

POLICY AND PROGRAMME WORK ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT BY
THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

A. INTRODUCTION

The 2006 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development recognized the contribution of international migration to the development of countries of origin and destination. United Nations Member States underscored the need for policy coherence and international cooperation in maximizing migration's benefits while reiterating the importance of safeguarding the human rights of all migrants and their families regardless of their migration status. Participants noted the increased feminization of migration and called for migration policies that address inequalities, especially those arising from racial and gender discrimination, as well as from entrenched poverty. The High-level Dialogue also highlighted the need to address the serious problem of trafficking of persons and smuggling of migrants, as well as the importance of focusing on the social consequences of international migration for receiving countries and families left behind in countries of origin.

B. THE WORK OF UNICEF ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) takes the position that the impact of migration on children, adolescents and women must be understood in the context of globalization and transnational human mobility, as well as examined within the framework of poverty, gender, intergenerational issues and the protection of children's human rights¹. Some of migration's effects can be captured by economic statistics, whereas social and cultural impacts are more difficult to assess, especially as they relate to women and girls.

Children are affected by migration at multiple levels: when they are left behind by one or both migrating parents, in migrating with parents (or born abroad), or when they migrate alone. In countries of destination, migrants and their families are often vulnerable to discrimination and social marginalization as well as poverty or economic distress, inadequate personal security and challenges to their legal status. Migrant children are more prone to problems related to family separation and limited access to healthcare, adequate education and affordable housing.

Undocumented migrants, particularly children and women, are also more susceptible to human rights violations, including deprivation of liberty. In countries of origin, while remittances have helped in reducing the overall level of poverty and promote economic development, effects of parental absence have created new challenges for families and children left behind, including family household burden and social stigma.

worldwide and in-country leadership in promoting awareness and policy dialogue on migration-related issues; (b) facilitating global and country-level research and analysis; (c) identifying critical issues, challenges, opportunities and best practices, and (d) reinforcing and promoting children's rights, with a focus on the protection and well-being of migrant children and children left behind.

The policy research and analysis of UNICEF at the global, regional and country levels focuses on: (a) the social impact of migration and remittances on children and women left behind in countries of origin; (b) the migration of unaccompanied children, and (c) the situation of migrant children upon arrival at their destination. UNICEF is also promoting comparative analysis and statistical evidence to inform policy development and safeguard children and adolescent's rights in the context of migration. In

awareness of the need for holistic legal and policy frameworks and investment in order to assure the human rights of children and adolescents in at-risk communities.

UNICEF, in moving forward on the mandates of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is also supporting capacity-building and advocacy on the social protection and human rights dimensions of migration as it affects children and adolescents. This includes exchanges between policymakers, stakeholders and other partners in countries of origin, transit and destination (i.e. South-South exchanges). These policy activities have raised the profile of child migration issues at country and regional levels and have strengthened institutional support for sustainable human development and the protection of the rights of children affected by migration processes.

2. Development of a survey instrument to assess the impact of migration and remittances on children left behind

UNICEF has developed four modules within its Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) to gauge the impact of international migration on migrant sending and non-migrant sending households. In this regard, UNICEF collaborated closely with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in developing the survey instrument and measurement tool. Pilot surveys have been conducted in Albania and Ecuador to test the validity of the modules. Data was collected on the characteristics, life satisfaction, health and remittances of migrant households. Preliminary results from the pilot surveys suggest significant levels of internal consistency and reliability of the survey instrument. Along with United Nations partners and the IOM, UNICEF is supporting the development of national surveys in several countries, including Albania and Morocco.

3. Estimating the number of international migrant children

Although some countries collect information on the foreign-born in censuses, global estimates of the numbers of international migrant children are not available. In order to address this data gap, UNICEF has partnered with the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA) to develop a database containing these estimates. Ts0 TDv s.cnot

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UNICEF advocates for a protective environment where children are free from violence, exploitation and unnecessary separation from family, where laws, services, behaviours and practices minimize children’s vulnerability, address known risk factors and strengthen children’s own resilience. This approach is human rights-based and emphasizes prevention as well as the accountability of governments. At the country level, the work of UNICEF aims to prevent and respond to human trafficking by supporting harmonization and reform of national legislation, strengthening institutional capacity and mechanisms for prevention, response and monitoring, promoting social change, providing services to families and communities and supporting regional and cross-border cooperation with governments and civil society partners.

D. EMERGING ISSUES

UNICEF is currently engaged in monitoring global developments as they relate to migration and its impact on the well-being of children —particularly in the context of sustainable development and human rights. Such developments include the current worldwide financial crisis, which might drastically disrupt remittance flows that are often essential to family well-being and in some instances support local

NOTES

¹ See the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

² For more information on this unit, see <http://tcdc.undp.org/> (accessed 27 February 2009).

³ For more information on this fund, see <http://www.undp.org/mdgf/docs/MDGF-FrameworkDocument.doc> (accessed 27 February 2009).

REFERENCE

Global Migration Group (2008). *International Migration and Human Rights: Challenges and Opportunities on the Threshold of the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. New York: United Nations Population Fund.



Component 1: Estimating the Number of International Migrant Children

The scarcity of reliable national-level data on international migration has motivated UNICEF to establish a partnership with UN/DESA to estimate the incidence and magnitude of child migration internationally. At the operational level, this initiative continues to benefit from a fruitful collaboration with the World Bank and the University of Sussex, primarily through the contribution of data.

Data Collection

Data collection is a vital part of the project, ensuring that the maximum amount of empirical data is taken into account when estimating the number of international migrant children. In the past few months, hundreds of new tabulations have been added to the database. In total, the database contains now more than 3,600 different tabulations on the international migrant population, by gender, age and country of origin. Roughly one-third of these tables have information by age and gender.

Data Verification

A key aspect of the project is verification of the empirical data collected. Data verification entails multiple processes. First, the data points entered into the database should be the same as those found in official publications and reports. Second, a comparison of different data sources for specific countries and time frames will result in validating some data sources and rejecting others. Similarly, an analysis of time series (also for specific countries) will be made. Checks that have so far been carried out include verifying the accuracy of totals by sex, age and country of origin. Particular attention was devoted to verifying the census dates reported in the database. The exact census dates will be important for harmonizing reference points for all data to mid-year.

Data Harmonization

A key objective of the initiative is to harmonize international migration data reported by different

countries. However, this is a significant challenge, considering that countries use a wide variety of definitions and reporting formats. Some initial steps to harmonize the data were taken during the reporting process. In particular, considerable time was devoted to improve coding consistency for international migrant countries of origin.

Estimation Process

Estimating the number of international migrant children depends on accurate estimates of the total number of international migrants. Currently, the Population Division is undertaking the revision of the 2005 estimates. This revised assessment will serve as the baseline from which to estimate the number of international migrant children and will ensure a correspondence between both sets of estimates. Considerable progress has been made in the revision of the 2005 data sets. As a first step, an “input table” was created, containing all the empirical data from the database that will be used in the estimation process. This “input table” was compared with that for the previous round of revision, with the 2005 estimates as well as with preliminary 2008 estimates.

Global Migration Research Database (GMRD)

In view of the unprecedented demand for accurate, up-to-date and policy-relevant data on international migration, the Population Division has developed a password-protected, web-based interface with which to access information contained in the database. During the test phase, access will be provided to key partners within and outside the United Nations.

It is important to note that estimating the number of international migrant children only tells half the story. In order to formulate coherent policy recommendations that enhance children's lives, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of the migration process and its impact on children's well-being.



Preliminary Results



