



Improving the Protection of Unaccompanied minors and separated children in Zimbabwe

AN ESTIMATED 7,000 CHILDREN CROSS THE BORDER ANNUALLY.

SPECIAL ATTENTION IS NEEDED FOR THEM BECAUSE EVERY CHILD DESERVES PROTECTION AND CARE, AND NEEDS TO THRIVE REGARDLESS OF ITS MIGRATION STATUS.

The Situation

The declining socio-economic context, worsened by climate change disasters and a weak social protection system have exacerbated unsafe, internal, and cross-border migration in Zimbabwe, with 87 per cent heading to South Africa, many of them unaccompanied children. Other destinations for cross-border migrants are Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique.

According to the International Organization for Migration's migration-flows-and-movements data analysis along the Limpopo corridor - sentinel sites on the South Africa/Zimbabwe border - a total of nearly 300,000 people (males almost doubling the female numbers) were recorded to have crossed the border to South Africa the first six months of 2022. Among them, 3,417 were unaccompanied children and 3,786 were pregnant women.

Of those interviewed by the International Organization for Migration, 35 per cent say they are migrating to South Africa to reunite with family. Another 36 per cent seek job opportunities, predominately in the informal trading sector and agricultural sector. Many children cross the border to work on orange plantations along the Limpopo River, in South Africa.

Some children in Zimbabwe are vulnerable to separation from their families during humanitarian emergencies (Cyclones, droughts and floods), and as their parents and caregivers migrate in search of better livelihoods, jobs and economic opportunities within and outside the country. The separation can last for long periods before any reunification is done. The longer the separation, the greater the risk of exposure to different forms of abuse. Separation compromises children's mental health, physical health and overall development. It exposes them to violence, exploitation and abuse.

'Children on the move' face grave risks to their rights, including their health and education. They are much more likely to experience violence, exploitation and abuse. Interventions targeting child migrants are currently limited, poorly coordinated, and do not effectively respond to the protection needs of children. Cross-border Coordination Working Groups, facilitating coordination and collaboration between two countries on migration issues, have limited technical capacity to coordinate the responses needed to protect 'children on the move'.



UNICEF Response

The interventions of UNICEF Zimbabwe for children migrating to South Africa and other neighbouring countries are based on UNICEF's 'Global Programme Framework on Children on the Move':

- Provision of coordinated quality protection services.
 - Ensure individualized care for unaccompanied children through the child protection system.
 - Strengthened bilateral cross-border coordination mechanisms between Zimbabwe and South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique.
 - Improved coordination between the Government of Zimbabwe, NGOs and other actors involved in addressing issues of unaccompanied minors and separated children.
 - Capacity building and resourcing of the social-service workforce to effectively handle protection and welfare cases of child migrants.
- In communities of origin, provide safe migration and asylum information through trusted, official, and community-based channels, including child-friendly safe migration information.
 - Providing families, service providers and authorities with knowledge on how to minimize the risk of separation, across all contexts.
 - Including refugee and migrant children in the Civic Registration and Vital Statistics Systems system, especially to ensure their access to birth registration.

Target beneficiaries

Estimated 1,800,000 migrants (in three years)

Over 20,00 unaccompanied children (in three years)

CONTACTS

Zeinab Adam, Deputy Representative, Programmes
zeadam@unicef.org

Pierre Ferry, Chief of Child Protection
pferry@unicef.org

Alexandra Makaroff, Partnerships Specialist
amakaroff@unicef.org

TOTAL BUDGET \$2.1m

Strengthen protection systems for identification, documentation, tracing and reunification, process for determining the best interest of the child, and reintegration of returned unaccompanied minors and separated children in Zimbabwe	\$800k
Reception Centre support in Beitbridge (border with South Africa) and in Plumtree (border with Botswana)	\$200k
Cross-border Coordination Working Groups	\$100k
Strengthening of social-service workforce, including community workforce and structures, for effective children-on-the-move prevention and response	\$200k
Community awareness, information and knowledge	\$100k
Birth registration services	\$50k
Social protection services including referral	\$500k
Migration policy operationalisation and coordination	\$50k
Technical assistance for programme delivery	\$100k