

## Submission to the Special Representative of the Secretary General for International Migration

Today, nearly 50 million children have migrated across borders or are forcibly displaced. Every day these children face a variety of rights violations, from exploitation and violence to being separated from their families, detained because of their migration status and deprived of essential protections and services. These abuses constitute a serious human rights crisis.

In response to this crisis, a broad coalition of organizations, including UN agencies and NGOs have come together to promote an inter-agency initiative called “Child Rights in the Global Compacts”, to ensure that both Global Compacts include coherent and harmonized child focused goals, targets and indicators similar to, and in line with, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. World Vision International supports the submission made by this group, ***“Recommendations for protecting, promoting and implementing the human rights of children on the move in the proposed Global Compacts.”***

The New York Declaration upheld critical principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and we hope that Member States will build on this in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) with concrete measures for the most vulnerable children. The following principles should be reflected in the GCM:

**1. Migrating and displaced children are children first and foremost.** This means that **independent of their status, migrating children, children seeking asylum and children in internal and external displacement are entitled to and must be ensured all fundamental rights**, as set out in the CRC and accompanying guiding documents. The best interests of children must be **the primary consideration at all times**, as already stated in the New York Declaration, paragraph 32.

**2. Children deserve a new deal that guarantees their right to a safe, thriving and productive life, including access to protection and other essential services.** This means equitable **access to protection from violence and exploitation**, including child trafficking. **Access to quality education** must be ensured within one month of displacement. **Psychological rehabilitation and emotional care** should be provided case by case to all children – especially those unaccompanied or separated – and their caregivers.

**3. Unaccompanied children must be protected and supported at all times.** When children are unaccompanied or separated from their primary caregivers they are more easily subjected to physical attacks, robberies, criminal groups’ activities and other dangers. Inclusive and adapted measures to guarantee their security and care including: **prevention of unnecessary family separation, granting guardianship and family or community based care**

to those **unaccompanied or separated**, and increased support and **the removal of barriers to family reunification**.

**4. Children should have access to safe and regular entry routes.** This includes access to family reunification services, so that children do not have to risk their lives or become separated from their families during dangerous journeys.

**5. Children should never be detained just because of their or their parents' immigration statuses.** The detention of children on the basis of their or their primary caregivers' migratory status **is never in their best interests** and we call for clear milestones to end this practice, in line with the commitment made in the NY Declaration. **Non-custodial, community-based settings as alternatives to detention** must be put in place and resourced.

**6. Children must not be returned to countries where they are not safe.** Respect for **the principle of non-refoulement and the best interests of the child must be considered** in any decision about returns. We call for increased adherence to legal, political and moral obligations to offer refuge to children in need of protection, including the obligation of States not to return children to countries where they run the risk of irreparable harm.

**7. Children on the move must be considered critical partners in finding the right solutions to their needs.** Children should be meaningfully consulted and engaged in all discussions on policies and decisions that affect them, including the development of the Global Compacts. As a child-focused agency, we are available to guide and support the **meaningful participation and engagement of children on the move**.

In order for the above principles to be effectively implemented the following enabling factors need to be in place:

- a) **a whole of society approach** is needed in their implementation, through establishing an integrated governance framework nationally and partnering with the private sector and other relevant actors, including civil society groups.
- b) **effective cross-border coordination between national child protection services to provide a continuum of protection throughout the migration cycle for refugee and migrant children** must be established on the basis of the recognition that States have a shared responsibility to protect migrant children.
- c) **root and structural causes of migration need to be addressed** and long-term solutions for children on the move ensured.

WVI hopes that the principles and enabling factors put forward in this submission be taken into consideration for the development and implementation of the zero draft of the GCM.