



## Taking and Inspiring Action:

### UNICEF Practices for Children on the Move during COVID-19

July 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has unleashed one of the worst human development crises in decades, heightening existing inequalities, magnifying vulnerabilities and showing who are the most excluded in our societies – among whom children and families on the move are disproportionately represented. Migrant, refugee, returnee and internally displaced children not only experience the direct and immediate impacts of COVID-19 and its socioeconomic fall-out, but they are also too often excluded from prevention, response and recovery efforts. They may live in camps or other cramped conditions with limited access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), be in immigration detention or unaccompanied or separated from their families and can be hardest to reach with accurate information in a language they understand. Too many migrant and displaced children lacked access to the most essential services even pre-pandemic – to health care, education and protection – and are now at risk of being left behind once again.

In line with [UNICEF's Agenda for Action for COVID-19](#), we need urgent action to put children on the move at the forefront of prevention, response and recovery to COVID-19 – to ensure health, safety, and opportunities for all. This compilation highlights some of the promising and emerging practices being implemented by UNICEF and partners around the world.



## Include migrant and displaced children in COVID-19 preparedness, response, and mitigation efforts.

**VIET NAM:** UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women are jointly conducting a rapid assessment to assess how COVID-19 impacts children and women’s protection and safety as well as the availability, access and adequacy of protection and response services in the context of the pandemic. It will focus on children that are considered particularly vulnerable, including migrant children, and help to improve the response to violence against children and women during the pandemic.

**THAILAND:** In Thailand, 21.2% of all children are estimated to not be living with either of their biological parents. Children left behind by migrating parents are thought to be among the most disadvantaged in their preparedness for distance learning necessitated by school closure, as well as at risk for disrupted financial support from remittances. UNICEF is conducting a rapid assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on these children to inform Government action and ensure they receive the support they need.

To learn more about programming and policy considerations, click [HERE](#) for the complete “Quick Tips on COVID-19 and Migrant, Refugee, and Internally Displaced Children (Children on the Move).”





## Advocate proactively against xenophobia, stigma, and discrimination.

**ROMANIA:** UNICEF’s Children’s Board is a child-led group, with members of different ages, including many children with a migration background. Members of the Children’s Board recently developed and shared COVID-19 communication materials and prevention messages in response to the pandemic. Blogs and TikTok videos were created by children for children, on distance and online learning, their recommendations for activities during COVID-19, and their [voices against stigma and discrimination towards migrants and refugees](#). All their messages were amplified via social media channels.

**GUATEMALA:** UNICEF has received reports of Guatemalan community members creating physical blockades, threatening and attacking migrant reception and transit centers, [to prevent returned migrants from entering](#). UNICEF is addressing the discrimination, stigma, and violence that returned migrants – including children – are facing due to fears and misinformation about COVID-19 in communities of return. Radio spots are being used to distill myths, misinformation, and fears with the goal of promoting greater tolerance among and between communities.

**LEBANON:** Lebanon has launched [a national anti-stigma campaign](#), under the slogan “#TheRealTest”, on several TV outlets, [primetime news](#) and social media. A children’s movie on stigma for this campaign is being finalized with the National Mental Health Program in partnership with Abaad, UNICEF, UNDP and the WHO. Frontline workers in Primary Health Care centers and implementing partners are also receiving ongoing COVID-19 training, which includes challenging myths, stereotypes and reducing stigma towards vulnerable groups, such as migrants and refugees.





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

**LIBYA:** UNICEF supported the establishment of a COVID-19 national hotline and activated multiple messaging channels such as social media, radio, television, outdoor and print materials on COVID-19. Arabic communication materials have been translated into French, Somali, Hausa, Amharic, and Tigrinya to reach all migrant groups. These informational messages are being widely disseminated to health facilities, host communities, restaurants, and other public spaces.

**SERBIA:** UNICEF developed and disseminated communication materials for families with children and youth on how to prevent COVID-19, seek assistance and psychosocial support for children, youth and parents. Posters and leaflets are available in Romani for the Roma community and in Arabic, Pashto and Farsi for refugees and migrants.

