

SPECIAL MEASURES FOR THE EVACUATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN: A REFERENCE CHECKLIST



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MICIC
MIGRANTS IN COUNTRIES IN CRISIS



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

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THE REFERENCE CHECKLIST: OVERVIEW

What is the Checklist?

The Checklist is a part of the toolkit developed by the IOM to provide technical guidance for the operationalization of the MICIC Initiative Guidelines, including Guideline 13: Relocate and evacuate migrants when needed. It is a non-binding compilation of recommended actions to ensure that the specific protection needs of migrant children are taken into consideration during humanitarian evacuations. This operational tool can help States and international organizations take a child protection (CP) approach to humanitarian evacuations by remaining aware of the unique conditions of vulnerability of migrant children and responding to their needs before, during and after evacuations.¹ Its recommended actions are designed to be mainstreamed within a general evacuation; they do not create or advocate for a separate evacuation process for children.

Who Does the Checklist Apply To?

The Checklist applies to migrant children, some of whom may be unaccompanied or separated children (UASC); it also applies to migrant children's families, if present. It is not intended for refugee children, for whom specific provisions apply.²

Who Can Use the Checklist?

The Checklist has been developed for use by States, IOM and other international or national organizations evacuating migrants from countries experiencing crises.

When to Use the Checklist?

The Checklist is intended for use during the emergency response phase of a crisis, such as a natural disaster or conflict, when humanitarian evacuation has already been assessed to be in the best interests of migrants.

The MICIC Initiative Guidelines

The **Migrants In Countries In Crisis (MICIC) Initiative** is a State-led undertaking aimed to improve the protection of migrants when the countries in which they live, work, study, transit, or travel experience a conflict or natural disaster. Through a broad and inclusive consultative process, the MICIC Initiative developed voluntary and non-binding **Guidelines to Protect Migrants in Countries Experiencing Conflict or Natural Disaster (MICIC Guidelines)**, which are targeted suggestions for States, civil society, international organizations and private sector actors to prepare for and respond to crises in ways that protect and empower migrants.

MICIC Guideline 13: Relocate and evacuate migrants when needed emphasizes that the humanitarian evacuation of migrants to other parts of the country or to another country can be a life-saving measure for those caught up in a crisis. It is an action that States, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and other international organizations may undertake as a *measure of last resort* when all other options to ensure migrants' safety are not feasible or not in the best interest of affected individuals. When evacuating migrant children, special measures are encouraged to protect their specific needs – whether they are in the company of their families or are unaccompanied or separated.

Where to Use the Checklist?

The Checklist can be used in all locations along an evacuation route. It applies to both internal and international humanitarian evacuations,³ though applicable international legal frameworks may differ. "Destination" is used to acknowledge that evacuations may be to other locations in a country in crisis, a country of origin or a third country; "host country" refers to a country experiencing the crisis.

¹ The Checklist provides an overview of actions to take with children in general, with specialized guidance for actions concerning unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). For detailed guidance on individual cases, see Child Protection Working Group, *Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection*, January 2014; Inter-Agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, *Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. Field Handbook on Working with Unaccompanied and Separated Children*, forthcoming 2017; and UNHCR, *Guidelines on Determining the Best Interests of the Child*, May 2008.

² This Checklist should be used after a screening and referral process to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees are identified and their needs are addressed, as per the UNHCR 10 Point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration, 2016 Update. See also UNHCR, *A Framework for Protection of Children*, 2012, and UNHCR, *Internal Note: Humanitarian Evacuations in Violence and Armed Conflict*, 17 June 2016.

³ Medical evacuations (medevacs) are beyond the scope of this Checklist. For further guidance, see IOM, *IOM Medical Evacuations and Health Rehabilitation*, 01/MHD-MEDEVAC-0901, January 2010.

How to Use the Checklist?

The Checklist is organized by phase of evacuation (1 – Planning; 2 – Pre-Departure; 3 – Departure and Transit; 4 – Arrival; 5 – Post-Arrival) and includes recommended actions to address migrant children’s conditions of vulnerability at each phase;

actions specific to UASC are shaded in blue in the Checklist.⁴ Officials and staff responsible for undertaking different evacuation phases can adapt recommended actions to their context and track progress by ticking off completed actions and planning to implement outstanding actions.

Definitions

Child: Every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.⁵

Migrant Child: A non-citizen child who is present in a country during a conflict or natural disaster regardless of: (a) the means of or reasons for entry; (b) immigration status; or (c) length of or reasons for stay. The term “migrant” does not refer to refugees, asylum seekers or stateless persons, for whom specific protection regimes exist under international law.⁶

Unaccompanied Child: A child who has been separated from both parents and other relatives and is not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.⁷

Separated Child: A child who has been separated from both parents or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members.⁸



4 These actions are necessary when there is no functioning national authority capable of guaranteeing protection for UASC. For further guidance on UASC, see Inter-Agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. Field Handbook on Working with Unaccompanied and Separated Children, forthcoming 2017.

5 United Nations General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Un Doc. A/RES/44/25,1989, Art.1.

6 This Checklist utilizes the definition of “migrant” used in the MICIC Guidelines which is tailored to the specific context of the MICIC Initiative. IOM’s definition of migrants differs. IOM defines a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person’s legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) the causes for the movement; or (4) the length of the stay. IOM concerns itself with migrants and migration-related issues and, in agreement with relevant States, with migrants who are in need of international migration services.

