Internal Displacement for Children and Young People
Intersectionality in Abuse in Conflict

Response to: UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement - Call for Submissions and Inputs
Submitting entity: United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth, Migration Working Group
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I.   **Overview:**

Throughout times of conflict, flight or times of displacement, particular groups are most vulnerable – children and youth make up a fundamentally vulnerable group. They are more vulnerable to exploitation at all levels as well as physical, mental, sexual and psychological abuse. Children may be separated from those take care of them, and are susceptible to being put at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation and recruitment into armed forces. Their entire childhoods and adolescent lives could potentially be disrupted. With little to no access to education and scarce opportunities as they grow

older, they ultimately find themselves ill-equipped to assume the roles and responsibilities of adulthood.

The UNHCR asserts that over half of the world's refugee population is made up of children.[1] Youth, aged between 15 and 24 years old also constitute 11% of all international migrants[2], and a significant fraction of populations affected by forced displacement. Many young people and children will spend their entire childhoods and adolescent lives away from home, and at most times, separated from their families. In situations of crisis and displacement, children, adolescents and youth are further at risk of various alarming levels of neglect, violence and exploitation at all levels.

II.   Key Issues and Imperatives: Obstacles to Internal Displacement and Room for Advancement

Key issues, concerns, obstacles or imperatives in this regard encompass an array of necessary steps that are child and youth-centered – namely:

Youth Opportunity: Education and Employment (especially in situations of protracted displacement, impossible return, or recurring disasters and subsequent displacement). Key mechanisms, policies, and frameworks at both a local and national level should be implemented in order to ensure that displaced youth have access to continued education (ideally with as little disruption as possible), employment opportunities, and integration into host community regions.

Mental Health and Trauma Support: Disaster response solutions and plans should include mechanisms that both proactively provide support for, and monitor longer term effects of disaster trauma and mental health issues in affected youth. These support instruments need to be tailored through youth- and child-centered approaches.

Institutional Invisibility: Internally displaced individuals, particularly those which are displaced due to natural disasters, have historically fallen through the cracks of not being protected or addressed by refugee/asylum mechanisms, and improperly addressed (especially long term) by disaster response mechanisms.[3] Inclusive and participatory legal and policy frameworks must be adopted at the institutional level in order to engage youth in processes through a legitimate lens, as well as in language at local levels, to ensure that affected youth are covered and thus provided the same support and access to assistance for the needed period of time.

Preservation of Youth Livelihoods and Prospects: This needs to take place both for the internally displaced as well as the host communities through the provision of sufficient and adequate specialized protection of youth from recruitment into militias, domestic violence, child abduction or all forms of human trafficking. This may be further ensured through providing sufficient and adequate specialized protection and mechanisms of support for even the most 'vulnerable of the vulnerable' i.e. orphaned youth, as well as for supporting the reunification of unaccompanied/separated minors during evacuations and resettlement. This can further be instilled through the development of legal frameworks and mechanisms to account for internally displaced youth facing legal documentation issues, especially for those who are separated or orphaned.

Proper Representation of Local Communities: This is pivotal so that real experiences and natural processes (e.g. histories of informal and circular migration between at-risk and safe areas, cultural

[1] UNHCR, 2020, Retrieved at: https://www.unhcr.org/children-49c3646c1e8.html
[2] UNDESA, 2019.
[3] UNICEF, 2010, Actions for Children and Youth Resilience Guide for Governments, Retrieved at: https://www.unicef.org/lac/sites/unicef.org.lac/files/2018-06/CandY_guide_for_governments.pdf

laws and guidelines, family and other support unit structures, community skills) are taken into account in disaster planning at a local level, informed and upheld by national frameworks. Youth should be properly represented in discussion committees, ad-hoc mechanisms as well as in the platforms which are engaged in these delicate issues. They further need to be included in these discussions as well as need to be seen as stakeholders in the eventual convergence process.

A Technical First Aid Guide for Displaced Parents: Similar to the medical first aid, there needs to be a technical first aid guide for displaced mothers and fathers to give them tools to deal with children immediately once they get displaced. As well as to raise their awareness of keeping their eyes on children and put their interests first in order to avoid any bad scenarios, which might have an impact on the child's whole life.

II. Objectives of Prevention, Response and Solutions: Cultivation of National Political Will, Responsibility and Capacity

The meaningful engagement in global governance of youth, and particularly displaced children and young people who are either refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs) is fundamental toward ensuring the durability, sustainability and effectiveness of governance across the political, economic and social spectrums. Subsequently, objectives of prevention, response and solutions can only be catalyzed and cultivated once this fundamental issue is realized. It is further fundamental toward the realization of sustainable approaches to peace and security. Young people aged 15 to 35 years old currently constitute one-third of the world's population yet are largely absent from decision-making process, and as such are unaccounted for in policy making, programming and laws – particularly those of them who fall within intersectional vulnerable categories such as IDPs.

