



FAITH ACTION
for Children on the Move

Global Partners Forum

October 16-18th, 2018

General Curia of the Society of Jesus

International Organizing Committee: ACT Alliance, ADRA International, Anglican Alliance, Arigatou International, Islamic Relief Worldwide, International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI), Mennonite World Conference, Micah Global, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventists, World Evangelical Alliance, World Council of Churches, and World Vision International

Host Committee: ADRA Italia, Unione Superiori Generali, Associazione Papa Giovanni XXIII, Casa Scalabrini 634, Caritas Internationalis, Caritas Italiana, Caritas Roma, Centro per la Protezione dei Minori della Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Centro Astalli, Chiesa Cristiana Avventista del Settimo Giorno, Comunità di Sant'Egidio, CO.RE.IS – Comunità Religiosa Islamica Italiana, Don Bosco 2000, Esercito della Salvezza -Comando Italia & Grecia Quartiere Generale del Comando Roma, FCEI- Federazione delle Chiese Evangeliche in Italia/Mediterranean Hope, FMSI - Fondazione Marista per la Solidarietà Italiana, Islamic Relief Italia, IIMA – Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice, Salesiani di Don Bosco, Salesiani per il Sociale, Scholas Occurrentes, VIS – Volontariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo, World Vision Italia

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Welcome to the Faith Action for Children on the Move Global Partners Forum

In early 2018, members of the Forum international organizing committee committed to developing and implementing an action plan to address violence against children on the move. Our goal was to provide a platform for a diverse group of faith-based organisations and local faith communities to reflect on contributions and plan to address violence against children on the move. Children on the move include all children who have migrated or been forcibly displaced across borders (refugees) or within the borders of their own countries (internally displaced). Children are defined as below the age of eighteen years old.¹ We agreed to work towards the following outcomes:

- 1. Compile and analyse current response, program approaches, best practices, policy frameworks, advocacy efforts and gaps through a literature review and series of briefs**
- 2. Discern, dialogue, and build consensus amongst religious and faith-based organizations, decision-makers, communities and children on issues related to violence, migration, displacement, and trafficking**
- 3. High-level action plan to increase awareness, strengthen partnerships and deepen collaboration, improve delivery and scale up interventions, and influence decision-making**
- 4. Seminal publication capturing the essence of the process, key issues and action plan to inform, inspire, and equip others into the future**

Along the way, several global UN agencies and mandates joined as part of an International Advisory Committee, contributing to the process and providing critical direction and reflection. In July, a host committee was established comprised of national organizations dedicated to serving and advocating for children on the move. Many other organizations and individuals contributed evidence to the literature review - providing evaluations, documentation, and case studies of their work with children on the move. These organizations also participated in the development of the draft action plan and policy recommendations. We have built upon critical processes, conferences and declarations, and

referenced global frameworks and commitments in the draft plan. Sub-committees for research, action, communications, and the programme have worked tirelessly to prepare for this forum. Preparatory meetings were held in Geneva, Italy, and New York earlier this year.

Collectively, over 60 organizations have engaged in an exchange of ideas, collecting and reviewing the evidence, taking time for discernment, and planning for action, and many more will join us in Rome. We are pleased to come together in person with so many committed organizations, agencies, and individuals especially the youth representatives to build upon the work, learn, reflect, and plan together. Our expectation is that this will be a dynamic process. The methodology of the Forum is designed to provoke discussion and build upon the draft action plan. We have established an Action Plan Committee of practitioners, faith leaders, international experts, and youth representatives to closely track discussions and propose a way forward. We are counting on the expertise and experience of everyone present as well as those following virtually.

This document provides the background for the Forum, draft documents and principles, as well as our expectations for what we will do together. We hope you will find this time beneficial and a celebration of the good work you are already doing to end violence against children on the move. We also hope to provide a platform for greater, more effective and inspired collaboration.