7 Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 6, 1 September 2005, CRC/GC/2005/6, para. 7. See also ICRC, IRC, Save the Children, UNICEF, UNHCR, and World Vision. Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, January 2004, p. 13.

8 Ibid., para 89.

MIGRANT CHILDREN'S CONDITIONS OF VULNERABILITY

Past evacuations of migrants from countries experiencing crises underscored migrant children's common conditions of vulnerability during crises and evacuations. Key drivers of vulnerability include:

Family Separation

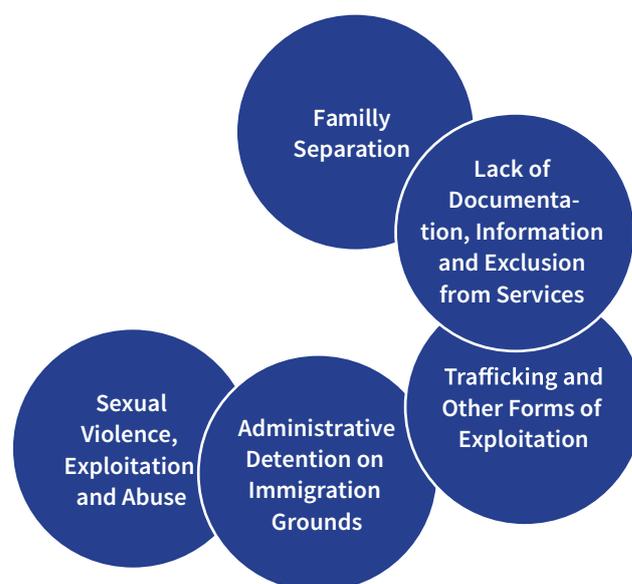
Migrant children evacuating with parents and family members risk becoming separated during chaotic evacuations. Other migrant children may already be separated before the crisis hits or become separated during it. These UASC can be vulnerable to violence, abuse and exploitation before and during evacuation. They also may lack access to information about evacuations or be excluded from evacuation procedures designed for adults.

Lack of Documentation, Information and Exclusion from Services

Many migrant children may not have access to consular services or have the documents to prove their age, identity or nationality – a key requirement for securing visas to exit, transit or enter countries during evacuation. Children's documents are easily lost, stolen, confiscated or held as collateral by employers or traffickers. Some children may never receive documents if they are not registered at birth, especially those born to migrant parents outside their country of origin. Without registration, it can be difficult to prove a child's age, identity or nationality and secure travel documents required for evacuation. When they cannot prove their nationality, children are at risk of both losing the chance for evacuation and becoming stateless.

Trafficking and other Forms of Exploitation

Migrant children, especially those travelling alone, are vulnerable to trafficking, which may entail sexual abuse and exploitation, forced labour, early marriage, and recruitment/employment by armed groups. Traffickers often hold children for ransom and consider children easy targets and valuable commodities, in part because they can be manipulated. Children requiring evacuation during crises may have been trafficked in the past, affecting their needs for specialized services during and after evacuation. If not



carefully screened, children may still be with their traffickers during evacuations and may be at risk of further trafficking at the destination. Traffickers may also take advantage of the chaos during crises by abducting or coercing children who are awaiting evacuation.

Administrative Detention on Immigration Grounds

Despite international legal standards prohibiting detention of children due to their or their parents' irregular immigration status, States often detain migrant children. In these situations, rare are the cases where alternative care is provided to the entire family⁹ and both children and families are provided immediate avenues for release to alternative care settings that are not locked or placed where they are deprived of liberty. These children may be discriminated against or treated as adults under a country's legal system, leading to indefinite arbitrary detention. Detained boys and girls are at great risk of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and torture or ill treatment; these risks escalate during crises when the rule of law collapses and detention centres become neglected and crowded. When crises hit, detention centres may be abandoned or overlooked, "hiding"

⁹ "Family" in this context is broader than mere biological parents, but "[t]he term 'family' must be interpreted in a broad sense to include biological, adoptive or foster parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom". CRC General Comment No. 14; see also CRC General Comment No. 6 re appropriate guardians and primary caregivers.

children who may be unintentionally left behind. Even after release, detention can affect children's needs for medical care, psychosocial support and family tracing during evacuations.

Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Abuse

Sexual violence, exploitation and abuse in detention, at borders or elsewhere by traffickers, armed groups, employers or others, including agents of the State or international/national organization staff, can affect migrant children of all genders. For girls, early marriage and pregnancy can be especially risky for their health, development and survival. When crises break out, these children are at even greater risk as protection systems and the rule of

law collapse, and traffickers, armed groups or others take advantage of the chaos and lack of accountability. Survivors may require specialized medical care or psychosocial support during evacuation. Additionally, those implementing the evacuation should be trained in and adhere to Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) policies and be held accountable for misconduct, including through effective community-based complaints mechanisms and internal investigation procedures.¹⁰



¹⁰ For further guidance on PSEA, see Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Minimum Operating Standards on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (MOS-PSEA), 15 January 2016, and Best Practices Guide: Inter-Agency Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms, 30 September 2016.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Migrant children are entitled to the same rights and protections as all children. In addition, all general principles for evacuation – evacuation as a last resort, voluntary nature of evacuation, freedom of movement – apply to evacuation of migrant children. However, the following principles, which are drawn from international law,¹¹ are particularly important to underpinning and guiding actions to protect migrant children in the context of evacuations.