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC:** UNICEF, in collaboration with IOM and UNHCR, created COVID-19 risk communication and awareness materials in Haitian Creole and Spanish to reach both Haitian migrants and Dominicans. UNICEF Haiti's prevention posters were used as a reference and adapted to local contexts. The communication materials are placed in 6 of the main bordering towns with Haiti.





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

**CHAD:** Violence from Boko Haram has driven forced displacement in the Lake Chad region. By the end of 2019, there were 176,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) due to conflict and violence in Chad. UNICEF and partners have organized COVID-19 awareness-raising and information sessions, focusing on reaching internally displaced communities.

**SYRIA:** 6.2 million people, including 2.5 million children, are displaced within Syria – the largest internally displaced population in the world. Many of those internally displaced live in camps or temporary shelters, where risk of infection is high due to the large number of people living within close proximity of one another, often with limited access to services and reliable water and sanitation resources.

Adolescent volunteers are sharing COVID-19 messages around staying safe and healthy, including through outreach activities to internally displaced Syrians. For instance, a volunteer team uses a puppet show to explain to younger children the risks of the coronavirus and how to stop the spread of infection. They then distribute soaps and masks complemented by handwashing and safe distancing demonstrations in a way that is accessible to children of all ages.



**Ensure universal access to COVID-19 testing, healthcare, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and other essential services, for all who need them, regardless of status.**

**IRAQ:** UNICEF is supporting the Directorate General of Health to maintain maternal and newborn health and nutrition services in all 50 IDP camps and for returnees in the governates of Dohuk and Ninawa in northern Iraq during COVID-19. More than 21,500 children under one year old and their mothers have been reached by these efforts. These services include post-natal visits and essential newborn care, counselling for Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) and management of acute malnutrition. UNICEF-supported out-of-camp Primary Health Care services in Erbil reopened on 11 May 2020 and efforts are being made to re-open vaccination in all Primary Health care (PHC) Centers in the country.

**MEXICO:** As of July 2020, thousands of migrants and asylum seekers remain stuck in Mexico due to pre-existing restrictive immigration policies and asylum cooperation agreements, with border closures and access to US territory for asylum processing suspended since mid-March following COVID-19. These migrants are not only from Central America, but also from other regions such as Asia and Africa – many of them children and youth. UNICEF has set up internet and screens in migrant shelters to virtually offer psychosocial support, including recreational sessions, to accompanied and unaccompanied migrant children who are unable to leave shelters due to national lockdown measures. Psychosocial support is also being provided to frontline workers in these shelters.





## Ensure universal access to COVID-19 testing, healthcare, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and other essential services, for all who need them, regardless of status.

**BULGARIA:** In reception facilities, UNICEF is ensuring asylum seekers and their families have access to essential health services through coordination and registration with social workers, doctors and urgent medical care during COVID-19. Frontline workers (ie. cultural mediators, social workers, interpreters) were trained through webinars on safety promotion, self-care, stress relief and well-being. UNICEF partners were also provided with adequate personal protection equipment to safely perform their tasks.

**BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA:** In the midst of the pandemic and lockdown measures, UNICEF and its partners run Paediatric Units in two migrant and refugee reception facilities. These units offer medical check-ups and regular counselling to children and caregivers with the goal of improving the health status of infants and young children, mothers, pregnant and lactating women. This dedicated medical presence also mitigates already limited access to government paediatric and immunization services, inadequate infant and young children feeding practices, as well as poor access to dental and ophthalmological services.

**COTE D'IVOIRE:** Many children living on the streets in Cote d'Ivoire are migrants themselves and separated from their families. 145 unaccompanied children at particular risk have been identified and placed in temporary care centers where they receive drama therapy and life skills training, while their families are being traced and family reunification is being assessed.



Ensure clean water, sanitation and good hygiene practices are available for migrant and displaced children and families, when transiting or for those living in camps and in urban areas.

