and ongoing crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the vulnerabilities of migrant and displaced children. Children and families on the move are missing out twice – not only are they disproportionately affected by the public health, protection and socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic, but they are also often excluded from the response and recovery. Migrant and displaced families are particularly exposed to the health impact of COVID-19 with many living or working in crowded or unsanitary conditions where COVID-19 can easily spread. Their access to health may be compromised, particularly when they are undocumented or excluded. They also often lack access to other basic services – from housing to water and sanitation, from food to social services and from education to social protection. Migrant and displaced children are more likely not to be able to return to school when they reopen, as many have missed out on remote learning and their families will be disproportionately affected by the economic impact – aggravating the existing learning crisis. Further, the misinformation on the spread of COVID-19 exacerbates the xenophobia and discrimination that migrant and displaced children and their families already face.

While SDG target 10.7 is often considered the key entry point to migration in the SDGs, the 2030 Agenda as a whole is very relevant to migrants and migration. For instance, target 8.8 on migrant workers, target 10.c on remittances and SDG 16 on trafficking in persons and legal identity illustrate the many ways in which sustainable development and migration intersect. A dedicated focus on children on the move is critical to meet the SDGs commitment to leave no one behind. Too often, migrant children are statistically invisible, excluded from national systems and discriminated against. Ensuring their inclusion, protection and empowerment will be key for them to contribute to the 2030 Agenda as they make their way into adulthood.

INVESTING IN THE SDGS TO WELCOME, PROTECT AND EMPOWER CHILDREN IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

The SDG Decade of Action presents an opportunity to advocate and support Member States to accelerate progress for *all* children, regardless of their migration or displacement status, across the SDG agenda and ensure that migration policies are child sensitive.

- **SDG 3 – Health:** Migrant and displaced children often face additional challenges when it comes to inclusion in health systems. Difficulties related to legal documentation, missing health records, fear of detection, detention or deportation, language and economic deprivation are some of the barriers that Member States should address. On top of that, there's increasing evidence about the impact of migration and displacement on mental health.
- **SDG 4 – Education:** Children affected by migration and displacement face additional barriers to accessing early childhood development, primary and secondary education and skills training – a situation that has been exacerbated by COVID-19. Challenges include lack of capacity in schools, language barriers and lack of recognition of certifications across borders and limited access to technology and connectivity to support remote learning. Further migration status can be a barrier to accessing

education – particularly for those who are undocumented. In crisis-affected communities, education is often the first service suspended and the last service restored. UNICEF encourages Member States to remove barriers to education for migrant and displaced children, ensure [safe places of learning](#), and increase funding to education, including trained staff, to close the access gap and enable schools to foster inclusive learning.

- **SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth:** Migrant children and their families are particularly vulnerable to the socio-economic impact of COVID-19. Many migrants work in jobs that have been the first and worse affected by the pandemic. The loss of employment and wages is resulting in a reduction in remittances, with a devastating effect for millions of children and their families. In countries where remittances account for a significant percentage of their GDP, these contribute to alleviate poverty, improve children's nutrition, health, development and access to education. It is also important for migrant children and their families to not be excluded from national social protection measures to mitigate the socio-economic impact of COVID-19.
- **SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities:** The success or failure of millions of migration stories is decided at the local level. It is here – at school, in the neighbourhood park – that newcomers and long-term residents interact, get to know each other, and eventually become community members. Local governments can make a real difference in the lives of uprooted children due to their in-depth understanding of the concrete challenges and opportunities these communities face, often putting in place innovative solutions.
- **SDG 13 – Climate Action:** With the risk and frequency of natural disasters increasing, millions have been uprooted. Data show an average of 20 million new displacements from disasters like flooding and drought, each year between 2015 and 2019.¹ Today, over 500 million children live in extremely high flood-risk zones and nearly 160 million children live in high or extremely high drought-risk zones. Developing child-sensitive adaption and resilience strategies and integrating displacement considerations into disaster preparedness can protect the most vulnerable, including internally displaced children.
- **SDG 16 – Peaceful Societies and Ending Violence:** Tens of millions of children are uprooted from their homes by protracted conflict and face gender-based violence, human trafficking and other risks. Expanding safe and regular migration pathways, allowing families to migrate together, strengthening child protection systems, ending child immigration detention and providing identity documents can keep migrant and displaced children safe and contribute towards achieving target 16.2 and target 16.9. These actions also support SDG 5 – Gender Equality targets to end trafficking and sexual violence.
- **SDG 17 – Partnerships:** The very nature of migration means that no one state can manage it alone. Effective collaboration between governments, private sector and civil society and children and youth themselves can develop and scale-up solutions to the issues mentioned above. Objective 23 of the Global Compact for Migration calls for a revitalized global partnership for safe, orderly and regular migration, including to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda in geographical areas from which irregular migration systematically originates. Another key component of this SDG is data, including partnerships and capacity-building to strengthen collection and dissemination to support targets 17 and 18.