Life, Survival and Development

All migrant children have the right to life and to fully develop to the best of their abilities. Preserving these rights is the very purpose of evacuation from countries experiencing crises, where children's lives and futures are at risk. Additionally, evacuations should be undertaken in ways that support these rights, such as by providing food, water, medical care and protection during evacuation.

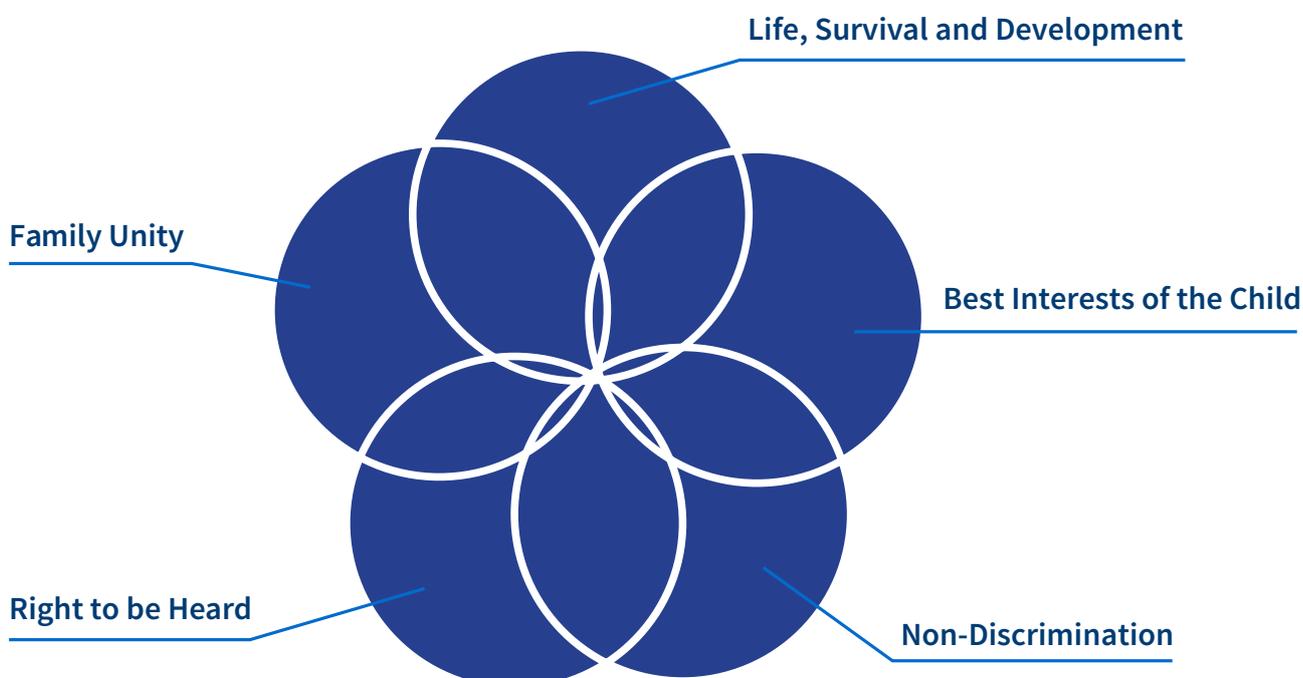
Best Interests of the Child

In all actions taken concerning migrant children, the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration. This Checklist assumes that the principle has already been applied to the actual

decision to evacuate children and determined that evacuation to be in their best interests. However, it should continue to be a primary consideration in decisions regarding when, how, to where and with whom children are evacuated, as well as alternative care, family tracing and reunification for UASC.

Non-Discrimination

Humanitarian evacuations must be undertaken without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his/her parents'/guardians'/caregivers' race, colour, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status, including immigration status.



¹¹ For applicable legal frameworks, see International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Geneva Convention IV, Art. 17, 23, 24, 38, 49(2), 50, 76, 89. Geneva, 1949; Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, Art. 70(1), 77(1), 78, Geneva, 1977; Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, Art 4(3), 17(1), Geneva, 1977; United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, UN Doc. A/RES/45/158, 18 December 1990; Convention on the Rights of the Child, UN Doc. A/RES/44/25, 20 November 1989; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 16 December 1966, Treaty Series Vol. 993, Art. 10; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 16 December 1966, Treaty Series Vol. 993, Art. 23, 24.

Right to be Heard

All migrant children should be able to express their views regarding decisions affecting them and to have those views given due weight according to their age, maturity and evolving capacity; this includes decisions related to evacuation, family tracing and reunification.

Family Unity

Children have the right to remain with and be cared for by their families. Every effort should be made

to keep family units intact during evacuations. Children should only be evacuated without family members as a temporary measure and when in the best interests of the child (for instance when there is a life-threatening risk to the child or the child is already separated and will be reunited at the destination). UASC are also entitled to special measures of protection, including alternative care, family tracing and reunification.



