



### ABOUT

The *Data Bulletin: Informing the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration* series aims to summarize in an accurate and accessible fashion existing evidence on migration to support the discussion and any follow-up activities.

As part of the project “Support to IOM for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration,” funded by the European Union, *Data Bulletin* outlines the strengths and limitations of relevant migration data and highlights innovative data practices that are pertinent to the Global Compact for Migration. This publication reflects the collaborative nature of the Global Compact for Migration process by including relevant contributions from different parts of IOM, as well as other agencies and migration experts.

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## Migrant and displaced children

Millions of children have migrated, within or across borders, following migrating parents and relatives, in pursuit of better opportunities, or to reunite with family or loved ones. Millions of other children have been displaced due to conflict, generalized violence and natural disasters. In 2017, children made up about half the number of refugees and asylum seekers, estimated at around 12 million globally.<sup>1</sup> In total, some 30 million children were living in displacement within and outside their countries of origin by the end of 2017, while an additional 6 million children had been newly displaced by natural disasters in that year alone.<sup>2</sup> All the figures cited here are based on estimates, as observed numbers are often not available.

Children constitute a particularly vulnerable group, which States have committed to protect under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>3</sup> Plentiful research shows that children on the move face greater risks of falling victim to trafficking, exploitation, violence or abuse.<sup>4</sup> The lack of data is therefore particularly concerning precisely because data are essential in providing evidence to inform decision-making and programming to protect children.

For many children, their families, and the communities they leave and join, migration brings significant benefits. However, it also entails serious risks, where gaps in laws, policies and services leave many children and adolescents bereft of the protection and services they need – whether in origin, transit or destination countries. Often, children on the move, especially those travelling in an undocumented fashion, find themselves in limbo, with only limited or no access to child protection, education or other essential services.<sup>5</sup>

To devise an adequate protection response and to better identify child migrants' vulnerabilities, needs, and how migration and asylum policies may affect them, we should ideally know children's basic demographic characteristics, such as their age and sex, where they come from, where they are going, why they are moving, and whether they are with their families or alone on their journeys. This would make it possible to determine how many children are in need of protection and support, and help improve support systems in States, including in contexts of humanitarian emergency.

## Data limitations and new possibilities

The notorious and persistent gaps in the availability and quality of global migration statistics have made it difficult to adequately measure migration and its impact on migrant lives as well as origin and host societies. In particular, the frequent lack of disaggregation of migration data by basic characteristics,

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, “Data Gaps and Mixed Migration between West and North Africa and Europe” (New York, 2018). Available from <https://data.unicef.org/resources/data-gaps-and-mixed-migration> (accessed 23 November 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, Convention on the Rights of the Child. Available from [www.unicef.org/crc](http://www.unicef.org/crc) (accessed 23 November 2018).

<sup>4</sup> International Organization for Migration and United Nations Children's Fund, *Harrowing Journeys: Children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea, at risk of trafficking and exploitation* (New York, 2017). Available from [www.unicef.org/publications/index\\_100621.html](http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_100621.html) (accessed 23 November 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Byrne, K. and C. Bech Hansen, “Protected on Paper? An Analysis of Nordic Country Responses to Asylum-Seeking Children” (Florence, Italy: UNICEF Office of Research Innocenti, 2018). Available from [www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/NORDIC%2028%20LOWRES.pdf](http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/NORDIC%2028%20LOWRES.pdf) (accessed 23 November 2018).



such as age and sex, prevents an appropriate understanding of the specific protection and development challenges that children on the move may face.

In 2017, only 56 per cent of the data the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) collected on refugees under its mandate included information on age. The same is the case for only about three quarters of the migrant stock data worldwide, while data on internally displaced persons are even weaker, with just 20 per cent of the countries and territories reporting on internally displaced persons including age in their data.<sup>6</sup>

While there is a general paucity of data on children on the move, even less data exist on their vulnerabilities. This is particularly worrying given the results found by various research projects; from the few quantitative published accounts, the picture clearly emerges that children (0–17 years of age) are more vulnerable than adults, as a 2017 UNICEF–IOM report on migrant and displaced children travelling toward Europe on the Central Mediterranean route found. The report also found that factors such as education, travel route and country of origin influence the degree of risk that children face on their journeys.<sup>7</sup> Despite such evidence, most information on children’s vulnerabilities are based on qualitative accounts and there is a clear lack of quantitative data to better support the development of an evidence-based policy agenda.