Sincerely,
The Organizing Committee

¹ As defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child



References:

Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts

<https://www.childrenonthemove.org/>

Global Network of Religions for Children:
5th Forum Ending Violence against Children:
Faith Communities in Action

<https://gnrc.net/en/>

The Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities:

Faith Action for Children on the Move Forum
Resource Platform, Forum on Localizing
Response to Humanitarian Need, Thematic
Hubs

<https://jliflc.com/>

UN Refugees and Migrants

<https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/>

UNICEF's Agenda for Action to protect all
refugee and migrant children

[https://www.unicef.org/children-uprooted/
agenda-for-action](https://www.unicef.org/children-uprooted/agenda-for-action)

WCC and UNICEF: Churches' Commitments to
Children

World conference on xenophobia, racism, and
populist nationalism in the context of global
migration

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en>

Justification for a Global Partners Forum on Faith Action for Children on the Move

As faith actors, we are in a unique position to address the needs of Children on the Move and their families. Faith actors represent a safe haven for many and are often the first place a migrant will seek refuge. Across different faith backgrounds exists the call to welcome the stranger in our midst and protect children. This call compels us to come together and respond.

We bear witness to how children² on the move³ are living through a range of devastating, violent experiences. Children migrate or are forced to migrate for a variety of reasons. Whether they travel with their family or independently (unaccompanied children) or with an extended family or a non-family member (separated children), children always face protection issues that must be urgently addressed.

Children on the move are uprooted from their homes and communities, often forced to flee due to armed conflict, insecurity, or political upheaval. They have migrated across borders as refugees, are internally displaced within their own countries, or live in limbo with unclear migratory status.

The most vulnerable children on the move consistently face discrimination, abuse, neglect, exploitation and/or ongoing violence. They are at risk of being trafficked, detained or deprived of liberty due to their migratory status, being out of school for long periods of time, unable to access social services or being homeless, and may suffer stress from their experiences on the perilous journey.

We are called to act with urgency. We are committed to collaborating around the world in a variety of contexts where children are highly affected by violence, migration, displacement and trafficking to identify the most pressing issues, solutions, and develop a common agenda. We recognize that migration itself has positive outcomes and children can be agents of positive change. Children and families who have migrated or been displaced contribute to their new communities in a variety of ways and host communities have opportunities to provide hospitality and for enrichment. Migration is part of our human history and welcoming the stranger is a principle in all of the world's religions.

Review of the Evidence

As people of faith, we want our responses to be effective and rooted in a strong understanding of what works. The organizing committee has partnered with the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI), an international collaborative group working on the evidence around faith and development, to identify and understand our current response, program approaches, best practices, policy frameworks, and advocacy efforts. Three distinct themes emerged, which have become the basis for our draft action plan and forum programme.

- 1. Spiritual support to children on the move and their caregivers as a source of healing and resilience**
- 2. The role of faith in strengthening the continuum of protection for children**
- 3. The role of faith in building peaceful societies and combating xenophobia**

We invite you to review these briefs designed to help faith actors,⁴ development practitioners, policymakers, and donors learn about faith communities' global contribution to prevent and respond to violence against children on the move. These briefs were developed based on a systematic review of academic and grey literature⁵ alongside a call for case study submissions. Two hundred and twenty-two documents and thirty-three case studies were reviewed; JLI has organized many of these into a resource library, which together with the three briefs can be accessed at <https://jliflc.com/>. We know this literature review was not comprehensive. Our hope is that more examples will emerge during the forum and we will continue to build the resource library.

² We are following the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in defining children as under 18 years of age

³ The term children on the move encompasses all children who have migrated across borders or been forcibly displaced across borders (refugees) or within the borders of their own countries (internally displaced).

⁴ The term faith actor is used in this brief to encompass a wide range of actors affiliated with religious belief and practices, including, but not limited to, local faith communities, religious leaders, local and national faith-based organisations, and international faith-based organisations

⁵ Grey literature includes policy statements and issue papers; conference proceedings; pre-prints and, post-prints of articles; theses and dissertations; research reports; newsletters, bulletins and fact sheets.