SPECIAL MEASURES FOR THE EVACUATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN: A REFERENCE CHECKLIST

Phase 1: Planning

Recommended Action 1.1

Estimate the Scale of the Evacuation of Migrant Children

- Estimate the total number of migrant children and family members that need to be evacuated to each destination, relative to the overall evacuation. Disaggregate by sex, age and separation status.
- Identify key locations where migrant children may be stranded. Note that unaccompanied children may not necessarily be in the same places as children with family members. Possible locations may include detention centres, places of employment, border crossings, health centres, transit hubs, playing fields or schools. Stay alert to newly identified locations.
- Receive reports, secure access and conduct visits to monitor the above-identified locations to ensure the estimated number of children is as accurate as possible given the context. This can be done in liaison with authorities, organizations or civil society and migrant community leaders. Maintain contacts in identified locations to continually receive reports of numbers of children in various locations to include in your estimates. When individual children are identified, document them, specifying separation status and other protection needs; children identified during planning estimates should be included in Phase 2.1 Identify and Register Children for Evacuation.

For all types of detention centres. During monitoring, sensitively identify migrant children held on immigration grounds by coordinating with appropriate actors (for example, asylum or refugee organizations). Secure their release and advocate for detention centre managers to regularly alert authorities, embassies and relevant international organizations of detained children and to facilitate their release.

Recommended Action 1.2

Determine Transport Options and Conditions

- Determine which available modes of transport provide the safest and fastest forms of evacuation for children and families. Note any restrictions that prohibit children of certain ages, abilities or medical conditions, including pregnancy. Determine how many units will be required based on estimated numbers of children. Factor in family members, caregivers and escorts travelling with children to avoid overcrowding.
- Prioritize the most vulnerable children and families for the form of transport with the safest and most child-appropriate conditions, if there are multiple forms of transport (such as flying on passenger planes instead of driving overland in commercial trucks).
- Factor in extra time and more locations for rest stops when choosing routes for long journeys, as children may need more frequent breaks (for instance 30 minutes every three hours).

Recommended Action 1.3

Coordinate Who does What, Where, When and With Which Children

- **Agree on referral pathways to multisectorial services to respond to children's immediate needs:** Which government ministry, consular staff or organization is responsible for which kinds of services (for instance, health, gender-based violence (GBV), food, shelter, documentation)? Include contact details for child protection (CP) focal points in these ministries and organizations at each stage of the evacuation – in host country, transit and destination. Document these referral pathways in a simple, clear way so staff can refer children quickly to relevant available services.
- **Agree on key stakeholders' roles and responsibilities regarding evacuation of migrant children and appoint CP focal points in relevant authorities and organizations in all locations from departure to destination,** including in the authority managing the entire evacuation and with government/organizations' counterparts across borders. Who does what, where, when, and for which groups of children in host country, transit and destination? The "What" may include recommended actions in Phases 2 to 5 (such as secure guardianship for unaccompanied children in host country and destination).
- **Agree on a regular communication schedule and how to securely share information** regarding evacuations of children (for example, password-protected documents, daily calls, biweekly meetings).
- **Deploy additional officials and staff** with protection, CP, trafficking, or gender expertise to assist children at key sites during departure, transit and arrival.



Phase 2: Pre-Departure

Recommended Action 2.1 Identify and Register Children for Evacuation

- Train or brief officials and staff on how to sensitively identify and document migrant children, including UASC (for instance, border authorities, consular officials, detention centre managers, civil society volunteers and international/national organizations' staff).
- Identify and register all children and families for evacuation.

Best case scenario: Register families and all children, for evacuation in context-appropriate ways that respect confidentiality (such as registration desks; lists shared securely by embassies and organizations; outreach to migrant leaders). Continue monitoring locations identified in Phase 1.1, Estimate the Scale of the Evacuation of Migrant Children, to register newly identified children and families. Note that age assessments are rarely possible in crises; if a child's age is unclear, give him/her the benefit of the doubt that he/she is under 18.

At minimum: Record children's basic information in context-appropriate ways that respect confidentiality if the crisis does not allow for detailed registration (for example, name, age, sex, nationality, priority level/ protection concerns, separation status and relationship to those with whom the child is travelling). Reliance on age estimates may be necessary.

- Disaggregate the master list of evacuees by age to maintain a sub-list of children. Incorporate children and families who were previously identified during Phase 1.1, Estimate the Scale of the Evacuation of Migrant Children, and continually update this list as children are identified or evacuated.

Recommended Action 2.2 Respond to Children's Immediate Needs

- Assess children's immediate needs and respond within your authority and capacity or refer immediately to relevant available services (for instance, health, food, water, basic shelter, GBV, international protection, documentation). Children may have different needs from their parents/guardians/caregivers. Note the individual needs of all children within families or in caregiving arrangements, not just those of the adult head of the household or older siblings.
- Screen children to identify UASC and victims of trafficking (for example, look for children travelling alone, in groups, or with adults holding multiple children's travel documents, etc.).¹² Refer children to authorities and international/national organizations providing specialized and multisectorial services (such as anti-human trafficking, health, psychosocial support).
- Be alert for refugee or asylum-seeking children and families among those caught in a crisis. If refugee or asylum-seeking children or families are identified, link them to national asylum processes or to UNHCR, while respecting the principle of non-refoulement.

¹² For further guidance on identification of UASC, see Inter-Agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separate Children, Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. Field Handbook on Working with Unaccompanied and Separated Children, forthcoming 2017. For further guidance on identification of victims of trafficking, see IOM, The IOM Handbook on Direct Assistance to Victims of Trafficking, 2007.

