

# Destination Unknown

*An international campaign to protect children on the move*

***Thousands of children around the world are on the move. They lost home. They are escaping poverty, violence or disaster. They may end up exploited or abused. Their destination is unknown. Let's mobilize to protect their rights.***

## ***“children on the move”: who are they?***

They are children who have left home. They are on the way to a new destination, or have already reached it. They move within or between countries, accompanied or alone. Trafficked, unaccompanied, in street situation, kidnapped, forced to migration, refugees, asylum seekers, nomadic...across the world millions of children are on the move.

## ***what is at stake?***

An estimated **214 million persons** worldwide are international migrants. **740 million are internal migrants**. Youth represents a big share of migrants from developing countries; about **one third of migrants is between 12 and 25 years old**. In the coming years the number of children and youth on the move is going to rise. Their needs and interests are largely absent from the preoccupation of public authorities. Public opinion tends to perceive them as a threat. They are often subject to prosecution, detention or unsafe return. Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, governments are obliged to protect all children – including children on the move. But they generally fail to do so.

## ***our 10 demands***

*Children on the move is a complex and growing phenomenon at global level. Mobility has geographical, social and emotional aspects.*

**Demand 1: Children on the move are entitled to protection based on their best interests as per Convention on the Rights of the Child, independently of their migration status, gender, age, health, nationality, religious or cultural belongings or any other ground.**

*For many children, movement is the remaining option to ensure survival. For others it provides the opportunity to seek for better life and personal development.*

**Demand 2 : Children and their families should find alternatives to mobility in their country and communities of origin for their well-being and development perspectives. This includes non-discriminatory access to services such as education, health, justice, livelihood development.**



*The first basic protective environment of the child is the local community who plays an important role in protecting children on the move.*

**Demand 3: Community protection practices in-line with the rights of the child must be respected while being linked to national law and protection policies.**

*A child moving within or across borders might lose his or her social protection net, like parents, family, friends, etc. Ensuring the continuum of a social protection net when moving means establishing a continuum among different actors located in different geographical locations.*

**Demand 4: protection of children must start with their own empowerment in their communities, and be extended through access to protection and services throughout their journey and upon reaching a destination.**

**Demand 5: Actors need to reconcile local protection customs, national law, trans-national cooperation and international policies. Exchanging, learning and finding solutions in different locations and bridging up from local to international must be put high on the public agenda.**

*In transit and destination countries, States' and public authorities practices are often in violation of child rights.*

**Demand 6: States must bring to an end practices that violate the rights of children on the move based on their migration status, namely detention, deportation and automatic return to community of origin**

**Demand 7: Instead States should make a case per case decision, aiming at a finding a durable solution for the child and respecting the child's view. A risk assessments should be conducted and documented prior to any decisions of repatriation and family reunification. Repatriation is not an automatic option, but one among others.**

*Protecting children on the move or supporting them in defining and realizing their mobility project involves a full range of actors concerned, primarily the children themselves. Too often decisions concerning children are taken without listening to them. Too often, children move as a consequence of adults' decisions, in unsafe, unprepared and unprotected paths.*

**Demand 8: In conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, States, NGOs and other protection actors are obligated to listen to the child concerned and take into account his/her views into any decision.**

*Not all children on the move end up abused and/or exploited. After moving, many of them enjoy better access to rights and services, enhancing future perspectives for themselves and their families .*



**Demand 9: States, NGOs and other actors implementing programs for children on the move are obliged to listen to children, their experiences and expectations when designing and implementing projects for them.**

*Children on the move are either invisible in public debates or negatively portrayed as a threat to the host societies. Instead evidence shows that once adequate protection and support is provided they become well integrated and can substantially contribute to the development of both host societies as well as their communities of origin.*

**Demand 10: Public debate on protection of children on the move should be fostered based on facts and stories of the children concerned. A child on the move must be seen as rights-holder and an actor of development. Public policies and solutions should be evidence based, avoiding instrumentalization of children that can lead to enhance xenophobia and discrimination.**



## ***our 10 main actions***

1. **We work at the community level** to generate alternatives for the children and their families, including educational opportunities, vocational training, cultural, leisure and development opportunities.
2. **We identify routes used by children and we discuss the risks and opportunities** linked to mobility with the children and families concerned. And we prepare for safe and documented mobility of children if relevant.
3. When the child moves, **we seek to establish a continuum of protection and care for this child**, by ensuring basic services and protection are available along the trajectory of the child. Both across or within borders.
4. **We advocate for safer migration opportunities of children** towards the States and authorities. We advocate to make sure that the best interest of the child is the prevailing consideration in any decision taken concerning children on the move.
5. **We support collaboration between countries** of origin, transit and destination, so that the best solution can be found for any child on the move. This include collaboration and exchange among social workers and law enforcement actors across countries.



6. **We draw lessons** from our field projects and **we demonstrate good practices** on how to bridge the gaps between Governments and Non-Governmental Organisations to put in place protection system for the children's safety at home, while in transit, and upon reaching their destination.
7. **We produce and disseminate research** based on data collected from the field to better understand why and how children move. This evidence-based data collection constitutes a backbone for our programs, awareness, policy work and recommendations towards actors and States.
8. **We review legislation, policy and programs** of public authorities, States or regional organizations like the EU on the issue of children on the move. On the basis of the field reality, **we highlight gaps, we formulate recommendations** for policy improvement, and **we denounce violations of human rights** experienced by children on the move.
9. **We raise awareness, inform and provide expertise** on the phenomenon of children on the move to politicians, policy-makers, media, citizens or professionals so that children on the move are seen more from the evidence of their experience, and less as adults may perceive them.
10. **We support the mobilization of youths and children** in different countries so that they can publicize their views in the public debate on child mobility. We support youth and children so that they bring their messages on child mobility to politicians, policy-makers, media, citizens or professionals.

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