



**FREE.SAFE.EDUCATED.**

**CHILDREN ON THE  
MOVE  
ACTION PACK**



## WHY FIGHT FOR THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN ON THE MOVE?

Our modern world is on the move like never before. The impact of climate change, conflict, and globalisation has led to unprecedented levels of migration.

The number of refugees, asylum-seekers and people displaced within their own countries because of wars, violence and natural disasters more than tripled between 2005 and 2016 ([UNHCR, 2017](#)). Many millions more have fled extreme wealth inequality in search of better education, healthcare and job opportunities elsewhere.

Children and young people are especially vulnerable in these situations, making up half of all refugees and asylum-seekers worldwide. ([UNICEF, 2017](#)).

Children on the move are often not free, safe, or educated. They are at risk of physical, sexual and psychological violence and exploitation, denied services like healthcare or education, and detained or deported by immigration police.

If we want to live in a world in which the rights of all children and young people are respected, we cannot allow these injustices to continue. But if we don't take action, they will.

Forced migration has reached record-high levels, but governments and societies are failing to protect the children and young people most affected. It's time to demand change. Together, let's protect and promote the rights of children on the move.

## STEP 1: KNOW

The term ‘children on the move’ includes many different individuals, from refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and asylum-seekers, to economic migrants and trafficking victims. A child migrant is also always under the age of 18.

So how many children are on the move worldwide? Shockingly, nobody knows for sure, because statistics are often outdated or unreliable. [A recent IOM report](#) suggests there are at least 53 million child migrants, including 12 million child refugees and asylum-seekers, and 23 million children displaced within their own country by violence, conflict, and natural disasters. It is not clear how many children and young people have migrated for other reasons, for example, to escape extreme inequality or join family members abroad, but this number could be as high as 18 million.

Children migrate in very different ways. They use almost all types of transport, from walking, to boats, buses, and cars, and their journeys may take months or years to complete.

Children travelling with their parents or legal guardians are called ‘**accompanied**’, whereas children who are travelling alone or only with other children are ‘**unaccompanied**’.



Although a child's home situation may be too dangerous to stay, life on the road is also full of risks. Children on the move are very vulnerable to **physical violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking**, especially when unaccompanied or in unfamiliar environments. The migration routes themselves are often difficult and many young people die crossing the Sahara and Sonoran Deserts, Central Asian mountain ranges, and the Mediterranean Sea.

Many children who cross international borders looking for safety and security are **not welcomed in foreign countries**. Young migrants are especially vulnerable if they don't have a valid passport or other important documents with them and can't prove they are under 18.

Undocumented immigrants may be arrested, imprisoned and deported, or excluded from public services like education, healthcare, and housing. If children in this situation are kidnapped or go missing, governments often won't look for them.

The term 'children on the move' describes many experiences, and it's important to remember that every individual has their own story. However, it is also important to recognise what unites these young people: both with each other *and* all other children around the world.

All children and young people should be met with **compassion, understanding and access to services**, regardless of whether they are an asylum-seeker, economic migrant or IDP or not. **They are *all* children and must be protected as such.**

**These are some of the different rights all children have, according to [the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#). In your group or individually, think about which rights children on the move can be denied or find harder to access. Circle them and discuss why you think this is.**

- To have a **name and nationality**
- To choose your **friends**
- To get **information** important to your **wellbeing**
- To be **protected from being hurt**, in body or mind
- To receive **special protection** if you are a **refugee**
- To get a **good quality education**
- To have **food, clothing** and a **safe place to live**
- To practice your own **culture, religion and language**
- To **play and rest**
- To be **protected from exploitation**
- To have **protection and freedom from war**
- To get **legal aid**

Next, choose up to **three** rights you think are most at risk for children on the move.

Are there **places, people and projects** that protect these rights in *your local community*? What are they? If there aren't any, what can your school, neighbourhood and nearby public services do to guarantee the rights of all child migrants?

## STEP 2: CONNECT

Travel, whether a short trip from one town to another or a long-distance journey across continents, is a big part of the lives of children on the move.

That's why this 'Connect' step is to **organise a walk of solidarity** with your 100 Million campaign group, friends and family to raise awareness of the realities of child migration.

Make your walk more powerful by including facts and experiences of children on the move – you could put them on posters or read their stories aloud during the walk. We've included some examples below, but feel free to find others from reliable sources, like [UNICEF](#), [IOM](#) or [UNHCR](#). More child migration facts can be found in this [100 Million campaign fact file](#).

If you're not sure where to go on the walk, think about the rights of children and on the move that you learnt in **STEP 1**. Could you raise awareness about the right to education at your local library, march by the town hall to promote the right to political participation or use the playground to illustrate the right to have fun?

When you're done, let us know at [campaign@100million.org](mailto:campaign@100million.org) – we'd love to hear about your experiences and see your posters, photos or videos!