**BANGLADESH:** In Cox's Bazar, where over 860,000 Rohingya refugees reside, UNICEF hygiene promoters are strengthening handwashing with soap practices in communities through community engagement and behavior change methodologies. UNICEF works with the community to self-identify problems and solutions for effective hygiene promotion management at community level, addressing barriers and identifying motivators to achieving hygiene. Women, adolescents, and children are encouraged to take leading roles in these efforts to ensure ownership, empowerment and sustainability.

To maintain hygiene promotion activities even during times of limited access to camps, UNICEF is ensuring Rohingya refugees are leading the activities within their communities. UNICEF trained 480 Rohingya hygiene promoters, religious and community leaders, and established WASH committees prior to COVID-19 on handwashing with soap at critical times, safe water collection and household water treatment. In addition, UNICEF regularly distributes soap and ensures safe water for 240,000 Rohingya refugees.

**PANAMA:** Through a partnership with UNICEF, the International Federation of the Red Cross is working to [ensure safe water for all migrants and host community members in Darien](#). The Darien Gap is a jungled section of land between Colombia and Central America, where many refugees and migrants pass through. In 2019, there was a more than seven-fold increase in migrant children passing through the Darien Gap from 2018 – half of them were under 6 years old. It is crucial that safe water access and other life-saving services are maintained during the pandemic.

**LEBANON:** In a country of 6 million, 1.7 million Palestine and Syrian refugees and thousands of migrant workers live in Lebanon. In April 2020, UNICEF went door-to-door to Syrian refugees living in informal settlements and collective shelters and delivered lessons on good practices to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread, supported by the delivery of soap to 180,000 refugees living in these settlements and shelters.







**Support and advocate for safer living conditions, especially by continuing child protection services to prevent and respond to violence and exploitation.**

**GABON:** With UNICEF's support, civil society organizations, public social welfare services, child protection police units, the Migration Police Unit and children's judges collaborate through a WhatsApp platform to support case management of migrant children, including the reintegration of returned children amid COVID-19. The platform allows child protection actors to remain connected and collaborate during COVID-19 and works as a tele-workshop to alert the actors of the system - such as police, justice or social services - about new child victims of violence, including migrant and displaced children. Actors then analyze a submitted case and advise about the next steps in the child's best interests. On the platform, actors exchange and decide on the child's individual case management action plan before transferring the case to IOM for further support concerning migrant and displaced children.

UNICEF has also supported a national NGO created by Beninese and Togolese migrants to fight human trafficking in their community by disseminating messages in French and five other languages spoken by migrants from West Africa, in order to reach migrant girls working as domestic workers or shopkeepers and currently confined due to COVID-19. Messages appeal for the protection of migrant children in the premises where they work or the transfer of these children to designated transit centers for their social support.





## Support and advocate for safer living conditions, especially by continuing child protection services to prevent and respond to violence and exploitation.

**NIGERIA:** UNICEF is supporting the development of e-learning tools to strengthen and build capacity in the social welfare workforce on case management during COVID-19, as well as finalizing alternative care regulations during the pandemic. The Borno Field Office is supporting the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (MWASD) to develop a business continuity plan for an Interim Care Centre, where over 300 children formerly associated with non-state armed groups are being rehabilitated, ensuring services are maintained during COVID-19.

**ETHIOPIA:** Between 13 March and 22 June 2020, UNICEF supported 1,602 (541 girls, 1061 boys) migrant children – many unaccompanied – returning from 8 countries during COVID-19 with child protection services. [IOM and UNICEF are working together](#) in supporting the government and its social service workforce to register returnees, identify returnees who are particularly vulnerable, ensure the most vulnerable are referred to appropriate services based on identified needs, trace families of unaccompanied children, ensure children return safely to their homes, and support reintegration to the community. The two agencies are also supplying the returnees with dignity kits, soap, recreational kits, tents, beddings, and other essential items.

**SOMALIA:** At least 1311 parents and primary caregivers and 1467 children were provided with community based mental health and psychosocial support to better cope with the restrictions during COVID-19. The Child Protection desks in the IDP sites remain open and continue daily counseling services. In addition, mobile outreach activities provided house to house counseling services, referral for the most at-risk persons of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as informing on Gender Based Violence, Child Protection and COVID-19. To support this vital work of government and civil society frontline social workers, tailor-made trainings on child protection, gender-based-violence, MHPSS and COVID-19 were provided.



