

High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges

Theme: *Children on the move*

Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

8-9 December 2016

SUMMARY

Thematic session 3 – Securing solutions for children on the move

Co-Chairs:

- **Mr. Per Heggnes**
Chief Executive Officer, IKEA Foundation

- **Ms. Kelly Clements**
Deputy High Commissioner, UNHCR

Key recommendation 1: Displaced children should be supported to navigate administrative procedures to access rights and services that arise out of situations of displacement. There is a need to support refugee children and families to access rights and services, and manoeuvre through administrative procedures and processes. Refugee adults and young people should be empowered through language support and training on the use of technology.

Key recommendation 2: The use of technology to provide education to children in situations of displacement should be actively pursued, for example through the systematic use of virtual classrooms. Displaced children should have the opportunity to go to school as early as possible and learn practical socio-economic skills with a focus on social development, communication, language training, the arts and drama, which can support integration and solutions.

Key recommendation 3: UNHCR, States and civil society need to strengthen their coordination and collaboration to find solutions for children on the move, and explore the use innovative approaches to strengthen cross-border cooperation to protect children on the move. This could be done through the better use of technology that takes into consideration data protection and data security principles in line with children's best interests. Similarly, more focus on a variety of pathways to solutions could help to expand the range of solutions available to children and their families and reduce dangerous onward movement.

Key recommendation 4: There is a need for coordinated early intervention based on the best interests of the child with child participation at the centre of any decision-making related to solutions. The capacity of national systems to meaningfully support child participation in best interest procedures, in particular those related to solutions, should be strengthened. This may involve the capacity building of social workers and of other authorities involved in asylum and migration procedures to ensure that processes are child friendly and provide space for meaningful child participation.

Key recommendation 5: States must do more to recognize the importance of family reunification, since restrictive family reunification policies adversely affect integration, and may lead to increases in the number of children on the move.

Key recommendation 6: The role that the private sector may play in providing solutions to children on the move should be fully explored, clarified and utilized. The

private sector can offer funds, expertise, knowledge, increased connectivity, and identify ways to improve access to job markets and livelihood opportunities.

Summary

Children should be treated as children first regardless of their migratory status

Participants emphasized the right of children to be treated as children first and foremost. It was recognized that displaced children often bear the burden of administrative procedures in the pursuit of solutions. For example, children may be relied upon as translators in resettlement countries because their parents have limited language skills, or children separated from family members may be required to take responsibility for tasks that would normally fall upon adults. Participants noted that activities such as art and drama provide a universal means of communication and an opportunity for displaced children to express themselves, to integrate into new societies, to process the distress that they have experienced and enjoy being children.

Education as part of solutions

Participants emphasized that access to education is increasingly seen as a component motivating families and children in their decisions to move, and there is a need for further focus on education as part of the essential services available for refugee children and other children affected by forced displacement. Participants also noted the importance of addressing root causes of conflict and strengthening education systems in countries of origin.

Case management processes

The number of children on the move and the resulting demands that it has placed on national child protection systems suggest that more must be done to support national systems in countries of transit and destination. Concern was expressed that there is a need to ensure that children at risk have trust in case management processes. Participants noted that best interest determination processes, while resource intensive, are a crucial part of the case management process and essential to the identification of solutions for children on the move. The need to maintain minimum standards in case management processes was also acknowledged. Participants agreed that by way of best practice, service providers should not work in silos, and children should not be required to share their stories repeatedly.

Private sponsorship

It was highlighted that resettlement States may face challenges in managing the expectations of communities who wish to sponsor children at risk, including unaccompanied and separated children. It was noted that the majority of children will have support structures around them (extended families, community support, etc.), and that private sponsorship should ideally focus on the broader category of children at risk and their families. Participants concluded that there is strong potential for private sponsorship programmes to provide solutions to refugee children and their families.

The psychological challenge of family separation

The emotional impact of separation from family members and communities was strongly emphasized. Family separation was considered to be one of the most significant pressures that refugees faced which in turn has an impact on the level of integration in countries of asylum and resettlement.

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