The disenfranchisement of displaced youth is a particular problem. This is mainly due to the fact that it further marginalised young people who are already subjected to various and intense forms of persecution, and have their entire futures and livelihoods in question after being internally displaced. While their individual realities indeed differ based on notions such as geographic location, gender and sexual identity, economic status and individual situation, youth share the experience of being marginalized throughout existing legal, political, economic and social systems at the global level – and continue to be marginalized despite the fact that they constitute major stakeholders within the heated international and current debates.

Furthermore, the United Nations' Global Compact processes have not yet reached a point where they have successfully mainstreamed the interests of youth or developed mechanisms for effectively engaging this significant and significantly vulnerable faction of the population. Alternatively, and in spite of their highly specific intersectional needs and capacities, displaced youth and refugees have largely been tokenized: invited to participate, yet prevented from influencing decisions or the design of structures and institutions, policy and reforms.

Again, the meaningful and continuous engagement of youth, particularly those who are displaced in the governance of the global refugee and migration systems is crucial toward the system's proper, effective and sustainable functionality. This is further important in order to ensure that their needs are being met and to address the barriers that impede them from exercising their agency. The inclusion of displaced youth in governance and decision making will assist in the identification of key barriers to engagement that displaced youth face, and will assist in highlighting effective strategies for engaging youth.

Comprehensive financial, legal, social and governance reforms are pivotal in order to facilitate and support the meaningful engagement of youth in the refugee and IDP systems and within the refugee and migration debates subsequently. Independent of these important reforms and partnerships between youth and other diverse stakeholders, it will be difficult to achieve sustainable solutions for forcibly not only the displaced populations themselves, but also the communities which will ultimately host them.

III.   The Role of Development, Peace, Climate Change and Disaster Reduction Action: Fostering Integrated Approaches

Integrated responses in the relevance and role of humanitarian, development, peace, climate and disaster reduction need to take place again, across multiple intersectional themes. These variables are encompass:

Joint Reviews of Governmental, Regional, Local, and International Actor Plans, Frameworks, and Mechanisms for Disaster Response: Specifically for internally displaced peoples, these joint reviews should include youth representatives, ideally spread across different locations, race/ethnicity groups, and financial backgrounds. Mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that local and regional representatives receive training and capacity building skills to properly contribute to these discussions. This could be done through specialized school training programs, as well as discussed with community leaders in areas where youth have less access to education, and be geared towards providing a path for these youth representatives to positions in local government and within the UN system. These should be equally considered for preventative measures, particularly in identifying at-risk areas and communities, and building resilience programs.

Working with Governments: In order to involve topics such as development, peace, and climate change in schools' formal curriculum for students to be aware of challenges they might face in their surroundings and to be emotionally ready to respond accordingly. For this purpose, governmental intervention and support in these areas is highly important and necessary.

A Development/Pandemic Impact Bond: This is an innovative way to involve many stakeholders and also hold them accountable (through impact metrics). Government/philanthropic organizations, civil sector/implementation-oriented organizations and private players synergize, come together and synergize their strengths, and can truly create a holistic impact.

IV.   Focusing on Solutions: Prospects for Effective Solutions and Support

What has led to many situations of internal displacement remaining stalled for many years might be that those people lost their properties, housing, education and employment. Their houses had been fully or partially destroyed and their schools and job places as well. In addition, they have established a new life in the new environment, which might make it harder to move back again. However, some people prefer to go back and live in their original places but the financial situation prevents them from doing so. They cannot go back if they do not have enough money to rebuild their houses again.

The international community generally considers internal displacement to be a sovereign issue, which means there's no strong framework to address IDP needs. Similarly, people forced to migrate due to climate change/global warming/disasters aren't considered refugees. When these two problems combine, i.e., when people become IDPs due to environmental causes, the international community doesn't have the means to reach them. When it comes to children, this is especially problematic,

because they have particular needs that can't be addressed under the current framework, such as education. Because education is a fundamental human right enumerated in various treaties and conventions, the international community could step in to ensure IDPs are able to exercise this right.

For-profit disaster recovery, such as in the wake of the Haitian earthquake, excludes the local populace generally, and children and youth specifically. When relief funds flow through private actors, that money does not go to the people who need it most. Instead, it is siphoned into private accounts or used to bolster international business interests at the expense of the locals. For example, when people are displaced by a disaster, construction contractors prioritize building new housing that they can sell, rather than ensuring that IDPs can return to their homes. Case studies in Haiti and Puerto Rico. This is also applicable to the MENA Region.

Public and private donors historically have come in bursts of public interest and media attention, and this has meant that disaster relief comes during the very first response period and tapers off as interest lessens and the public become fatigued. The UN, other international actors, and government bodies need to encourage and enter proper discussions with these actors to facilitate and ensure that funds are allocated to both initial disaster relief to all affected communities, as well as to the processes and mechanisms that are needed to ensure that support is given in accordance to the level of protracted-ness and/or recurrence.