**Advocate to stop refoulement, detention, push-backs, deportations and mass returns of migrant and displaced children and families. These practices threaten children's rights and health and are a risk to public health.**

**MYANMAR:** UNICEF advocated with the Government of Myanmar to ban new cases of deprivation of liberty of children during COVID-19. It has also supported the Ministry of Labor, Immigration and Population to ensure that migrant and stateless children are no longer prosecuted nor detained if they are found to breach immigration law.

**UN MIGRATION NETWORK:** UNMN released a [statement](#) on suspending forced returns of migrants during COVID-19 and a [policy brief](#) on Immigration Detention.

**MALAYSIA:** In partnership with the International Detention Coalition, UNICEF developed a policy brief on children impacted by immigration detention during COVID-19. This brief was used for advocacy and engagement with the Government to halt arrest and immigration detention of children, particularly in the context of COVID-19. The Policy Brief also supported the statement by the UN Country Team urging the Government to use alternatives to immigration detention and to ensure migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers have access to health services and assistance.

A chatbot survey to measure public perception of child immigration detention in the context of the COVID-19 crisis was also launched through U-Report, where nearly half of respondents thought there was a good reason for children to be detained, but around 80 per cent changed their mind after completing the survey.

The UN in Malaysia also issued a [statement](#) urging the Government to use alternatives to immigration detention and to ensure migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers have access to health services and assistance.



**Implement education strategies for continued learning for all children - including migrant and displaced children - and make schools safe, healthy, and inclusive environments.**

**COLOMBIA:** More than 1.6 million Venezuelans have fled from dire living conditions in their country to Colombia. Almost 60 per cent of these Venezuelans lack a regular status and the children face difficulties accessing education. UNICEF mobile education teams are focusing their efforts on providing educational activities, psychosocial support, and hygiene promotion to people living in spontaneous settlements and on the streets, many of whom are refugees from Venezuela. Colombian internally displaced adolescents have also been engaged in meaningful activities that build their life skills during COVID-19 lockdown and promote positive relationship building with household members and peers.

**TURKEY:** UNICEF has mobilized 12,000 Syrian volunteer education personnel to provide refugee and migrant parents and caregivers information on accessing distant learning opportunities due to COVID-19. These efforts are helping to ensure that 680,000 Syrian and other refugee children in public schools and temporary education centers benefit from the government's national distance learning program via broadcasting lessons on TV and digital learning platforms.





## Implement education strategies for continued learning for all children - including migrant and displaced children - and make schools safe, healthy, and inclusive environments.

**GREECE:** UNICEF is supporting efforts to reach all children with distance and home-based learning, including non-formal distance learning through printed homework packages, as well as digital tools. With the Ministry of Education, UNICEF is ensuring the registration of refugee and migrant children into the government's distance learning program, through translating informational materials to parents into multiple languages and providing physical support in the online registration process. Unaccompanied children on the Islands and the mainland received tablets, allowing them to access the UNICEF/Akelius digital language learning platform in 6 languages (English, French, Farsi, Arabic, Kurmanji, Sorani). Together with the government's Institute of Educational Policy, a series of online workshops were also organized for teaching personnel in view of documenting challenges and good practices in relation to distance learning activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**JORDAN:** Nearly 3 million refugees live in Jordan and account for approximately 30% of its entire population. UNICEF worked with the government's Ministry of Education to provide printed learning materials as "learning packs" for the most vulnerable Grade 1 to 6 students, including in refugee camps and informal tented settlements – in addition to supporting continued learning for children via online learning and televised lessons amid COVID-19. The [Adolescent Kit: Adapted Resource Package for COVID-19](#) was also integrated in Life Skills and Citizenship Education (LSCE) programs and is disseminated via digital mediums such as voice recordings, videos and activity cards to adolescents and youth - in both host and refugee communities - to build life skills and promote mental health, psychosocial support, and wellbeing. UNICEF has also integrated the new [Learning Passport](#) online platform to provide access to the activities through facilitated WhatsApp groups.



