

# African Action Agenda for #ChildrenUprooted



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Between 2016 and 2030, Africa's child population is projected to expand by about 170 million, bringing the continent's total to 750 million. By the end of the century, Africa will be home to nearly half of the world's children.

The share of children among Africa's migrants and displaced populations is currently the largest for any region – nearly one in four international migrants in Africa is a child, more than twice the global average, and some 55 per cent of the 7.4 million refugees in African countries are children. At the end of 2017, another 7 million African children were living in internal displacement because of conflict and violence – with the Democratic Republic of the Congo being home to nearly one third of Africa's Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), followed by Sudan, South Sudan and Nigeria. While Nigeria, Ethiopia and Angola are among the top 10 countries with the largest share of under 18s among migrants in the world.

Nowhere in the world are children more central to a continent's future than in Africa. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity. With the right policies and practices in place, African states can improve national actions and international cooperation to address the negative drivers forcing children from their homes and protect and respond to the needs and rights of children uprooted - whoever they are and wherever they are.

Over the years, African governments have generously hosted large numbers of refugees. There are already many promising initiatives at regional, national and local level throughout the continent. The recent adoptions of the Global Compacts for Refugees and for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration and the African Union's focus in 2019 on refugees, returnees and IDPs provide an opportunity to share, replicate and scale-up solutions throughout the continent.

By coalescing efforts and investments around an African Agenda for Action for Children and Young People Uprooted, African leaders, civil society, the private sector, multi-lateral partners and young people themselves can unlock and harness the enormous potential that lies in Africa's children and young people.

Critical to implementing this agenda is better, timely and accessible data and evidence, disaggregated by age and gender, to improve our understanding of how migration and forced displacement affect children and their families. Further, refugee, migrant and internally displaced children themselves must have a seat at the table, be taken seriously and offered the opportunity to be part of the solution.



## Protect children on the move from violence, abuse and exploitation

**Invest in and train** social and community workers, police, lawyers and teachers in child rights and child protection to equip them to prevent and respond to all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse, including trafficking.

**Egypt** has launched a national protection system for children on the move. To build the capacity of child protection officers, 338 child protection committee members and social workers have been trained as of late 2018.

**Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya** invested in training health cadres, teachers, social and community workers in refugee-hosting districts.

**Create integrated one-stop shops** where children and families can receive information, counseling and assistance at the same time and access referral pathways to other essential services such as health and education.

**Ethiopia** established more than a dozen One-Stop-Centers for child survivors of violence in five refugee hosting areas as part of a national strategy to strengthen the national child protection systems.

**Strengthen transnational protection responses** to improve information sharing, cross-border case management and practical cooperation between immigration and child protection authorities for the protection of children that are moving across borders and along migratory routes.

**ECOWAS members** adopted a Strategic Framework to strengthen national child protection systems and established the West Africa Network, which ensures a continuum of services are delivered to across the region within an eight-step procedure, ranging from the identification of a vulnerable child to provision of emergency care to successful return and social re-integration.

To improve protective services for children on the move in Africa, **Primerio**, an open source software platform developed by UNICEF and partners is being rolled out in humanitarian and development contexts to help manage protection-related data, with tools that facilitate case management, incident monitoring, and family tracing and reunification.



## End the immigration detention of children

**Identify, implement and invest in alternatives to detention** for all migrant and displaced children that respect the rights of the child and allow children to remain with their families. Adopt time-bound and resourced national or regional action plans to end the detention of children and families based on their migratory status in law and practice.

**Zambia's** Guidelines for Protection Assistance to Vulnerable Migrants prevent unaccompanied children from being placed in detention centers. They establish identification, referral and service procedures for frontline officials to deal sensitively with refugees, asylum seekers, trafficking victims, unaccompanied and separated children, and stateless migrants.

**Uganda** has outlawed immigration detention for migrants and refugees.



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## Keep families together and give children legal status

Address the **legal and practical barriers** that prevent or delay family reunification and expand accessible opportunities for families to migrate or flee together safely.

In **South Sudan**, more than 5,000 children have been reunited with their families. Reuniting them requires that multiple local and international partners work together to manage cases, locate family members and reunite them with their children. The process involves case management support to each of the registered unaccompanied and separated children.

Provide all migrant and displaced children with **appropriate legal documentation**, and extend existing birth registration services to include all children.

**Morocco** has regularized around 50,000 migrants, including children, and given them legal status.

**Sudan** integrated birth registration within its vaccination campaigns implemented by the Ministry of Health's Expanded Programme on Immunization in Sudan. This enabled civil registrars to access high-risk conflict-affected areas, remote rural communities, IDPs and nomadic groups with birth registration services.

Take measures to **end childhood statelessness**.

**Rwanda** has included protections against statelessness in its nationality code, especially for children born in the territory who cannot claim another nationality. It recognizes a child's right to acquire nationality based on birth and residence in the country until majority.