Knowledge and experience from other sectors, such as refugee/asylum seeker integration, poverty alleviation, gender equality, as well as education and employment access, should be brought into discussion with hazardscape and disaster relief professionals to inform the needs of communities in protracted or recurring internal displacement. These can then be created to set up task forces that can address their livelihood needs.

V. Financing Solutions in Creating Effective Responses and Durable Solutions

An impact bond (also known as result-based financing) is the best way of achieving robust and long term results. Once a livelihood bond has taken off, bonds for education of IDP/refugee children can be kicked-off too. Furthermore, one of the most sustainable and long-term financing solutions is to economically and financially empower children and young people – who can support their families in return- by providing them with training about how they can manage their budget, use their resources, saving techniques, and how they become financially successful people. Nowadays, there are curriculums and programs that are being designed for adults to get knowledge about the steps for them to succeed on the financial level. Therefore, it would be important to provide young people with skills like these. In addition, one of the financial solutions is giving young people information about entrepreneurship and working as freelancers to help them in establishing their own professional way in life.

VI. Critical Issues and Gaps in Data and Evidence: Identifying Sources, Compositions and Barriers to Integration

Critical issues in this area are further elaborated across the central themes and concerns below:

The Source of Displacement: In South and East Asia and the Americas, the overwhelming majority of IDPs become displaced due to environmental causes, rather than conflict. The opposite is true in the MENA region. Because the international community struggles to trace and locate IDPs, internally displaced children are at risk of being trafficked. In South and East Asia and the Americas, the overwhelming majority of IDPs become displaced due to environmental causes, rather than conflict.

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Revealing True Demographic Compositions: With respect to developing countries like India, there is no official portal for the actual numbers of IDPs or even migrant workers for that matter. They are at times underrepresented in the national Census as well. Countries are now grappling with providing relief measures for such marginalized groups given the COVID-19 situation because no one knows the exact number of IDPs in each state/province. There must be a regular data collection exercise initiated. A live 'dashboard' can be created which shows real time numbers. Apart from policy-makers, such an initiative will be helpful for researchers and academicians as well writing on the issue.

The Need for Real Data: With respect to internal migration due to environmental causes, there is very little information available on how many people move due to slow-onset disasters, such as drought or famine. IDMC started recording this information in the last couple years, but due to global warming, many--if not most--internal environmentally-related migrants will relocate due to slow-onset crises.

Barriers to Integration: Oftentimes, IDPs move from rural areas into urban locales, which can be a difficult transition, as their skills, abilities, and livelihoods do not often translate to the urbanized setting. Moreover, in multilingual countries, IDPs may migrate to a city where they cannot speak the local language, even though they have not crossed a national boundary. For example, in Nigeria, which has around 350 spoken languages, people travelling from the agrarian East to urban centers like Lagos or Abuja could find it hard to adapt, simply because their languages aren't prevalent. Similarly, countries with significant Indigenous minority populations may not even recognize the Indigenous languages spoken as legitimate or official. For example, Guatemalan Mayans frequently do not speak Spanish, which can be problematic when they are forced to relocate to urban centers where Spanish is widely spoken and languages like Mam are actively suppressed. This is especially problematic for children, as it impedes their education, since they have to learn an entirely new language before they can continue schooling. States with multilingual IDP populations should work to respect those differences and to account for them, such as by opening and properly funding schools in these languages and by officially protecting languages and cultures.

Keeping in Mind Trauma and Vulnerability: One of the critical issues is that IDPs might have traumatic experiences on their way to the host place. Therefore, proving them with immediate mental health and psychological support services would be important.

About the Submitting Entity

The United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UNMGCY) is the UN General Assembly-mandated official, formal and self-organised space for children and youth (aged below 30) to contribute to and engage in certain intergovernmental and allied policy processes at the UN since 1992. Our mission is to bridge children and youth and the UN system in order to ensure that their right to meaningful participation is realised. We do so on a voluntary-basis by engaging children and youth entities in formal and informal forms in the design, implementation, monitoring, follow-up and review of sustainable development policies at all levels in four areas: Policy & Advocacy, Capacity Building, Youth Action and Knowledge.

The Migration Working Group is the group within the UNMGCY which focuses on migration issues through a youth-centered lens and experience through Policy & Advocacy, Capacity Building, Youth Action and Knowledge Assessment, Generation and Use.

The Migration Working Group's Latest Impact Report found that youth are concerned with the urgency of addressing the opportunities and challenges created by the large movements of people across the globe, and believe in the power of partnerships to achieve our goals more effectively. In 2020, the UNMGCY will be focusing on bringing even more practical solutions to the table, and want to make it easy for actions to be taken and partnerships to be created, and so it will bring young people to present innovative initiatives based on strong and successful track records. The UNMGCY will present evidence-based recommendations on how to scale them and concrete proposals for partnerships.You can read our latest impact report, here: https://bit.ly/2VvaLyb

For any questions please do not hesitate to contact the leadership of our migration team at migrationgfp@unmgcy.org