**CAMPAIGN TIP:** read **STEP 4** and think about inviting the person you want to influence to the walk.

### Mustafa, Syria

"I had some toys that I loved very much and I wish I could bring them with me. They told us we will be walking a lot, [that I would] get tired and throw them away. I keep thinking about what is going to happen to us. Are we going to die? God forbid! Here I don't understand the language or anything. I miss my friends but what can I do?"  
([UNICEF, 2016](#))

Nearly a **third** of all children living outside of their country of birth are **refugees** ([UNICEF, 2017](#))

In 2016, the **developed world** took **only 16%** of all refugees under the UNHCR's mandate ([UNHCR, 2016](#))

Children & young people travelling alone from the Middle East & Africa to Europe are **more than twice as likely to be exploited** as those travelling in groups ([UNICEF/IOM, 2017](#))

### Marie\*, Central African Republic

"After our village was attacked, my family and I had to live in the forest for more than a month. We had nothing to eat and I had to drink water from the swamp." ([IDMC, 2011](#))

## STEP 3: MOBILISE

After you've finished **STEP 2** (or even during the walk, if that works better!), ask everyone to write a pledge to do something individually to welcome child migrants into your school or community. Print out and complete as many copies of this [this pledge sheet](#) as you want and can!

Think back to your answers from **STEP 1**: how could you *personally* help ensure children on the move are welcome in your community and can realise their rights? Could you pledge to accompany child migrants to the doctor? How about donating your spare clothes to young people who have recently arrived in the area?

**This action will be most effective if you get lots of pledges, so don't forget to engage as many people as possible!**

You could first ask the people who took part in the walk of solidarity, but also think creatively about getting others involved. Talk to classmates and neighbours, mention the pledges in an assembly or seminar or set up a Facebook event – you know what works best in your community!

Don't worry if you haven't done a walk of solidarity, you can always collect pledges from people in your school grounds, outside a lecture hall, or from friends/family.

Once you've finished making and collecting pledges, turn to **STEP 4** to find out how to give them to the community leader or local politician you want to influence!

### Juan\*, El Salvador

"I left because I had problems with the gangs. They hung out by a field that I had to pass to get to school. They said if I didn't join them, they would kill me. [...] I went to the police twice to report the threats. They told me that they would do something; but when I saw that they weren't doing anything to help, I knew I had to leave. I even brought a copy of the police report I made; but U.S. immigration took it from me and threw it away. They said that it wasn't going to help me in this country." ([UNHCR, 2014](#))

Around **50%** of asylum-seekers from South Sudan are **under 11 years old** ([IDMC, 2017](#))

Over **100 countries** worldwide **detain children** for migration reasons ([UNICEF, 2017](#))

At least **23 million** children and young people have been **displaced** in their own countries by violence, conflict and natural disasters ([UNICEF, 2017](#))

**\*Names have been changed**

## STEP 4: INFLUENCE

There are so many millions of children on the move, it can seem impossible for individuals to make a difference. **But even if one person alone can't change the world, they can be part of a movement that does.** By combining the steps in this Action Pack, you can start to unite your local community in actively protecting the rights of some of the world's most marginalised children.

This month, share the pledges you collected in **STEP 3** to show a local figure of your choice what you and your community are going to do to help children on the move, *and* to ask them what they're going to do to support it.

**Individually or as a group, think about the pledges that you made, and which local decision-makers or authority figures could help make them a reality:** can your headteacher allow child migrants to study at your school? Could the town council publish leaflets about local facilities, like hospitals, police stations and libraries, in different languages? Perhaps a community centre could run an integration course for recent migrants?

On the final page of this pack, you'll find a template letter with gaps for your chosen decision-maker's name, the name of your community, the number of people who made a pledge, and the names of everyone in your group. In the middle of the letter, there is space for you to summarise the pledges (or a selection of the most common ones!) you made to protect and welcome child migrants into the community.

**Seeing the community's collective commitments will send a powerful message to local authority figures: we are dedicated to the rights of children on the move and you should be too.**

We've made a template letter below to send with the pledges, but don't forget to add a personal touch and make the message more memorable. Think about how you could make this action stand out – can you meet your chosen authority figure in person to talk about what you discovered? Why not show them all the pledge sheets you completed? How about including your photos or the facts and statistics you used on the walk of solidarity?

Don't forget to share your activities or experiences with us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)! If you get a reply, email us at [campaign@100million.org](mailto:campaign@100million.org) and we can suggest steps that you or your 100 Million group can take next.



Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

We, 100 Million campaigners from \_\_\_\_\_ believe that all children and young people should be free, safe and educated. But right now, at least **53 million children are on the move worldwide**. Forced from their homes by violence, poverty, and natural disasters, they are extremely vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking, and even death on perilous journeys.

**And the situation is only getting worse: according to UNICEF, we are currently experiencing the highest levels of forced migration on record.**

We cannot wait for national governments to act: we, as citizens, campaigners, students, friends, family, neighbours and human beings, commit to actively welcoming any child migrants (and their families) that arrive or pass through our community. After asking \_\_\_\_\_ people in our community to pledge to do something to help children on the move locally, we have summarised these commitments below and now invite you to join us by making your own pledges.

Our community makes the following pledges to welcome migrant children into our community and ensure they are **free, safe and educated**:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

We hope that you consider our commitments seriously and look forward to discussing how you will personally and professionally protect the rights of children on the move.

*Yours sincerely,*



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