

Submitted by members of the Child Rights in the Global Compacts Initiative

**Contribution to Thematic discussion 1 :
Past and current burden- and responsibility-sharing arrangements**

Room XVII, Palais des Nations

Geneva, Switzerland, 10 July 2017

The present contribution is submitted by the members of the Child Rights in the Global Compacts Initiative.¹ The Initiative aims to ensure that the rights of children who are on the move or impacted by migration and forced displacement are respected and fulfilled; it is driven by a steering committee which comprises experts, multilateral institutions, and non-governmental as well as philanthropic organizations. This intervention is based on the position adopted by the members of the initiative and attempts to reflect their diversity of views.

We commend the work of the High Commissioner for Refugees for the leadership taken in paving the path towards an effective and timely Global Compact on Refugees through setting forth the New York Declaration, supporting the application/piloting of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.

The 5th question in today's consultations paper asks what **elements from past or current burden- and responsibility-sharing** arrangements should be adapted for use in other situations today? In the Initiative's paper on *Recommendations for protecting, promoting and implementing the human rights of children on the move* there are a number of examples additional to those described in the consultations paper. This contribution is based on lessons learned drawn from all of them.

Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Many children have experienced violence, sexual abuse trafficking and labour exploitation during their time in transit and can be further

¹ Members of the Child Rights in the Global Compact include Caritas Internationalis, Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW), Cross-Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Destination Unknown Campaign, Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), International Detention Coalition (IDC), International Organization for Migration (IOM), NGO Committee on Migration, SOS Children's Villages, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children, NGO Committee on Migration, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oak Foundation, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), Public Services International (PSI), Save the Children, Terre des Hommes, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP), World Vision and other experts and organizations.

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subjected to physical and psychological stress through detention and return processes. Section 7 of our *Recommendations for protecting, promoting and implementing the human rights of children* specifies goals, targets and indicators to protect this vulnerable group in the context of cross-border responsibility sharing. Member States should commit to establish "**effective cross-border coordination between national child protection services to provide a continuum of protection throughout the migration cycle for refugee and migrant children.**" Such coordination framework should be funded and operationalized. We note that cross border coordination is *de facto* regional and are pleased to see regional approaches such as IGAD in East Africa and the Brazil Plan of Action in the Americas as well as ECOWAS in West Africa. We also recognise useful examples of other forms of responsibility sharing such as resettlement, humanitarian admission programmes or expansion of complementary pathways for refugee children, education programmes and other forms of mobility schemes, namely in the draft AU protocol?.

When children are separated from their families they are more vulnerable to smugglers and traffickers. The Initiative therefore supports the **establishment of a reliable and integrated international family tracing and reunification system, guaranteed by law and operated consistently with the best interests of the child.**

A key commitment of the New York Declaration is the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of all refugee and migrant children, regardless of their status, and giving primary consideration at all times to the **best interests of the child.** As **whole-of-society responsibility sharing mechanisms** are developed they should operate within the principles of best interest of the child, non-discrimination (including non-discrimination on the basis of status, migrant or refugees), right to life and development and right to freedom of expression and participation, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Section three of our recommendations puts forward goals, targets and indicators to ensure #AChildIsAChild approach is applied. Evidence of progress to protection of children under the Compact needs to use consistent definitions, and regularly updated, appropriately disaggregated and carefully collected data.

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As we take stock of past and present responsibility sharing arrangements in today's consultation, the reality is that 51% of the world's refugees are children.² If we are to truly live up to the promise to "share responsibility" we must do so in a manner that provides predictable, multi-year and flexible funding to support the protection of children so that hosting countries and communities can extend and expand opportunities for those seeking refuge and those who are opening their doors.

This contribution will be made available on childrenonthemove.org

² UNHCR, Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016, 2017. p2 <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/unhcrstats/5943e8a34/global-trends-forced-displacement-2016.html?query=global%20trends>