

Stronger Data, Brighter Futures: Protecting Migrant Children with Data and Evidence

Side-Event at the International Migration Review Forum Date, Time, Format

Background

Millions of children continue to migrate across borders. According to the International Data Alliance for Children on the Move (IDAC) info brief, [IDAC Data InSight #1](#), 35.5 million children under the age of 18 were living outside their country of birth as of end 2020. This estimate does not include the numbers of children affected by recent events such as Afghanistan and Ukraine.

While the urgency of conflict and crisis drive many children to leave home – often quite suddenly – there are many other reasons children are on the move today: Children cross borders to escape poverty, violence and exploitation, child marriage, discrimination and other violations of their rights. But many also move for aspirational reasons, to pursue their right to learn or work. But no matter the circumstances of their migration, these children commonly see their safety, security and well-being threatened throughout their journeys and in host communities – and too many of them face this life-changing event alone.

The real scale of movement among children remains unknown. Numbers are often derived from estimation with many assumptions. The limited data are further hindered by large gaps that obscure the most basic information about children on the move. Accurate, timely and disaggregated data are critical to promote evidence-based decision and policymaking that can protect migrant children.

However, as the IDAC Data InSight exposes, 3 in 10 countries and territories do not have age-disaggregated migrant stock data. The general scarcity of child-related migration data means children are often overlooked, hidden behind the stocks and flows of total migrant population. Persistent data gaps mean we do not fully understand the real situation of vulnerable migrant boys and girls which prevents us from providing them with essential health, education and other services they need to thrive.

Improving data on migrant children is an integral aspect of GCM Objective 1

The first objective of the Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration (GCM) is to “collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies.” To this end, Member States that adopted the GCM in 2018 committed “to strengthen the global evidence base on international migration by improving and investing in the collection, analysis and dissemination of accurate, reliable, comparable data, disaggregated by sex, age, migration status and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.”

However, the GCM did not include specific recommendations on how the commitments will be realized. The GCM envisaged national and regional actors to develop detailed action plan for the implementation of each GCM objective. In relation to GCM Objective 1, this meant that it was up to individual member states and regional bodies to unpack what improving international migration data means in their respective context.

To date, most of the existing national action plans are child-blind when it comes to GCM Objective 1 implementation. Moreover, data-related conversations that have taken place in the framework of the GCM follow up have largely focused on remittances and migrants' contributions to host and home communities, improving public perceptions around migration, and countering incidents of human trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

More attention must be paid to improving counts and estimates of migrants in general, and migrant children particularly, to capture their needs and well-being– i.e., how well they are integrating, whether they have access to nourishing food, clean water and sanitation, quality education and play, and other vital services they need for proper development.

While some important work has taken place in the last four years to improve data for children, much more needs to be done to realize the GCM vision of positive migration experiences for all, including the highly vulnerable migrant children. Better quantitative and qualitative data and evidence are urgently needed to protect and empower migrant children. This would entail improving foundational statistics and employing innovative approaches in data collection and analysis to understand and monitor flows and, crucially, to capture the short and longer-term development outcomes for migrant children. Concerted global efforts and partnerships will be required to do so.

In this regard, the first International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) on May 17 to 20, 2022 offers a platform for Member States and other concerned stakeholders to take stock of the progress that has been reached, as well as the areas for improvement in implementing the child-specific considerations of GCM Objective 1.

The 2018 Call to Action as a framework for reviewing global progress in implementing GCM Objective 1

The 2022 IMRF also coincides with the 4th year since the 2018 [Call to Action: Protecting children on the move starts with better data¹](#) was issued by 5 key agencies – Eurostat, IOM, OECD, UNHCR and UNICEF – working at the intersection of migration, displacement, development, data and children's issues. Highlighting the poor quality of data on migrant and displaced children, this Call urged Member States to redouble their efforts and investments in data and research on children on the move, to prioritize actions to address the evidence gaps and to include child-specific considerations in the GCM.

The Call to Action recommended 5 strategic action points that Member States must do, at a minimum, to address the pervasive data gaps on child-related migration data:

1. Disaggregate data by age, sex and migratory status²;
2. Cover key issues relating to children affected by migration and displacement;
3. Make better use of existing data, and share it;
4. Coordinate data efforts within countries and across borders;
5. Make special efforts to collect and analyze data on children

¹ Following this call, the International Data Alliance for Children on the Move (IDAC) was established in 2020 to improve statistics and data on children on the move to support evidence-based policymaking and programming, and to help Member States better deliver on their international commitments, including the GCM. In the same spirit as the GCM, IDAC emphasizes a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach that captures children's experiences and needs through better migration data, uniting Member States, international and regional organizations, NGOs, think tanks, academia and civil society to share insights and expertise to fill the data and knowledge gaps on migrant and displaced children.