## Call to action for children on the move

To address this issue of poor data quality, UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM, Eurostat and OECD recently released a joint call to action.<sup>8</sup> Building on existing and proposed recommendations regarding migration and asylum data by expert groups and agencies,<sup>9</sup> the call to action asks States and key stakeholders to invest in better data to help provide the protection that children need to live up to their full potential and contribute to the societies they live in.

Specifically, it calls on Member States to address the data and evidence gaps pertaining to children affected by migration or displacement. Member States are to support the actions and commitments put forth in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees,

and specifically include child-specific considerations in the implementation of the compacts.

At a minimum, the child-specific considerations should:

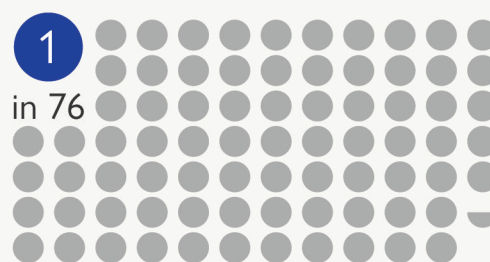
- Disaggregate data by age and sex;
- Cover key issues relating to children affected by migration and displacement;
- Make better use of existing data, and share it;
- Coordinate data efforts within countries and across borders;
- Collect data in compliance with child protection standards and use them for the purpose of protection only.

Given the acute protection concerns and the meagre data availability on children on the move worldwide, it is paramount that States redouble their efforts and invest in data and research on migrant and displaced children. This will allow us to better live up to our commitment to ensure children their rights as they are enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Figure 1: Children living in migration or displacement

## WORLDWIDE MILLIONS OF CHILDREN LIVE IN MIGRATION OR DISPLACEMENT

As of 2017, around



were living in displacement  
– an estimated 30 million

The number does not include 6 million children, who were internally displaced by disasters in 2017 alone.

As of 2017, around



were living outside their country  
of birth

They had moved for a range of reasons, including joining family members, pursuing educational opportunities – or fleeing conflict, violence or persecution

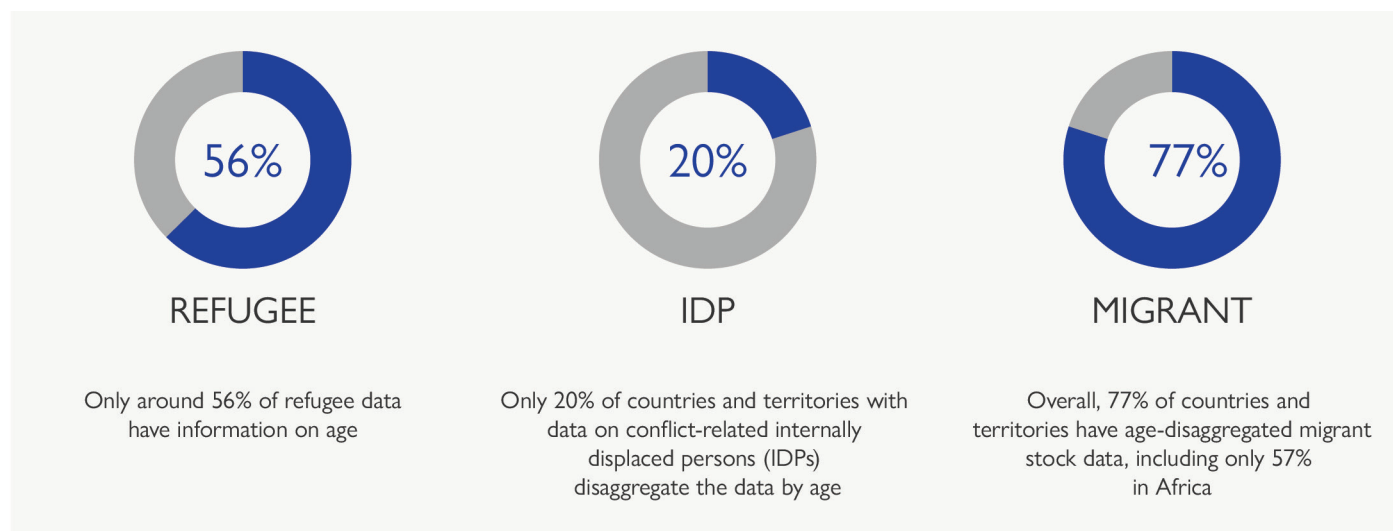
<sup>6</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund, International Organization for Migration, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Eurostat and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, “A Call to Action: Protecting Children on the Move Starts with Better Data” (New York, 2018), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> International Organization for Migration and United Nations Children’s Fund, *Harrowing Journeys: Children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea, at risk of trafficking and exploitation* (New York, 2017), p. 8. Available from [www.unicef.org/publications/index\\_100621.html](http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_100621.html) (accessed 23 November 2018).