## Expand social protections to minimize the economic impact of COVID-19 on families.

**INDIA:** UNICEF is supporting the Government in ensuring national social assistance and cash transfers reach vulnerable families such as families of migrant workers and other vulnerable daily-wage earners, especially impacted by COVID-19, by supporting additional social protection monitoring mechanisms. These mechanisms provide feedback loops for continuity of regular social protection delivery across 16 states, with a special emphasis on social protection packages including cash transfers for students and girls to prevent child marriage and child trafficking. In Uttar Pradesh, the results of a rapid assessment led to expanding the availability of banking services through micro-ATMs. UNICEF has also supported migrant workers' identification and account detail verification in 20 districts, which has already enabled 2300 families to access social protection schemes.

**PERÚ:** Growing numbers of Venezuelans have fled to Peru, with 70% of Venezuelans settling in Peru's capital, Lima, and 88.5% working in the informal economy – making Venezuelans especially vulnerable to the economic impact of lockdown measures and service disruptions. A cash transfer initiative by Peru's Ministry of Social Development did not originally include undocumented migrants. Therefore, UNICEF, in coordination with the UN Country Team, is providing technical guidance to the Ministry of Social Development to implement a specific strategy to provide cash transfers that reach at least 63,000 migrants in extreme vulnerability. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has officially requested UN support, mobilization of funds and capacity to implement this action. Starting in August 2020, UNICEF is launching a cash-based intervention in northern Lima to benefit 350 families in the initial phase of the program, to be scaled up to reach more families in the following months.

**NIGER:** By April 2020, more than [7,400 talibé children – children who attend Koranic schools – were sent back to Niger](#) from Nigeria following the closure of Koranic schools due to COVID-19. UNICEF has successfully advocated for the inclusion of returned Koranic students that live on the streets of Niger to be included in the government's list of beneficiaries of food distribution. This operation was implemented under the lead of the Niger Regional Directorate of the Population and the "Dispositif National de Prevention et Gestion des Crises Alimentaires."



Join forces with relevant partners and stakeholders as needed, to disseminate information, coordinate responses and minimize the impact of COVID-19 on children and families on the move.

**EU:** As of July 17th 2020, there are 4,600 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in Greece. Half of these children live in COVID-19 outbreak hotspots, immigration detention, or in other unsafe and limited-resource conditions. Most children in these circumstances are of Afghan, Pakistan and Syrian nationalities. As of July, IOM, UNHCR, and UNICEF, welcomed and supported the EU in the relocation of 12 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to Luxembourg, 47 to Germany, 8 to Ireland and 49 Portugal and Finland. These children had been living in overcrowded reception and identification centers for several months on the islands of Lesvos, Samos and Chios. These are the first relocations under a European Union [initiative for the relocation of 1,600 unaccompanied children](#) in which Member States have pledged to participate including Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, as well as France, Ireland, Portugal, Croatia, Lithuania and Bulgaria. Starting in July, Germany will begin the relocation of 900 children and family members who have become ill. Portugal has pledged to receive up to 500 UASC. Finland has also pledged to take another 100 UASC and 30 adults.

**MICROSOFT:** UNICEF and Microsoft, with the University of Cambridge, designed a global learning platform, *Learning Passport*, to provide digital remote education for displaced and refugee children. This platform has now undergone rapid expansion to facilitate country-level curriculum for children and youth whose schools have been closed due to COVID-19. The platform will also provide key resources to teachers and educators. [Read more here.](#)





Engage and empower migrant and displaced youth every step of the way.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Italy, Romania, Kosovo, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Uzbekistan and Ukraine** the U-Report platform gives young people an opportunity to amplify their concerns to decision makers. It has already provided 220,157 U-Reports on COVID-19 polls. In **Italy**, UNICEF's [U-Report "On the Move"](#) expanded its outreach towards adolescents and youth with messages on prevention, mental health and stress management. Information on legal status, government social protection schemes and GBV prevention and responses were also channeled this way. In parallel, adolescents and youth were regularly consulted and mobilized on the impact of the pandemic, their expectations and the solutions they propose.