A Call to Faith Action for **Children on the Move**

Facing an unprecedented global crisis of children on the move, we are compelled as people of faith to join together, affirming shared, fundamental principles that guide our community response.

Children on the move have value, dignity and worth

We affirm the value of human life and our desire to see children flourishing within healthy and safe families and communities. The status of children reflects the values of a society. When children are safe, secure and hopeful, society honours and upholds fundamental principles and shared values. When children are afraid, in danger and suffering loss of hope and opportunity, society fails to stand for the values that undergird our faith. We stand together to protect life and foster dignity for children on the move.

Children on the move are amongst the world's most vulnerable people

We recognize our relevance and effectiveness will be measured by the experience of the world's most vulnerable. Our faith traditions reflect narratives of compassion to serve the orphan, the widow, the stranger and the dispossessed. Hospitality and service for the most vulnerable in society are essential. We are encouraged to respond with effective solutions that both target root causes and respond to symptoms, as Pope Francis calls us "to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate" children on the move.

As members of the human family, we stand in solidarity with children on the move

People of all faiths are impacted by global crises that lead to children on the move. The nature of hospitality and love extends across our faith traditions, compelling us to take action to embrace the stranger. We stand in solidarity with those who are suffering, particularly children. Discrimination and criminalization of children because they are displaced stands contrary to our core beliefs. Welcoming the stranger—as members of our shared humanity—is a moral imperative. It is essential for peaceful and flourishing society—not just for children on the move, but for all of us.

As people of faith, seeking justice and righteousness compels us to respond with actions of love and compassion to serve children on the move

Our faiths compel us not only to affirm the value and dignity of every human life but to take action, to seek justice and live rightly to ensure justice is accomplished. Throughout our religious texts and traditions, benevolence, kindness and generosity are affirmed. We recognize and affirm the value of each and every child on the move as gifts to their families, their communities and the world.

We will, therefore, strive to take actions based on our unique skills, opportunities and connections to lift the voices of these children, to strengthen systems to serve them and to ensure they have hope for their future.

DRAFT Action Plan

Introductory note: The present text was developed based on discussions at workshops in Geneva (May 2018), New York (July 2018), and Rome (July 2018). It includes comments and feedback received from partner organizations, the international advisory committee members, and other individuals and organizations through the end of September. Partner organizations and forum participants are encouraged to discuss this version within their organizations and local faith actors. This DRAFT action plan will be discussed, debated, and further enriched at the Forum in order to reach consensus and to scale up action.

Principles

- We believe that as faith-based organizations and actors we are stronger together; together we can reach the most vulnerable, and together increase our positive impact for children on the move.
- We believe that life is sacred and that children, as the most vulnerable members of society, demand the highest protection of their human rights.
- We embrace the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols; and in particular, the general principles of non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; to participate; and respect for the views of the child.
- We recognize that girls and boys on the move experience significant and distinct vulnerabilities and are at increased risk of all forms of violence; we affirm that it is an urgent moral responsibility to protect and empower children in complex and challenging environments.
- We recognise that children are the hope of humanity, and must be protected and empowered to experience life in its fullness and to transform the societies in which they live.
- We recognise that the periods of early childhood, childhood, and adolescence are critical stages in the process of growth and development of the person; children need to be nurtured to grow holistically: physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, and in safety.
- We recognize that parents and caregivers are the first point of reference for children, and acknowledge the need to support them in their efforts to raise children in a safe, caring, and loving environment.
- We recognise that spiritual support to children on the move and their caregivers enhances healing and resilience.
- We believe that faith actors have a significant role to play in reducing conflict and promoting peaceful, inclusive and sustainable societies for children and their families and highlight the important role of faith actors in empowering marginalized children and groups including women, minorities, and people with disabilities in periods of displacement.
- We also recognise that partnering from different beliefs and religious traditions enhances respect for freedom of religion.
- We condemn xenophobic and discriminatory narratives and reaffirm the need to speak up with words of solidarity, welcome and love and endorse the 18 Commitments on Faith for Rights adopted in Beirut 2017⁶ as well as the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes.⁷

⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/21451/18CommitmentsonFaithforRights.pdf>

⁷ UN Office for Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect's Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/publications-and-resources/Plan%20of%20Action_Religious_Prevent-Incite-WEB-rev3.pdf

- We recognize that 2019 represents a unique juncture in the history of international protection for children displaced populations including 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the formal implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees; the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration; the 20th Anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GP20); as well as Sustainable Development Goals review process. We will work to continue to contribute and influence relevant international bodies of work and processes.
- We highlight children's resilience, capabilities and power to overcome negative experience and thrive, and we consider children on the move as partners and agents of change for building peaceful societies, for helping communities change behaviour, and for ending violence against children.

Therefore, we share commitment to:

- Ensuring that our faith-based and religious organizations establish the strongest safeguards to prevent, detect, address and speak out on instances of violence against children by our leaders, members, staff, and anyone else;
- Ensuring that organizations partnering to protect children on the move will endeavour to foster respect for each other and promote freedom of religion and expression;
- Consulting children and youth on their experiences, needs, and involving them in designing programmes, activities, and interventions;
- Working within and across our own organizations and networks towards greater collaboration, action, generation of evidence, and advocacy in the broad areas and evidence-based interventions outlined below:

1. Providing spiritual support to children and caregivers as a source of healing and resilience

- 1.1. Further spiritual support (respecting children's beliefs, religions and traditions) and activities that support prevention of violence, healing and increase resilience, in particular with children who are survivors of violence and have been subject to trauma
- 1.2. Further spiritual support (respecting beliefs, religions and traditions) to caregivers who are survivors or witnesses of all forms of violence so they may provide a consistently safe, loving and developmental home for their children
- 1.3. Examine guidelines and resources for working with children on the move with the aim to develop faith-sensitive guidance for psychosocial support, mental health, and building resilience
- 1.4. Incorporate faith into psychosocial, mental health, and resilience programmes. This includes training faith actors and caregivers, where appropriate, to provide support to children on the move, particularly to survivors of all forms of violence, according to their faith traditions
- 1.5. Promote faith literacy, interfaith awareness, and collaboration so as to best serve children in multi-faith contexts
- 1.6. Support the establishment of safe spaces for worship and/or help connect children to places of worship, according to their wishes
- 1.7. Support the establishment of safe and friendly spaces for children to be children with appropriate activities to protect them from violence and support them in healing and resiliency
- 1.8. Ensure access for children on the move to religious and faith community spaces so faith actors can assist in developing children's sense of belonging and identity

2. Strengthening the continuum of care for child protection

- 2.1. Raise awareness of the dangers children on the move face and provide information on protective measures and when possible refer them to safe places along the way
- 2.2. Strengthen the child protection system, including the areas of psychosocial support, mental health, resilience, spiritual nurture, and referral mechanisms as faith actors in and across countries of origin, transit and destination
- 2.3. Empower and support faith actors to advocate for and serve children on the move for access to health, early child development and education services in a way that respects and integrates the child's traditions and religion
- 2.4. Support and scale local programs for children on the move; Build capacity in community-based protection, gender, psychosocial first aid, child rights, and humanitarian standards with faith actors
- 2.5. Promote adherence by all actors to best-practice international standards including the Minimum Standard for Child Protection (CPMS)
- 2.6. Promote coordination amongst child protection systems, referral mechanisms, and formal and informal actors including faith actors internally and across borders
- 2.7. Work to build the capacity of systems and services for children from both displaced and host communities
- 2.8. Protect children on the move through countries of origin, transit, and destination from all forms of violence including the promotion of safe corridors
- 2.9. Support and improve relationships and communication between faith actors and other agencies serving migrant and refugee populations, especially children
- 2.10. Work towards the full protection of children on the move throughout their journey, including through the promotion of humanitarian access and protection of child rights

