**IOM - International Dialogue on Migration 2020**

***Save the Children’s statement***

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| ***Panel 2 - Protection of vulnerable migrants during and beyond the COVID-19 crisis***  |

In all Save the Children’s operations, we observe that COVID-19 continues to challenge the protection and associated realities of migrant and displaced children and youth in all geographies.

The virus – and containment measures taken by governments to counter its spread - has significantly altered the short and longer term perspectives for enhanced protection systems. Migrant families and displaced children stand out as among the most affected, as borders have closed and their journeys put off, or forcibly altered through pushbacks, deportations or delays in family reunification and asylum processes.

Concerns about public health and related states’ actions are reducing the most vulnerable households’ income, while access to education, protections mechanisms and basic services for their children is often rendered impossible.

Immediate consequences of Covid-19 measures in migration and displacement settings range from acute hunger, lack of access to healthcare and to other essential services, such as shelter, water and sanitation and nutrition These needs are particularly exacerbated for unaccompanied children and youth - especially girls on the move - who stand out as a priority vulnerable group.

In addition, violence at home in the form of xenophobia in host communities, increased sexual and gender-based violence, exploitative work, child marriage, risk of arrest and detention are all observed as increased threats to migrant children and youth in time of Covid-19.

Camp settings and receptions centres are coming under increased securitisation, with authorities taking control and access to reception centres increasingly being denied to external stakeholders. This compounds fear that essential and basic services will not be provided and humanitarian organisations will have no means of ensuring case management and social workers visit to monitor the quality of protection and other critical services.

A number of research reports, field-based analysis and programmatic reviews enable us to put forward today a set of recommendations to ensure the sustained and reliable delivery of protection interventions for the benefit of migrant children and youth in time of COVID-19:

* Child protection services for should be adapted to the current context. Case management and referral pathways should be revised to ensure the most vulnerable children can access such mechanisms. Those pathways should also enable the provision of remote psychosocial support and advice, as well as include emphasis on relevant healthcare, shelter and nutrition essential services.
* Education should a must for all children, irrespective of their migration status. They should have access to learning opportunities in relevant languages. National school plans and programmes should be fully inclusive of migrant children.
* All initiatives should be gender sensitive, establishing child protection systems to prevent and address gender-based violence within families and communities. The provision of such services to combat domestic violence and SGBV is essential during the pandemic.
* Local leaders and organisations should ensure that migrant children and youth are being consulted and not being stigmatised. They should take prompt actions to respond to any xenophobic campaign. Similarly, there can be no forced returns based on real or perceived fears of COVID-19 transmission.