

IOM CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMMING

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF MIGRANT CHILDREN



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency



Migrant children represent a significant share of the migrant and refugee population, with 1 in every 8 migrants worldwide being a child (UNICEF, 2016). Children migrate for multiple reasons: to flee persecution, war and violence; to reunite with family members abroad; and to seek better economic and educational opportunities. Migrant children are highly susceptible to violence, abuse, exploitation, detention, and trafficking. Different factors contribute to migrant children's vulnerability, including pre-existing risk factors at individual, household, community, and structural levels; the specific reasons why they have migrated; and the specific conditions they face during travel, transit, and at destination. These vulnerabilities are intensified for those migrant children who are unaccompanied or separated.

Children and youth are at the heart of the Organization's global mandate on migration. As there is no one coherent profile of a migrant child, IOM strives to address children's individual needs which encompass among others access to education, health care, and psychosocial support as well as family unity and various protection measures to ensure children's safety.

For more information on the above activities please contact Migrant Assistant Division (MAD) at migrantassistancedivision@iom.int or Department of Operations and Emergencies (DOE) at DOEProtection@iom.int.

IOM's work in relation to children is set primarily in the framework of international law, in particular the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

IOM commits to the following principles in its work with migrant children:

1. Non-discrimination
2. Best interests of the child
3. Life and full development
4. Family unity
5. Non-refoulement
6. Evolving capacities
7. Participation
8. Confidentiality

Based on these principles and its mandate, IOM implements a broad range of projects and initiatives which directly and indirectly address the needs and interests of children and youth worldwide.





Most of IOM's child and youth-oriented programming falls within the following six pillars:

DATA AND RESEARCH

Evidence is emerging that children are increasingly engaging in migration, in particular in the context of multiple large-scale migration movements. However, there are limitations in the data available as well as gaps and inconsistencies in terminology. This directly affects decision-makers' ability to develop effective migration policies, including policies to protect migrant children. To strengthen States and partners' capacity, as well as inform its own programming, IOM is engaged in data and research projects that aim to bolster data information management systems and in turn improve data availability on migrant children at all stages of the migratory process. This in turn contributes to the formulation and implementation of child-sensitive migration policies.

POLICY AND ADVOCACY

IOM is engaged in advocacy efforts to promote child-sensitive migration policies and programming, alternatives to immigration detention of children, and to facilitate children's access to protective and assistance services that address their specific needs regardless of their migratory status. IOM also works with partners to encourage responses to migration crises that recognize children as entitled to specific rights including protection.

PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE

IOM provides protection and assistance services to migrant children when in need, such as medical and psychosocial assistance, family tracing and reunification/alternative care options, assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR), shelter, and legal aid in order to support children's sustainable recovery from a situation of vulnerability, exploitation, and abuse. Protection and assistance services also include providing migrant children with access to solutions, such as return and reintegration to the country of origin, local integration, alternative care options and resettlement to a third country as per their best interests.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Lack of awareness of the rights of children and migrants, along with limited child-sensitive skills and practices, can contribute to rights violations against migrant children, as well as difficulties in identifying vulnerable children within migration flows. IOM therefore works to build the capacities of governmental and non-governmental actors, including social workers, in order to enhance prevention and assistance and protection mechanisms for migrant children.

PREVENTION

In order to contribute to reducing the vulnerability of children to violence, exploitation, abuse, and/or other violations of their rights, IOM implements a broad range of prevention activities, including awareness raising, capacity building, and community engagement.

CHILD PROTECTION IN CRISIS RESPONSE

Crises around the globe produce increasingly complex and often large-scale population movements, which typically expose affected populations to significant vulnerabilities. To address this, in 2012 IOM developed its Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF), which encompasses assistance and protection activities of migrants including IDPs, refugees, and migrants caught in crisis situations, as well as for host communities. IOM's programming in this arena takes into account the specific needs of children. IOM has committed to integrate [child protection minimum standards in humanitarian action \(CPMS\)](#) throughout its emergency operations-, including camp coordination and camp management, provision of assistance such as shelter and non-food items, emergency evacuations, and psychosocial and health support. IOM is progressively mainstreaming child protection and migrant protection activities in its emergency response in order to both address the needs of migrant children, and reduce their exposure to violence, abuse, trafficking, and exploitation in crisis situations. During crises, IOM works with its key humanitarian partners involved in the provision of other essential child protection services.