- 2.11. Promote family preservation and reunification, effective child protection mechanisms, and advocate for an end to child detention in all its forms
- 2.12. Serve as bridges among faiths, government actors, other organizations, and host communities to strengthen the overall child protection system

3. Building peaceful societies and combating xenophobia

- 3.1. Welcome children on the move and their families, providing protection and promoting and supporting integration as a way to provide hospitality and welcome the stranger and support others doing the same
- 3.2. Design and implement programmes and initiatives aimed at promoting respect for different beliefs, faiths, and religion to reduce violence, xenophobic narratives and nurture peaceful societies
- 3.3. Maintain high standards of protection, including against bullying, and combat xenophobia in education and other systems where faith actors are highly engaged
- 3.4. Work with leadership to speak out, advocate for durable solutions, encourage a whole of society approach and diverse partnering and collaboration for children on the move
- 3.5. Challenge narratives of fear: Provide faith-based alternative narratives to xenophobia and build bridges between host communities and refugee populations, locally and globally
- 3.6. Support child and youth-led programs that include host community and refugee children to build relationships and challenge xenophobia
- 3.7. Speak out against injustice where children are victims of violence or at risk of displacement, including crises and forgotten conflicts
- 3.8. Raise awareness of the impact of displacement on child development and the issues children on the move face, including all forms of violence, discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation

4. Working Together

- 4.1. Share expertise, evidence, and project models and approaches which support children on the move, including those for child protection, psychosocial support and resilience-building, spiritual nurture, and challenging and presenting alternative narratives to xenophobia
- 4.2. Continue mapping current initiatives undertaken by faith actors with children on the move and strengthen the evidence base for what is working, what is not, and where we can do more together
- 4.3. Align outreach, communications, and advocacy work, including the development of awareness raising materials to end violence against children on the move. Share positive stories of hope, love, and children as active agents of change
- 4.4. Call for action at all levels—global, national and local—to end violence against children on the move
- 4.5. Continue and deepen coordination with states and United Nations actors and mechanisms, especially in the framework of the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the Global Compact on Refugees, the Sustainable Development Goals, and other global and regional mechanisms

Recommendations for Policy Makers

Introductory note: The present text was developed based on discussions at workshops in Geneva (May 2018) and New York (July 2018) and includes comments received from partner organizations, the international advisory committee members, and other individuals and organizations through the end of September. This document was developed as a supplement to the action plan in order to distinguish what we want to do together as faith actors, from the changes we want to see from policy makers and state actors. Partner organizations and forum participants are encouraged to discuss this version within their organizations and local faith actors. These DRAFT recommendations are intended for partner organizations and forum participants for advocacy and awareness raising work but are distinct from the action plan.

What are the numbers telling us?

In 2015, at least three out of four of the world's children – an estimated 1.7 billion – had experienced some form of interpersonal violence in a previous year.⁸ Violence against children is now recognised as a global epidemic. Children on the move are particularly vulnerable to all forms of violence. As of 2017, 30 million children lived outside their country of birth.⁹ By the end of 2015, there were 17 million internally displaced children (most because of violence and conflict).¹⁰ Unaccompanied/separated children on the move are on the rise: 300,000 applied for asylum in 2015-16, an increase from 66,000 children recorded in 2010-11.¹¹ Faced with an increasing flow of migrants, the political narrative in host countries is becoming more hostile to foreigners and increasingly intolerant of different cultures. This narrative and political implications create obstacles for social cohesion, integration, access to basic services and the respect and fulfilment of the rights of children on the move, exacerbating their vulnerability. In particular, children under five years risk longer-term negative impact on their physical and psychological development.

