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## Quick Tips on COVID-19 and Migrant, Refugee and Internally Displaced Children (Children on the Move)

Migrant and displaced children are at heightened risk to the immediate and secondary impacts of COVID-19. They often live in cramped conditions with limited access to WASH, may be in immigration detention, and can be hardest to reach with accurate information in a language they understand. Children of labour migrants often live in the most disadvantaged urban areas, where access to essential services is already limited. Further, the misinformation on the spread of COVID-19 exacerbates the xenophobia and discrimination that migrant and displaced children and their families already face.

We need urgent action to put migrant and displaced children at the forefront of UNICEF's preparedness, prevention and response to COVID19 – to ensure health, safety, and protection for all.

### What must we do now?



- ✓ Include children on the move in preparedness, response, and mitigation efforts for COVID-19. Starting with the following key questions:
  - Key questions to consider: where are migrant and displaced children in your country (in camps, urban contexts, in makeshift dwellings, in transit)? What challenges do they currently face? Is UNICEF's preparedness and response plans including them – are government plans and responses inclusive of displaced and vulnerable migrant children?
  - Are the main protective measures - access to water and soap and social distancing – within reach for migrant and displaced children? What is being done to ensure access to WASH and health services in places where displaced or migrant live.
  - How are COVID-19 response measures impacting girls' and boys' differently, in terms of their safety, health and wellbeing, family unity, as well as caregiver's abilities to provide for basic needs?



✓ Advocate proactively against xenophobia, stigma, and discrimination – the virus does not discriminate, and neither should we.

- Do not miss any opportunity to lead by example and call out all instances of discrimination or stigmatization against any person, including children on the move. Activate local influencers, leaders, and youth bloggers to speak up in support of protecting all children IN a country, not just OF a country. The virus knows no passports.
- Avoid singling out children on the move but include them along with other groups in vulnerable situations who need specific support. For a good example see the [UNICEF's Press Release](#) of 11 March.
- Youth on the move, especially those moving irregularly are at heightened risk of being stigmatized or becoming targets of violence. Consider youth on the move as a high-risk group and proactively engage them as partners in your COVID response.




✓ Provide accessible, timely, culturally and linguistically appropriate, child-friendly and relevant information on COVID-19 to children and families on the move.


- Ensure that your C4D (Communication for Development) response plan and any RCCE (Risk Communication and Community Engagement) activities are inclusive of displaced and migrant children and families and do not inadvertently stigmatize them. They are likely among the worst affected, and the hardest to reach.
- Consider cultural barriers and ensure translation of C4D materials and other information into languages commonly spoken by children and youth on the move in your context.
- Use their preferred channels of information and sources they trust (peer migrants, refugee networks, diaspora groups, volunteers, frontline workers).
- See here for [more tips](#) on considerations when communicating with migrant populations.





✓ Ensure universal access to COVID-19 testing, healthcare, MHPSS and other essential services, for all those who need them, regardless of status.

- Identify and address barriers in law or practice that prevent safe access to health or MHPSS services for children and youth on the move. Advocate for the right to health for all – regardless of status – as being in the best interest of all. To keep everyone healthy, no one should be denied access to care and no one should fear their legal status data will be shared with migration and law enforcement authorities, when accessing services.
- With limited resources, including COVID-19 tests, rationing may disproportionately affect migrant and displaced families and children. Support local and national health providers to deliver services that do not discriminate against children on the move.

- ✓  Ensure clean water, basic toilets and good hygiene practices are also available for children and families on the move, when transiting or for those living in camps and in urban areas.
  - Coordinate with other UN partners and support governments to expand the availability and access to WASH services in places where children on the move live and at other critical locations, such as border crossings, bus/train stations or key transit points.
  - If WASH facilities are not readily available, communicate clearly (in languages understood by displaced or migrant children) and often that avoiding touching one's mouth or eyes is another way to minimize the risk of infection.
  - Do not overlook menstrual health and hygiene management in COVID-19 response plans, with an emphasis on women and adolescent girls that are on the move.

- ✓  Support and advocate for safer living and housing conditions to allow for social distancing, including in shelters, refugee and IDP camps.
  - Work with partners to sensitize governments and donors not to forget about those in the most precarious living conditions.
  - If environments remain crowded, to the extent possible, isolate the sick from the most high-risk (the elderly, those with co-morbidities, co-infections, and other pre-existing conditions). Scale up risk communication and information to encourage coughing hygiene, such as coughing into elbow rather than hands.

- ✓  Pay special attention to children and families who are currently detained and continue advocating to end child immigration detention. During a pandemic, those in detention face a disproportionate risk, as social spacing becomes difficult to maintain and many facilities are inadequately equipped with WASH.
  - Step up your advocacy calling for the immediate placing of children in safe accommodation and alternatives to detention.
  - Where detention continues, advocate for WASH facilities and the provision of [essential COVID supplies](#).

- ✓  Implement education strategies for continued learning for all children - including migrant and displaced children - and make schools safe, healthy, and inclusive environments.
  - Click here to [read more](#) about UNICEF's Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools.
  - While schools are an important platform to provide information to migrant and displaced children, do not rely on schools only to reach them. They are already disproportionately affected by learning disruptions and make up a large part of the out-of-school child population.

- Often poor, many migrant or displaced children depend on school lunches and other services being provided at schools. As schools close, provide alternative, safe options for hot meals and support for the most vulnerable.
- Consider the need for special childcare options especially for children whose parents are living or working abroad or directly involved in the Covid-19 response (e.g. healthcare workers).



✓ **Expand social protection to minimize the economic impact of COVID-19 on families.**

- Millions of children have parents who are labour migrants working in faraway cities or different countries, sending money (remittances) home. Monitor and mitigate the socio-economic impact of the economic downturn affecting migrant workers and their ability to support children left behind in communities of origin.
- Consider the impact of travel restrictions and border closures on children of labour migrants. More families may now be separated for prolonged periods exposing children to protection and mental health risks. Advocate for children of labour migrants to be included in economic stimulus packages, response plans and mitigation measures.



✓ **Join forces with IOM and UNHCR as needed, to disseminate information, coordinate response plans and minimize the impact of COVID-19 on children and families on the move.**

- [UNHCR](#) and [IOM](#) have issued COVID-19 response plans and engage in proactive communication to prevent stigma and discrimination. As children constitute more than half of all forcibly displaced (including refugees) and 1 in 3 international migrants is under 30, UNICEF can and must play its part to ensure the best possible UN-wide response.
- Assess whether there is coordination between UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM and other relevant agencies to ensure full coverage and inclusion of children on the move in COVID-19 preparedness and response measures in your context.

### Communications Assets

Media plays a critical role in the spread of information and misinformation, reinforcing stigma and dismantling it. Let's ensure positive and proactive communication to minimize stigma and discrimination and to promote a more united world. Where possible, engage a diversity of young people in these efforts, including children on the move.

- Tackle misinformation
- Multimedia content
- Young people combatting xenophobia
- Internal communication

The Uprooted Campaign is developing Communication Assets on Children on the Move, which will be uploaded on the DOC website once finalized – stay tuned: [Coronavirus Communication Strategy](#).

**This is a living document. We welcome your feedback.**

**Thank you for your dedication.**