

Unicef Messages on Migration

Children must matter in migration policies and debates. Migration generates development benefits. To maximize these benefits, the effects of migration on children must be a core consideration in migration debates, where children have been woefully invisible. Children are affected by migration when they are left behind by one or both migrating parents, migrating with their parents, migrating alone, or living in a context affected by high migration. Policies should protect children's rights by enhancing access to the potential benefits created by migration, while also protecting against inherent vulnerabilities.

Children affected by migration are particularly vulnerable and should receive special protection. Migration policies should be accompanied by additional investments in health, education and social protection to address the risks, exclusion and discrimination faced by children and adolescents who are migrating or are left behind. When children migrate with their parents, the benefits of access to higher standards of education and health may also be reduced by hostilities, relative poverty and language barriers.

Children and households gain significant financial resources from remittances, which contribute to the development of nations and to their achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Children's health conditions and their access to education are often improved by additional remitted income. Remittances cannot replace ODA and government investment in domestic programmes for social protection and poverty reduction. Although remittances are generally considered beneficial to development, they cannot replace parental care and guidance. Remittances may even have negative social effects that need to be analyzed by future research.

Women who stay behind as heads of households have special needs, as do the increasing numbers of women who migrate. There is a need to adopt a gender perspective in identifying the different effects of migration on children. It is imperative to elaborate gender sensitive migration policies to promote children's best interests.

More research and comparable global data is needed on how children are affected by migration and remittances, in order to increase the visibility of children in migration debates and policies. Following the central message of the High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, policies should be developed to maximize the development benefits of migration, minimize its negative impacts for children and promote children's well-being. Evidence-based policies should promote children's right to health, education, and to be raised in a protective family environment according to the CRC. Effective policies are needed to protect children affected by migration from any form of abuse, discrimination, social exclusion, exploitation, neglect or abandon.