Recommended Action 2.3

Assign Guardianship for Unaccompanied Children in the Host Country

Best-case scenario: Nominate or facilitate nomination of a guardian to serve as a caregiver and to help make decisions in the best interests of the child in the host country. Host country authorities can identify responsible guardians in consultation with international/national organizations and migrant communities.

At minimum: Seek feasible solutions to ensure an adult is responsible for the child, if the host country's government is not functional due to the crisis. Agree, for instance, with consular officials that they will automatically serve as guardians for groups of children of their nationality upon identification or consider whether other trusted adults can serve as guardians and caregivers to individual children. Document guardianship in writing, if possible.

Recommended Action 2.4

Maintain Confidentiality and Seek Informed Consent¹³ to Evacuate and Conduct Family Tracing

- Provide full information about the evacuation, the authorities conducting the evacuation, and its risks and possible consequences to all children and parents/guardians/caregivers in child-friendly language. Where parents/guardians/caregivers are present, their informed consent is required. Older children may provide implicit consent,¹⁴ if their age, maturity and evolving capacity allow them to understand the implications of evacuation.
- For UASC: Before evacuation, family tracing and any other actions for UASC, obtain informed consent of a guardian/caregiver or the implicit consent of the child to receive assistance and share personal data, if their age, maturity and evolving capacities allow them to understand the implications of their decisions.

If there is no guardian/caregiver: Use the 'Best Interest' principle as a guide to assess whether or not the modalities of evacuating the child or group of children is in their best interests (when, how, to where, with whom), with primary consideration for risks to children's survival and development. Any decision by authorities or organizations to leave children behind should consider the risk of irreparable harm, the impact of separation from their community and the ways to maintain links with peers/adult community members. Those older children who explicitly request evacuation are effectively providing implicit consent to the service of evacuation.

¹³ Informed consent is the voluntary agreement of an individual who has the capacity to give consent, and who exercises free power of choice. To provide 'informed consent' the individual must be able to understand and take a decision regarding their own situation. Informed consent may be sought from a child or from the child's caregiver, according to the age of the child and their level of maturity. The Child Protection Working Group, Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 'Standard 5: Information Management', 2012, p. 66, uses the term informed assent: "Informed assent is the expressed willingness to participate in services. For younger children who are by definition too young to give informed consent, but old enough to understand and agree to participate in services, the child's 'informed assent' is sought." International Rescue Committee and United Nations Children's Fund, Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse: Guidelines for health and psychosocial service providers in humanitarian settings, 2012, p. 16.

¹⁴ "Implicit consent" is an IOM term that is equivalent to informed assent. See Internal Guidance Note on the Inclusion of Protection Considerations when Planning and Implementing International Humanitarian Evacuations for Migrants Caught in Armed Conflict Settings, IN/238, 18 July 2016. Para. 8.

Recommended Action 2.5

Secure Valid Travel Documents

- Ensure all children and family members have valid travel documents and required visas before being added to transport manifests.¹⁵
- Prioritize children and families with urgent needs when issuing travel documents and visas. Consider assigning/requesting a consular focal point for children and families to fast-track vulnerable cases and to process the documents/visas of children and their family members/guardians/caregivers at the same time so they can travel together. All governments involved can consider removing age restrictions for visa applications or waiving exit, transit and return visas altogether for children and family members.
- For children without proof of nationality: Facilitate verification of nationality and documentation.

Best-case scenario: Refer children to the embassy/consulate of the country from which they state they are from and alert officials in that country of origin. Officials verifying nationality should give the child the benefit of the doubt, as he/she may have been born abroad or left at a young age. Consider accepting a wide range of types of proof of citizenship.

At minimum: Find innovative ways to continue verifying children's nationality if their country of origin does not have or has already evacuated an embassy/consulate in the host country. Consider sending consular officials posted in neighbouring countries to borders or camps to conduct interviews and issue documents, or conducting interviews by phone or video feed.

- For children whose family members are of different nationalities: Facilitate evacuation of families as units to the same destination. Consular officials can consider issuing laissez-passer and temporarily waiving restrictive visa regulations.

Recommended Action 2.6

Take Action for UASC: Assessment, Alternative Care, Family Tracing and Case Transfer

- Assess and Determine Best Interests of UASC.

Best-case scenario: Adapt the "Best Interest" procedures¹⁶ so that the principle is still respected within what is feasible in the emergency. Consider convening informal meetings or calls with those working with or close to the child concerned to assess what is the best interests of each child vis-à-vis when, how, to where and with whom they will be evacuated, as well as decisions regarding family tracing and reunification. This group may include officials from country of origin consulate, the Ministry of Social Affairs of the host country, CP organizations or other trusted adults. Note that the guardian/caregiver/child must first consent to share the child's identifiable information with officials from their country of origin, in case the child has a well-founded fear of persecution there. Keep children's information confidential in a password-protected document or in a locked cabinet, with access granted only on a "need to know" basis.

¹⁵ Manifests are documents for customs and immigration officials and list all individuals travelling on a given transport.

¹⁶ The Best Interests procedures consist of the Best Interest Assessment (BIA) and the Best Interest Determination (BID). A BIA is an assessment of a child to ensure that his/her best interests are a foremost consideration. A BID describes the formal process with strict procedural safeguards designed to determine the child's best interests in particularly important decisions affecting the child; evacuation and cross-border family reunification are two such important decisions. While these are UNHCR-specific procedures designed for refugee children, they may also be used by host governments or other CP actors working with non-refugee children. See UNHCR, Guidelines on Determining the Best Interests of the Child, May 2008, and Field Handbook for the Implementation of the Guidelines on Determining the Best Interests of the Child, 2011.