What are the policy frameworks available to respond to the increasing number of children on the move?

Recent global policy processes that address the challenges of migrants and refugees children include the New York Declaration on large movement of migrants and refugees adopted in September 2016 and the subsequent discussions, and soon to be adopted Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees. These were built on existing global frameworks.¹² The Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols as well as the Convention relating to the status of Refugees, provide the strongest legally binding support for children on the move. Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals, globally agreed upon, impact every aspect of a child's well-being.

What is the role of faith-based organizations and religious groups in protecting children on the move?

As recognised in the above-mentioned global compacts, faith actors have an important role to play. The key evidence-based areas include providing spiritual support to children and caregivers as a source of healing and resilience, strengthening the continuum of child protection across borders and building peaceful societies and combating xenophobia. Through these three areas, partners of the Faith Action for Children on the Move stand ready to support the implementation of the global compacts and existing instruments that provide for responses to migrants and refugees, including regional agreements.¹³

8 Know Violence in Childhood: A Global Learning Initiative, <http://www.knowviolenceinchildhood.org/>

9 UNICEF, IOM, UNHCR, EUROSTAT and OECD - A call to action - Protecting children on the move starts with better data. February 2018

10 UNICEF 2017 Uprooted - THE GROWING CRISIS FOR REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CHILDREN

11 Katharine M. Donato And Joshua Kirton, Georgetown University. Global Mapping of Migrant and Displaced Children: Trends and Patterns

12 The United Nations has several legal instruments related to international migration. The main instruments are: (a) the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, (b) the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, (c) the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, (d) the 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and (e) the 2000 Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. These instruments, together with those on the rights of migrant workers adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO), form the basis of the international normative and legal framework on international migration.

13 For more information on the role of FBOs in addressing children on the move, see Finding of the Literature Review and Case Study Submission: Faith Action for Children on the Move by JLI, 2018

What is the policy position of partners of Faith Action on Children on the Move?

Partners of the Faith Action for children on the move call on governments and other relevant actors to adopt these recommendations to work together towards the protection of children on the move:

- Children on the move are children first and foremost. Regardless of their migration status, their rights as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols must be respected and fulfilled.
- Ensure that children's best interests are the primary consideration in all actions concerning them.
- Uphold children's right to life, survival and development. Children on the move are particularly vulnerable to all forms of violence. Therefore, they must be protected, their basic rights are respected and they have opportunity to thrive and build a culture of peace.
- Provide access to health and education services, and to shelter, nutrition, water and sanitation to ensure children on the move stay in school and stay healthy.
- Respect children's right to liberty of movement within their state, and their right to leave their State and any other.
- Promote children's right to express their views freely in all matters which affect them, and their right to have their views taken into consideration in accordance with their age, maturity and understanding of the options available. Children are agents of change and their capabilities to be part of the solution must be recognised through the establishment of concrete mechanisms for including them in policy design and decision-making.
- End detention of children because of their or their parents' migration status. Such detention constitutes a child rights violation and is never in the best interest of the child.
- Do not separate children from their parents or primary caregivers during all phases of migration (unless this is in their best interests) and work towards family reunification if separated.
- Ensure that child protection systems protect all children including children on the move and children affected by migration. Extend protection systems beyond borders to ensure a continuum of access to services, including psychosocial and spiritual support. Ensure children can exercise freedom of religion and access to places of worship.
- Protect children against all forms of discrimination. Forbid xenophobic narratives and legal discrimination, such as policies on access to services. Counterbalance xenophobia with initiatives of interfaith dialogue, awareness raising, and collaboration, moving beyond non-discrimination towards actively building peaceful and inclusive societies.
- Ensure that migration management measures do not adversely affect children's human rights.
- Do not criminalize individuals and organizations rendering assistance to migrants, including children on the move.
- Provide durable solutions for all children on the move.

Acknowledgements

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