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund, International Organization for Migration, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Eurostat and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, “A Call to Action: Protecting Children on the Move Starts with Better Data” (New York, 2018).

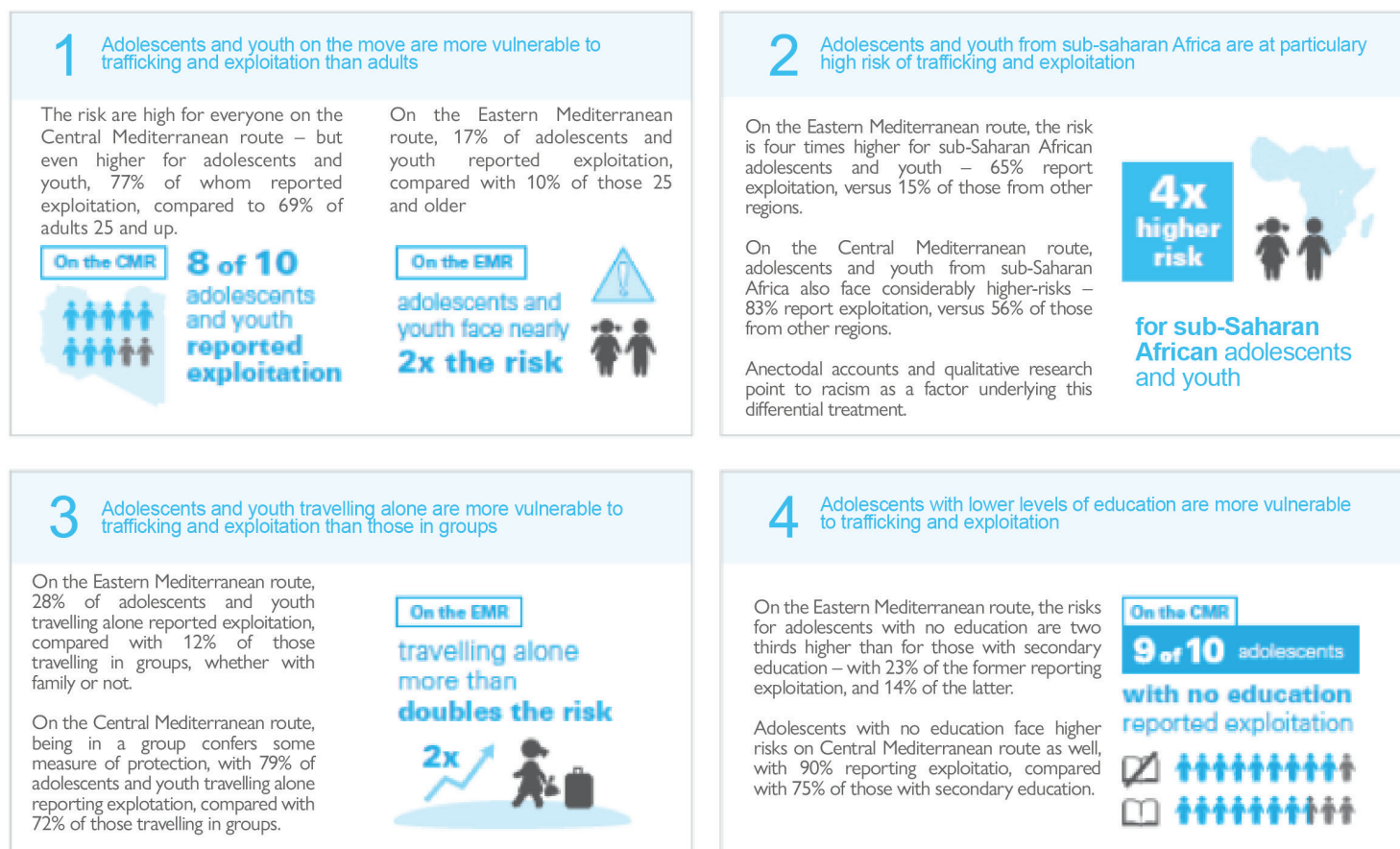
<sup>9</sup> Global Migration Group, *Handbook for Improving the Production and Use of Migration Data for Development* (New York, 2017); Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics, *International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics and Technical Report on Statistics of Internally Displaced Persons*, forthcoming, under global consultation; United Nations Expert Group Meeting, “Improving Migration Data in the Context of the 2030 Agenda: Recommendations” (New York, 2017); United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, International Organization for Migration and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Improving Data for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* (New York, 2017); International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, *Strengthening Migration Data, Research and Training, in the Context of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration*, 2017; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*, Revision 3 (New York, 2016); International Organization for Migration, “International Migration Statistics”, Global Thematic Paper.