KEY ASKS

UNICEF urges governments and partners to take the following actions as part of their SDG implementation:

- 1) **Ensure that all [COVID-19 response plans and socio-economic response measures are inclusive](#) of migrant and displaced populations:**
 - Provide accessible, timely, culturally and linguistically appropriate, child-friendly and **relevant information on COVID-19 to children and families on the move.**
 - Ensure universal **access to COVID-19 testing, healthcare, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and other essential services**, for all those who need them, regardless of status.
 - Ensure **clean water, basic toilets and good hygiene practices are also available for migrant and displaced children and families**, when transiting or for those living in camps and in urban areas.
 - Support and advocate for **safer living and housing conditions to allow for social distancing, including in shelters, refugee and IDP camps.**
 - Advocate to **stop refoulement, detention, pushbacks, deportations and mass expulsions of migrant and displaced children and families in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.**
 - Implement **education strategies for continued learning for all children - including migrant and displaced children -** and make schools safe, healthy, and inclusive environments.
 - Expand **social protection policies and programs to minimize the economic impact of COVID-19 on families.**
 - Join forces with relevant **partners and stakeholders, to disseminate information, coordinate response plans and minimize the impact of COVID-19 on children and families on the move.**
- 2) **Implement a six-point [Agenda for Action for Children Uprooted](#):**
 - **Protect migrant children from exploitation and violence** by investing in strong local, national and regional child protection systems, including (i) training of social workers; (ii) appointment of qualified guardians; (iii) legal assistance; (iv) case management; and (v) partnerships with civil society and faith-based organisations; and (vi) cooperation across borders.
 - **End the detention of children because of their immigration status** by introducing non-custodial practical alternatives, such as foster care, supervised independent living, or other family- or community-based living arrangements.
 - **Keep families together and reduce statelessness** by allowing families to migrate together; by preventing family separation

¹ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019/>

in transit; by facilitating family reunification, including in destination countries; and by providing all children with a legal identity and registering them at birth.

- **Provide inclusive access to quality services, including healthcare, education and social protection** for migrant and displaced children through strengthening the capacity of education, healthcare systems (supporting target 3.8 for universal health coverage) and social protection systems, enacting referral mechanisms, and implementing firewalls between services providers and immigration and law enforcement authorities, to allow undocumented children and families to access services without fear.
- **Protect migrant children from discrimination and xenophobia** by speaking out against discrimination, regulating hate speech, enacting hate crimes legislation and strengthening the role of human rights institutions. Lift overall barriers to inclusion and invest in specific policies and programmes to ensure that migrant and displaced children belong in their communities (supporting target 10.2 on the inclusion of all).
- **Address the causes that uproot children from their homes** through policy and financial investments across all SDG areas such as social protection, youth employment, climate action, peace and justice.

- 3) **Include key priorities for children in the context of migration and displacement (i.e., six-point Agenda for Action) in all SDG implementation and monitoring efforts at the country level**, such as national development strategies, plans and budgets; Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks; and voluntary national reviews, in partnership with children and young people.
- 4) **Continue to implement national plans of the Global Compact for Migration that include the child-sensitivity guiding principle and the child-specific commitments of the Compact**, in partnership with children and young people.



MONITOR -- THE IMPORTANCE OF DISAGGREGATED DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND USE

UNICEF urges governments to collect age and sex-disaggregated data, and to report on all children in national reviews, including migrant and displaced children. Reports on SDGs should cover key issues relating to children impacted by migration and displacement, and the data collection and analysis efforts should be coordinated both within countries and across borders, as stressed in a [Call to Action](#) for better data by UNICEF and partners. Safeguards should always be in place to ensure that data collected about / from migrant and displaced children is never shared with migration or law enforcement authorities or used for migration enforcement purposes.



INVEST -- SOCIAL SPENDING AND PROGRESS ON RESULTS FOR CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS & YOUTH

- Invest in the implementation of the child-specific commitments in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees.
- Investments for children, adolescents and youth under all other SDGs will benefit migrant & displaced children, as long as they target all children in the country regardless of status (as opposed to only the children of the country).
- Invest in inclusive child protection/education/health systems that address the needs of all children in the country, as well as the specific needs of migrant and displaced children. This will lead to strong inclusive systems that leave no child behind.
- A precondition to the above two asks would be to invest in collecting, analysing and sharing disaggregated data, including monitoring SDGs for migrant & displaced children



ACTIVATE -- AWARENESS BUILDING & MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS & YOUTH

UNICEF urges governments to enable participation by young migrant and displaced people in designing and implementing migration policies and programmes and to involve them as partners in the SDG monitoring and review process. Participation is key as children's first-hand experiences can inform and strengthen national priorities to implement the SDGs, including target 10.7 on well-managed migration, target 10.2 on inclusion and target 10.3 on ensuring equal opportunities. Supporting platforms such as the [UN Major Group for Children & Youth](#), which organises the Youth Forum at the Global Forum on Migration and Development, provide an opportunity for young migrants to engage on the global decision-making progress. Likewise, tools such as [U-Report On The Move](#) give young refugees and migrants a voice and access to information about their rights while allowing UNICEF and partners to collect data. Governments should work with the public and other partners to foster societies and communities inclusive of migrants, starting with educating children, adolescents and youth on inclusivity. UNICEF encourages national partners to implement SDG-focused learning through the school curricula. The [World Largest Lesson](#) is an excellent resource to bring the SDGs to the classroom through multilingual educational content, including [teaching materials on SDG 10 and target 10.8](#) (see specific lessons: [Children on the move](#) and [Migration is Part of our Shared History](#)). UNICEF also has a [number of materials/initiatives](#) that aim at bringing communities together by empowering migrant and displaced children and crafting positive narratives about child and youth migration with key target audiences.