At minimum: It may be necessary for authorities and organizations to decide that it is in the best interests of all children, or specific groups of children, to be evacuated in a certain way or to a certain destination without individual assessments. To the extent possible, document decisions about the modalities of evacuations of groups of children in writing.

If evacuation means or destination are not in the best interests of the child: Explore alternative evacuation options, considering risks to the child's survival and development. Note that adoption is not an appropriate form of care for UASC during or immediately following emergencies.

- **Provide Alternative Care for Unaccompanied Children Awaiting Evacuation in the Host Country.**

Best-case scenario: Assess potential family-based caregiving arrangements (such as conduct home visits to assess caregivers' capacity and willingness to provide suitable care) before placing children. This may be done in agreement with the child's guardian and conducted by the Ministry of Social Affairs in coordination with international/national organizations and migrant leaders.

At minimum: If family-based care is not possible, seek feasible alternatives (for instance, neighbours or community members supervising or feeding nearby unaccompanied children).

- **Trace Family Members of UASC.**

For All UASC: Make all efforts to trace UASC's parent(s) or other adult family as soon as possible. At minimum, document the name of the child and that of the parent(s)/family member(s) to be traced as well as the age, contact details, place of origin and relationship to the child, circumstances of separation, information about where the adult might be, as well as details that might help verify the relationship. Ask migrants travelling with the child for information that may help trace family.

For Separated Children: After documentation and assessment that the evacuation means and destination are in the child's best interest, evacuate separated children with caregivers and continue tracing on arrival with counterpart officials and organizations in the destination.

For Unaccompanied Children: For Unaccompanied Children: Try not to separate unaccompanied children from the population within which they are travelling or leave them behind solely to conduct tracing, if doing so would place the child at risk. However, before evacuating them, it is necessary to either: 1. successfully trace family in the destination, or 2. confirm guardianship, alternative care arrangements and continued family tracing in the destination. The only exceptions should be if the child is at imminent risk and immediate evacuation is in his/her best interests. In such cases, the evacuating authority can become the child's de facto guardian until he/she is assigned a guardian and placed in alternative care or reunified with family in the destination.

- **If the parent(s)/family member(s) being traced is believed to be in the host country:** Work with embassy/consular officials, migrant leaders, and international/national organizations to trace the family and, if found, to verify their identity, relationship to the child and willingness to reunify.
- **If the parent(s)/family member(s) being traced is believed to be in the country of origin or in a third country:** Coordinate tracing with counterparts in that country. The ICRC and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies will normally be responsible for organizing cross-border tracing; according to circumstances and operational capacities, other organizations, such as IOM, may be involved. Embassy officials in the host country and Ministry of Social Affairs officials in the destination can also be involved, if this is in the child's best interest.

- **Prepare to Transfer UASC Cases to Counterparts in the Destination for Guardianship, Alternative Care and Follow Up.**

For all UASC: Coordinate the transfer of UASC cases to relevant authorities and organizations in the destination, including by agreeing on how case files will be transferred (for example, secure e-mail, physical handover by escorts). Ensure allocation of cases to social workers or staff at receiving authorities or organizations for follow up on arrival.

If family tracing is still in process or is unsuccessful but it is in the child's best interest to be evacuated immediately due to imminent risk: Coordinate in advance with counterparts in the destination to ensure that an extended family or community member, adult caregiver, government official or CP organization has agreed to provide guardianship and family-based care on arrival. Where possible, confirm the identity of the guardian/caregiver in writing before evacuation; if not possible, confirm their identity after evacuation but before giving the child into their care on arrival.

If family tracing is successful: Coordinate in advance with relevant authorities/organizations in the destination to verify the family member's identity and relationship to the child, confirm their willingness to reunify with and care for the child and conduct a home visit. Ideally, do this before a child is evacuated; if not possible, complete verification after the child is evacuated but before reunification. If the family is unable to travel to meet the child on arrival or verification and home visit have not yet been completed, pre-arrange alternative care for the child until the family can travel or verification and home visit can be conducted.

Recommended Action 2.7

Prioritize Children and Families for Evacuation Based on Vulnerability

- **Prioritize children and families who are ready for evacuation based on reasonable, fair and clear vulnerability criteria** that are appropriate in your context, within the broader framework of prioritization of all vulnerable persons. Consider the whole picture of a child's specific needs and factors that increase their vulnerability (for example age, gender, separation status, disability or other protection concerns).

Prioritization should neither discriminate nor be based on a "first come, first serve" basis. Though nationalities may be grouped together at governments' request or for logistical reasons, balance these factors with children's vulnerability. In all scenarios, maintaining family unity is key – if a child is prioritized, so should his/her family members/guardians/caregivers so, that they can be evacuated together.