² The Feb 2018 call to action did not specify migratory status. But the subsequent work of the founding agencies of IDAC and IDAC itself have consistently called for disaggregation also by migratory status.

As the international community gathers at this important juncture for the GCM, the IMRF offers a strategic opportunity for collective reflection on the slow and limited progress that has been achieved in making data on migrant children more timely, available and responsive to policy and program needs, vis-à-vis the above strategic action points which remain very much valid today.

The IDAC's proposed side event, "*Stronger Data, Brighter Futures: Protecting Migrant Children with Data and Evidence*," will consider the state of progress and the continuing priorities and challenges under each strategic action point, as well as cite some good practices and initiatives – existing and emerging, at country, regional and international level – that are meant to inspire action, investment and participation. The IDAC will also issue a renewed Call to Action – *Towards sustainable progress to improve the data and evidence on migrant children*"- for Members States and other stakeholders to get involved in efforts to improve the lives of migrant children through better data and evidence.

To honor their commitments under the GCM, the international community must recognize that the GCM Objective 1 can only be achieved if member states consider the data needs of children on the move as a priority, to be matched by political, technical and financial investments accordingly.

Description of the Side-event

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Key objectives:

The event has the following objectives:

1. Foster thoughtful, objective reflection and understanding of what the GCM 1 objective means in relation to data on migrant children;
2. Reflect on the collective progress that has been achieved in improving the data availability and quality on migrant children since the [2018 Call to Action](#) and the subsequent adoption of the GCM;
3. Renew the 2018 Call to Action and highlight the critical data gaps and needs, as well as the continuing challenges and bottlenecks that stall efforts to strengthen migration data systems at national, regional and global levels;
4. Consider concrete steps and initiatives, including good practices and initiatives, that member states can follow to realize the GCM vision of positive migration experiences for all.

5. Present to the GCM community the opportunities for policy and practical action that member states and other concerned stakeholders can leverage by working in partnership with the IDAC to improve child migration data.

Expected outcomes:

1. Better knowledge and understanding of the child-specific considerations of GCM Objective 1
2. Offered concrete options for policy and practical action to Member States and other concerned stakeholders to help them deliver on their commitment to implement the GCM Objective 1 with a child-sensitive lens.
3. Generated partnerships on improving data and evidence on child migration to foster their protection and empowerment.
4. Promoted peer-learning and sharing of good practices and innovative methods in closing data gaps and improving data availability and quality
5. Enhanced knowledge about collaboration and coordination through the IDAC platform

Format

The side event will be held in a hybrid format (i.e., limited in-person participation from 8 to 10 am EDT + virtual participation from 8.30 to 10 am). The virtual event will be recorded and conducted in English only. No Interpretation will be provided.

Register [here](#).

Suggested agenda

<p>18 May 2022</p> <p>Time: 8.30 to 10 am (New York) / 2.30 to 4 pm (Geneva)</p> <p>Venue: Danny Kaye room, UNICEF Headquarters, 3 UN Plaza NY</p>	
<p>This is a hybrid event. Online participation is open to the public. In-person attendance operates on a first come, first served basis.</p>	
3 minutes	<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Mark Hereward, Chief Data Officer, Associate Director, Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, UNICEF
10 minutes	<p>Opening Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambassador Evan P. Garcia Jr., Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the UNOG • Mrs. Vidhya Ganesh, Director of Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring (DAPM), UNICEF
12 minutes	<p>Presentation</p> <p>IDAC's Continued call to action, "Stronger Data, Brighter Futures: Protecting children on the move with data and evidence"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Frank Laczko, Director of the Global Data Institute, IOM
30 minutes	<p>Interactive Panel dialogue</p>

	<p>Panel discussion with representatives of ... will be discussing good practices; challenges; lessons learnt; and emerging priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Alankrita Dayal, Founder of Program yoUR Future (youth representative) • Mr. Vebjørn Aalandslid, Senior Adviser, Division for Development Cooperation, Statistics Norway • Colombia (TBC) • Mr. Jean-Christophe Dumont, Head, International Migration Division, Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, OECD <p><i>Moderator:</i> Mr Gady Saiovici, Head of the Technical Support Unit at the Global Data Service, UNHCR</p>
23 minutes	Discussion / Q&A
7 minutes	<p>Key takeaways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospects for the Next IMRF by Mr. Diego Iturralde, Chief Director for Demography and Population Statistics, Statistics South Africa
5 minutes	<p>Closing Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Ani Todorova, Head of Unit at European Commission - Eurostat