**Uganda and Ethiopia** changed their national legislative and policy frameworks to allow birth registration for refugees, which is a critical step to ensure legal recognition of children's existence, to prevent statelessness and to guarantee access to national services.



## Keep every migrant and displaced child learning and give them access to health and other quality services without discrimination based on their legal status

**Integrate, develop and implement inclusive national policies** to ensure that all migrant and displaced children are included in the national education system and can access health services, including mental health, without discrimination, and ensure that these policies are implemented at the regional, community and school-levels.

As **the Government of Chad** and its international partners respond to the influx of refugees, education is an essential element of providing children with stability, support, skills and knowledge. Efforts to reach refugee children are integrated into plans to strengthen local school systems and involve the surrounding community.

**IGAD's** Djibouti Plan of Action on Regional Refugee Education commits participating states to include refugee education within their national education systems, while responding to the distinct learning needs of refugee and returnee boys and girls to ensure equitable and inclusive access to education. **Uganda** recently approved a costed Education Refugee Response Plan and established a road map for the full inclusion of refugee children in the national education system.

The **Government of Burundi** supported the construction of classrooms in communities of returnees where community members had provided land or contributed labor. As a result, returnee children were able to access education alongside children of host communities, and the damaging consequences of remaining out of school were avoided.

**Johannesburg's** Three2Six project provides an afternoon bridging education program for hundreds of refugee and migrant children living in the inner-city suburbs, where neighborhoods experiencing significant urban decay have been sites of attacks on foreign residents. It employs refugee teachers, providing them with employment and assistance to have their qualifications recognized, get to know the South African curriculum and receive support to continue their studies.

**Remove legal and practical barriers** that prevent migrant and displaced children and youth from accessing critical services while regulating data-sharing and reporting requirements between service providers and immigration authorities so that no child is discouraged from using services for fear of being detected.

In a major step forward, **Ethiopia** updated its refugee law to allow refugees to obtain work permits, access primary education, obtain drivers' licenses, legally register life events such as births and marriages and access national financial services.



## Address the underlying causes that uproot children from their home

**Strengthen social safety nets** and expand opportunities for family income and youth employment and **promote social cohesion** and facilitate peaceful conflict resolution.

**Sierra Leone**, in partnership with UNDP and CAUSE Sierra Leone, strengthens national policy, strategy and coordination for youth employment, including provision of basic support services, including mentoring for micro and small enterprises and career advisory services. As a result, 5,000 young people have started their own businesses.

To address community violence in **South Africa**, the Nelson Mandela Foundation promotes social cohesion by facilitating meetings in a safe place where host and migrant communities can come together to discuss the challenges they face, while at the same time looking for sustainable solutions.

**Recognise and address child-specific drivers of forced migration** such as forced recruitment into armed groups or gangs, child trafficking, female genital mutilation, forced or underage marriage as well as family and domestic violence through community system strengthening and capacity development to influence social behavior change.

**Nigeria** invested in and trained community-based volunteers deployed in the northeast of the country to strengthen access to child protection service which prevent and address some of the key child protection drivers, enable access to education, birth registration and support behavior- change related activities among caregivers.

**Develop child-centered adaptation and resilience strategies** to sudden-onset and slow-onset natural disasters to better address and respond to the adverse effects of climate change and environmental degradation.

**Somalia** has worked to deliver water to reduce the negative effects of drought in an area of Central Somalia, a region where access to water has been the source of conflict between three sub-clans. Meetings were organized with elders from the three communities and local authorities to build consensus for the project and secure agreement on forming a water committee to manage the new resource. Approximately 26,000 people in multiple communities now benefit from a sustainable water supply. Further, agreement between parties has reduced the likelihood of future conflict and contributed to social cohesion and resilience.



## Promote measures to combat xenophobia and marginalization

**End legal and policy discrimination** based on migration, asylum, nationality or residence status, as well as all practices that criminalize undocumented stay.

**The Charter of Local and Subnational Governments of African on Migration** was adopted in Morocco in December 2018. The Charter opposes all forms of xenophobic violence and discrimination against migrants, the construction of detention camps for African migrant populations expelled from other parts of the world and calls for migration policies that recognize the benefits of migration and its contribution to local development and diversity.

**Integrate and empower** migrant and displaced children and their families.

**Uganda** trains and supports inter-ethnic child-friendly learning spaces open to Nuer, Dinka and host community children. The programme not only helps children learn and develop, but also creates social cohesion between children and caregivers, with the result that Nuer children come to play with Dinka children and vice versa in their respective households.

The **city of Kampala** developed its Strategic Response to Displacement, Migration and Resettlement in 2018 to address the needs of new city migrants, guided by the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. Under the theme of "Kampala for All", the city has taken steps to prioritize the inclusion and integration of displaced populations in the city.