Recommended Action 2.8

Share Evacuation-Related Information with Children and Families

- **Ensure that all communication is clear and age-appropriate, uses child-friendly language, and is accessible for all literacy levels** (such as pictures, cartoons, radio, music, public announcements, TV/video, Internet, SMS or social media).
- **Use all languages spoken by migrant children in your context**, including language(s) spoken in the host country, as some children may not know the language(s) from their country of origin.
- **Include targeted messages for children and families in general evacuation announcements.**

- What to pack for children in carry-on bags (examples of which include travel documents, school certificates, medications, diapers, age-appropriate food and water, weather-appropriate clothing, comfort items such as blankets or toys).
- How to prevent family separation (for example make a plan to stay together, share phone numbers/addresses or agree on a meeting place in the destination if split up).
- Clear explanation of evacuation procedures and available protections for children, including that no one has the right to touch children or demand favours from them in exchange for evacuation and how to get help if this happens.

Recommended Action 2.9

Keep Children Safe During Pre-Departure Health Checks

- Allow parents, guardians and escorts to remain with children and, if possible, to hold young children during health checks as a safeguarding measure and to minimize distress in young children.
- Ensure that health staff includes women and those who speak children's languages.
- For children whose family member is not declared "fit to travel": Do not evacuate the child alone. Keep families together and refer to health partners until the family member is cleared or an alternative is found. If a child must be evacuated due to imminent risk or the adult is unlikely to quickly be declared "fit to travel", facilitate exchange of contacts to enable future communication and reunification.
- For children with life-threatening medical needs: Urgently refer children, including those injured in the crisis, for medical evacuation (medevac). Medevacs may be conducted simultaneously by the same actors conducting the general evacuation, however, medevacs follow specific procedures. Where possible, allow a family member to accompany the child on medevacs and, to the extent possible, to hold or remain within eyesight of the child; if not, facilitate exchange of contacts to enable future communication and reunification.

For children whose parent/guardian/caregiver with life-threatening medical needs requires medevac: Determine what is in the best interests of the child, whether that entails travelling with the parent/guardian/caregiver on the medevac, remaining in the host country or being separately evacuated with another family member or guardian/caregiver. In all cases, facilitate exchange of contacts for continued communication and future reunification.

Phase 3: Departure and Transit

Recommended Action 3.1

Prevent Accidental Family Separation During Evacuations¹⁷

- Create safe spaces by designating and clearly identifying a section of the departure waiting area exclusively for children and families, and establishing and clearly identifying "Help and Information Meeting Points." Assign a designated CP focal point who speaks children's

¹⁷ For guidance on prevention of separation, see Inter-Agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. Field Handbook on Working with Unaccompanied and Separated Children, forthcoming 2017, Chapter 3.1.

language(s) to “Help and Information Meeting Points” to assist children and families who are lost or need assistance. Ensure that shelter and water are available in the waiting area and assemble children, families and escorts there.

- [Train/brief evacuation staff and officials on what to do if they find a child who seems lost, abandoned or trafficked](#), and how to refer them to Help and Information Meeting Points or CP focal points. Identifying victims of trafficking can be sensitive; where possible, alert staff and organizations with trafficking expertise (such as IOM) to suspected case before taking action yourself.
- [Encourage parents/guardians/caregivers to teach children their own names, ages, nationalities, medical needs and the names and phone numbers/addresses of family members/guardians/caregivers](#). Provide parents/guardians/caregivers of very young children with identification tags to pin to the children’s clothing or permanent markers to write directly onto the inside of clothes with the same information.
- [Remind parents/guardians/caregivers how to prevent separation](#) (for example carry small children, hold hands or do not give children to people on a different transport even if it is leaving first).
- [Try to limit entry of people who are neither evacuees nor staff into the boarding area](#) to reduce the risk of other families attempting to push children onto departing transports from the crowd.

Recommended Action 3.2

Provide Escorts for Unaccompanied Children

- [Assign escorts to travel with unaccompanied children ages 15 and younger](#), and older children as required. Escorts may be adult guardians, international/national organization staff, country of origin officials or other trusted adults; if the child has a caregiver in the host country, who is being evacuated to the same destination, this caregiver may also serve as an escort. Ideally, escorts are already trained in child safeguarding. Pair female escorts with young children and girls, and ensure that escorts speak the child’s language.
- [For all escorts](#): Be aware of your responsibilities as an escort and of the child’s specific needs. Do not leave the child alone at any point in the evacuation. Facilitate access to food, water, medical care and blankets, and, if necessary for younger children, feed and change them. Remain alert to any risks to the child. Explain what is happening and ensure that the child is safe and as comfortable as possible. Keep the child’s file (copies of the child’s travel and identification documents, assessments, family tracing details, and handover forms) in a safe place for transfer to receiving authorities and organizations on arrival. For escorts travelling with children who will be reunified on arrival: Prepare the child to reunify with family, discussing who will be there, what may have changed since they last saw their family, or their worries and requests regarding the reunification.

[For escorts travelling with children who will be reunified on arrival](#): Prepare the child to reunify with family, discussing who will be there, what may have changed since they last saw their family, or their worries and requests regarding the reunification.