UNICEF offices are continuing to implement skill building programs. **Italy** is continuing [UPSHIFT classes](#) online and **Croatia** is activating online 21st century skills workshops, Hackathons and U-Report. In **Armenia**, adolescents from the UPSHIFT community contribute to global youth voices through producing blog posts on the current situation, social media assets to be disseminated locally, and development of photo stories on how they are coping with COVID-19. The ongoing [GenU Youth Challenge](#) organized by UNICEF, UNDP and local partners will shift from in-person to an online platform.

In **Colombia, Tajikistan, Indonesia, Jordan and Lebanon**, UNICEF and partners are engaging adolescents, including migrants, IDPs and refugees, in the contextualization and implementation of the [Adolescent Kit: Adapted Resource Package](#) for COVID-19, a tool that promotes their psychosocial wellbeing, enables them to continue learning new skills in times of stress, and engages them in COVID-19 efforts – all while staying at home.







Consider disability in every response to ensure all migrant and displaced children are reached.

## JORDAN

*Education:* In UNICEF Makani centers, children in vulnerable circumstances – both refugees and Jordanians – have access to learning support services and community-based child protection. Staff and volunteers from UNICEF-supported Makani centers and partners continue to support children’s learning and well-being from home through the dissemination of multimedia recordings, including videos and audio messages for those who are visually impaired or unable to read or write, along with exercises, activities and games.

*Child Protection:* Over 600 children with disabilities in refugee camps are receiving rehabilitation home visits from trained refugee volunteers to ensure continuity of care during the pandemic.

*WASH:* Quarantine areas were established in Azraq camp and King Abdullah Park, including latrines and showering areas, separated by gender and accessible for people with disabilities. The WASH hotline remains operational, responding to concerns from the community and ensuring uninterrupted access to WASH services.

**UNICEF EAST ASIA PACIFIC REGION:** Recognizing the vulnerability of children with disabilities during COVID-19, UNICEF EAPRO developed a [COVID-19 minimum care package](#) for children with disabilities and [guidance for frontline responders](#), including UNICEF partners, health personnel, social workers, teachers, helpline staff and community volunteers, to protect children with disabilities during the COVID-19 response.



## Additional Resources and Further Readings

- UNICEF COVID-19 [Agenda for Action](#) 'Protecting the most vulnerable children from the impact of coronavirus: An agenda for action', April 2020
- UNICEF [Quick Tips](#) on COVID-19 and Migrant, Refugee and Internally Displaced Children (Children on the Move), June 2020. *Also available in Arabic, French and Spanish upon request.*
- UNICEF [Brief](#) 'COVID-19 and Migrant and Displaced Children- What Local Governments Can Do', June 2020
- UNICEF [Training Package](#) for Frontline Workers Working with Children Affected by Migration during COVID-19, May 2020
- UNICEF [Practical Tips](#) for Engaging Adolescents and Youth in the COVID-19 Response, April 2020
- UNICEF [Article](#) 'Migrant and displaced children in the age of COVID-19: How the pandemic is impacting them and what can we do to help' in the Migration Policy Practice Journal 'COVID-19: A New Challenge for Migration Policy', Vol.X, Number 2 April- June 2020
- UN Secretary General [Policy Brief](#) 'COVID-19 and People on the Move', June 2020
- UN Migration Network [Brief](#) 'COVID-19 and Immigration Detention What can Governments and Other Stakeholders do?', April 2020
- UN Migration Network [Statement](#) 'Forced returns of migrants must be suspended in times of COVID-19', May 2020
- Inter-Agency [Practical Guidance](#) for 'Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) for Refugees, IDPs, Migrants, and Host communities particularly vulnerable to the COVID-19 Pandemic', June 2020

For more information, please contact [migration@unicef.org](mailto:migration@unicef.org)