**Figure 2:** Age-disaggregated data on migrants and displaced persons are incomplete



Source: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), IOM, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Eurostat and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "A Call to Action: Protecting Children on the Move Starts with Better Data" (New York, 2018).

**Figure 3:** Key findings of the UNICEF–IOM report *Harrowing Journeys*, based on the large-scale flow monitoring survey conducted by IOM through its Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)



Source: IOM and UNICEF, *Harrowing Journeys: Children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea, at risk of trafficking and exploitation* (New York, 2017), p. 8.



## 10 key facts about migrant and displaced children

1. As of 2017, there were an estimated 30 million international child migrants globally. This equals 1 in 8 of the world's 258 million international migrants.<sup>10</sup>
2. As of 2017, about 30 million were living in forced displacement – 1 in 76 of the world's children. This includes some 12 million child refugees and child asylum seekers, and 17 million children living in internal displacement due to conflict and violence.<sup>11</sup>
3. Around 9 out of 10 refugees remain in their region of origin as of 2017.<sup>12</sup>
4. In 2014, 28 per cent of all detected trafficking victims were children (20% girls and 8% boys).<sup>13</sup>
5. At least 300,000 unaccompanied and separated children who moved across borders were registered in 80 countries in 2015 and 2016.<sup>14</sup>
6. Since 2014, over 1,300 migrants identified as children have lost their lives. The true number is likely much higher since the age is only known of around 25 per cent of dead or missing (and presumable dead) migrants. Worldwide, there have been more than 29,000 migrant deaths since 2014.<sup>15</sup>
7. Around the world, almost 1 in 10 children live in countries and areas affected by armed conflicts, and more than 400 million live in extreme poverty.<sup>16</sup>
8. Over 100 countries are known to detain children in immigration detention.<sup>17</sup>
9. Refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than other children. Only 50 per cent of refugee children are enrolled in primary school, and less than 25 per cent of refugee adolescents are enrolled in secondary school.<sup>18</sup>
10. An adolescent boy from sub-Saharan Africa with secondary education and travelling in a group along the Central Mediterranean route, faces a 73 per cent risk of being exploited, while the risk for a boy from another region drops to 38 per cent.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. "International Migrant Stock: The 2017 Revision." New York, 2017. Available from [www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates17.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates17.shtml); UNICEF analysis based on: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. "World Population Prospects The 2017 Revision." New York, 2017. Available from <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Download/Standard/Interpolated>

<sup>11</sup> UNICEF analysis based on: UNHCR. "UNHCR Global Trends 2017," 2018. Available from [www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/5b27be547/unhcr-global-trends-2017.html](http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/5b27be547/unhcr-global-trends-2017.html), Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, Global Report on Internal Displacement, Geneva, 2018, and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and Population Division. "World Population Prospects The 2017 Revision." New York, 2017. Available from <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Download/Standard/Interpolated>

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF analysis based on UNHCR. "UNHCR Global Trends 2017," 2018. Available from [www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/5b27be547/unhcr-global-trends-2017.html](http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/5b27be547/unhcr-global-trends-2017.html)

<sup>13</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, Vienna, December 2016, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, A Child is a Child, New York, May 2017, p. 6

<sup>15</sup> IOM 2018, available from <https://missingmigrants.iom.int>, accessed 28 November 2018. Number of children on Central Mediterranean route is estimated by UNICEF based on demography of migrants at arrival for specific months.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, Danger every step of the way – A harrowing journey to Europe for refugee and migrant children. Child Alert, June 2016, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, A Child is a Child, New York, May 2017, p. 30; citing European Commission, The Protection of Children in Migration, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, (2017), Brussels, April 2017, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, Education Uprooted, New York, September 2017, p. 5; citing Nicolai, S., et al., Education Cannot Wait: Proposing a fund for education in emergencies, Overseas Development Institute, London, May 2016, p. 10.

### IOM's GMDAC

In response to growing calls for better data on migration, and for better use and presentation of migration data, IOM has created the Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC).

Located in Berlin, Germany, the Centre aims to provide authoritative and timely analyses of data on global migration issues as a global hub for data and statistics on migration.

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