Recommended Action 3.3

Keep Children Safe while Loading Baggage and Boarding

- Designate a specific section of the baggage storage area on the transport vehicle for children and families (for example compartment #1, back half of the rooftop) so that their baggage does not become mixed up with others' and create risks for children during unloading. Ensure that only adults load heavy baggage to minimize injury and risk of family separation (for example designate a family or staff member to remain with children off to the side).
- Prioritize baggage loading and boarding order based on vulnerability. Keep in mind what is culturally appropriate in your context (such as pregnant women boarding before teenage unaccompanied boys). In some situations it may not be appropriate or safe to visibly prioritize unaccompanied children and they may need to be integrated into more general priority categories (for example all children and families/escorts with children under a certain age).
- Designate a baggage and boarding line for children and families/escorts, and move children and families/escorts from the waiting area to baggage and boarding line as a group. Keep lines orderly by assigning personnel to this task.
- Check children and family members'/escorts' names individually against the manifest as they board to ensure that no families are accidentally separated or children left behind. If a child or their family member is missing, alert staff and search the departure area and the "Help and Information Meeting Point" for the missing person. Do not split up the family unless it is in the best interests of the child to be evacuated immediately with some but not all family. In this case, facilitate exchange of contacts to enable future communication and reunification.

Recommended Action 3.4

Ensure Children's Health and Well-being in Transit

- Seat children with their families/escorts, ideally in a designated area near the transport's entrance, ventilation and sanitation facilities (if available). Create a private area for breastfeeding.
- Distribute adequate meals, infant formula¹⁸ and drinking water to children, lactating mothers and pregnant women/girls during rest stops and keep some food and water easily accessible in the transport vehicle.
- Be prepared to treat children, lactating mothers and pregnant women/girls who become sick or dehydrated during transit. Stock first aid kits with pediatric medications and dosage instructions.
- Distribute available comfort and hygiene items (such as blankets, diapers, female sanitary materials, soap, toys or games) to children and families based on vulnerability.
- Train transit staff, including female staff, to be alert for child protection risks, such as sexual harassment, abuse, and trafficking, and to refer cases to relevant organizations on arrival.

¹⁸ While the WHO recommends exclusive breastfeeding of infants and this should be encouraged during evacuations, if a child under the age of 2 is unaccompanied or for medical or other reasons requires an alternative to breast milk, then formula may be necessary and should be available during evacuations.

Recommended Action 3.5

Keep Children Safe at Rest Stops

- Allow children and families/escorts to disembark first and then re-board first when arriving at and leaving rest stops. Sign children in and out on the transport manifest individually. Double-check the manifest before departing to ensure that children are not accidentally left behind.
- Clearly identify a Help and Information Meeting Point and designate a CP focal point who speaks children's language(s) to assist children and families who are lost or need assistance during long or overnight rest stops.

Phase 4: Arrival

Recommended Action 4.1

Prevent Accidental Family Separation on Arrival

- Establish and clearly identify a "Help and Information Meeting Point" in the arrival area and designate a CP focal point who speaks children's language(s) to assist children and family members who may be lost or need assistance. Remind children, families, and escorts to meet in this place if they become lost.
- Prioritize the most vulnerable children and families for disembarking and unloading baggage first, before less vulnerable passengers. This order may be the same as in Phase 3.3 Keep Children Safe while Loading Baggage and Boarding.
- Check children's names individually against the manifest as they disembark. Governments and evacuating authorities should maintain complete records of all evacuations of children.

Recommended Action 4.2

Take Action for UASC: Reunify or Provide Guardianship and Alternative Care

- For UASC whose family members travel to reunify with the child on arrival: Escorts should have already prepared the child to reunify with family during transit. Staff on the ground should verify the identities of adult family members awaiting the child and their relationship to the child and inform them of any delays in the evacuation. Reunify the child and family with the assistance of social workers from CP organizations and the Ministry of Social Affairs.
- For UASC who are not immediately reunited: As agreed during Phase 2.6 Take Action for UASC: Assessment, Alternative Care, Family Tracing and Case Transfer, Ministry of Social Affairs officials, social workers, international/national organizations or other CP actors can escort children to previously identified care arrangements or onward travel to guarantee a formal reunification and handover to parents or previously identified new guardians.
- For All UASC: Escorts/former guardians/caregivers, who evacuated with the child and family members/new guardians/caregivers, who are taking responsibility for the child in the destination should sign a handover form. Escorts/former guardians should give copies of all the child's documents to both authorities (if in the best interest of the child) and family members/new guardian/caregiver. The evacuating authority (if different) should also retain a copy of the handover form.

Recommended Action 4.3

Ensure Children's Health and Well-Being on Arrival

- Provide children with immediate basic services (such as food, drinking water, shelter or medical care), means of communicating with family members and special multisectorial assistance for children whose specific needs have been assessed (for example victims of trafficking and/or GBV).

Phase 5: Post-Arrival

Recommended Action 5.1

Follow Up on UASC and Other Vulnerable Children with Protection Needs

- For all UASC: Ensure that the Ministry of Social Affairs or other competent Ministry, with support of international/national organizations, conducts post-evacuation monitoring and follow up of reunified children, supervises care arrangements of UASC to ensure these meet minimum standards and are appropriate for each child, and continues family tracing for UASC.
- Refer vulnerable children with other protection needs to the Ministry of Social Affairs or other competent ministries, CP partners and appropriate services for follow up.
- Facilitate communication regarding children's cases between the Ministries of Social Affairs or other competent Ministries in host country and destination, as well as counterpart offices of international organizations. Escorts and evacuating authorities should transfer children's files to the Ministry of Social Affairs or CP organizations in the destination, per data protection and information sharing protocols.
- Ensure that children evacuated with temporary documents, including those born abroad, receive identity documents and proof of citizenship from the appropriate Ministry in the destination country.

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