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LEARNING REVIEW RELATED TO SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN ON THE MOVE
Risk Factors, Responses, and Recommendations

2

CHAPTER

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this review is to examine what is known about multi-level risk factors for sexual abuse/exploitation of children along the trajectory of the migration experience and then identify promising strategies, policies, and services that promote child protection and prevent maltreatment. Throughout the review, case examples of sexual abuse and exploitation of migrating children in diverse contexts and settings are used to illustrate the needs of youth and promising directions for CoM policy and programming.

Children on the move (CoM) may be traveling alone or with family members, and include youth identified as refugees, internally displaced persons, unaccompanied children/minors, and voluntary migrants.[1] Although accurate statistics on the number of children on the move are difficult to obtain, in 2013 the United Nations estimated that roughly 15 percent out of 232 million international migrants were under the age of 20.[2] The circumstances of children on the move render them particularly vulnerable. Compared to the general population, these children are at elevated risk for a variety of adverse exposures, including sexual exploitation and abuse.[3] While data on the burden of sexual exploitation and abuse in this population is extremely limited, meta-analyses indicate

that prevalence of sexual abuse among all youth ranges from 8 to 31 percent for girls, and 3 to 17 percent for boys worldwide, with estimates varying by region.[4] Based on work by the Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children, this report uses the following definitions of sexual violence, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation:

- Sexual violence against children encompasses both sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children and can be used as

an umbrella term to refer jointly to these phenomena.

- Child sexual abuse is a broad category that, at its core, defines the harm caused to children by forcing or coercing them to engage in sexual activity, whether they are aware of what is happening or not.

- Child sexual exploitation is a type of sexual abuse which happens when a child is performing, and/or another or others is/

Individual (gender, age, health, etc.)

Microsystem (family, peers, school, place of worship)

Mesosystem

Exosystem (industry, mass media, local politics, social services, neighbors)

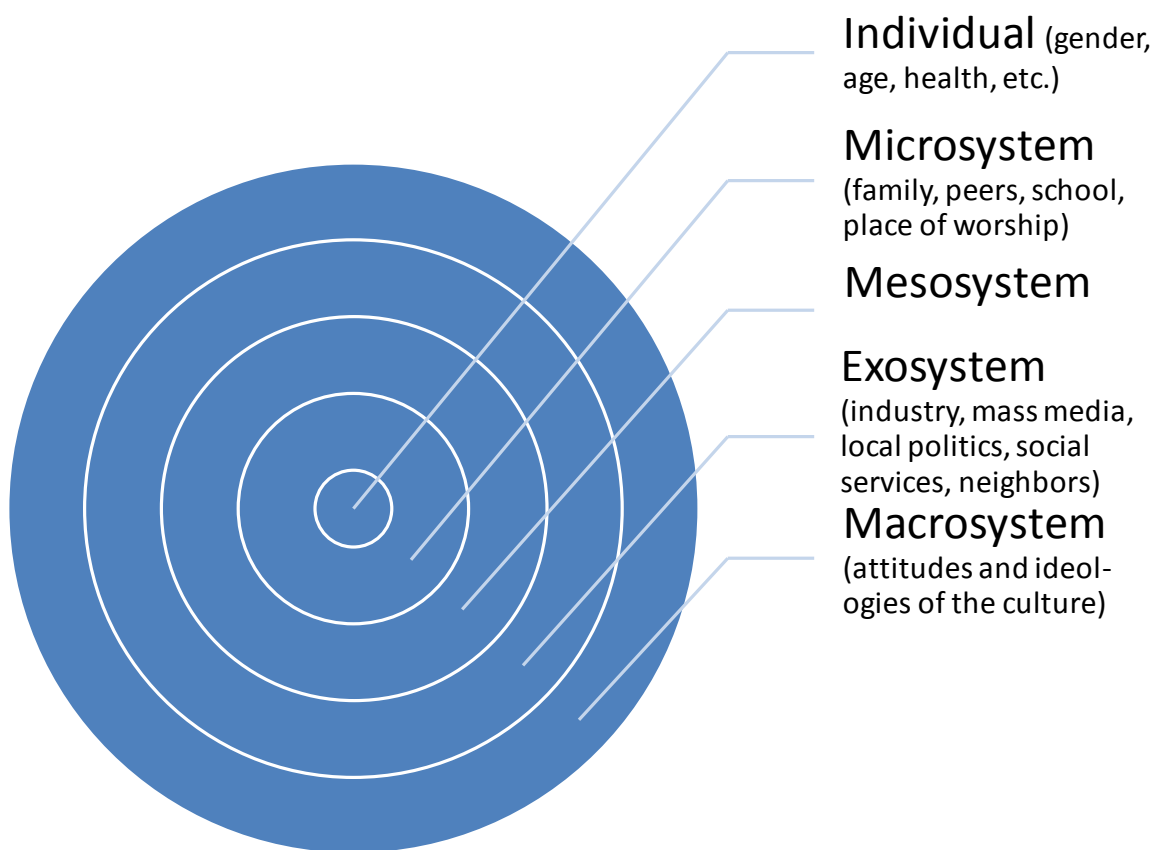**Macrosystem** (attitudes and ideologies of the culture)

Figure 2.1: Simplified version of Bronfenbrenner's Model of Human Development (Influences flow in and between systems). Based on model in Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Toward an experimental ecology of human development," *American Psychologist,* 32(7), 1977.

are performing on the child, sexual activities in exchange for something.[5]

There are different contexts in which children on the move become sexually abused and exploited. For instance, for some children, migration is a consequence of sexual exploitation, and occurs when the children are forced into child prostitution and become victims of national and international child trafficking.[6] A different scenario occurs when adolescents leave home alone in search of economic opportunity and become coerced into situations of sexual exploitation and abuse because of a lack of adult protection or because of financial desperation.[7] Still other children, migrating with or without families because of war and political unrest, experience sexual violence embedded within the context of armed conflict and/or as a result of separation from caregivers during flight or social and economic marginalization.[8]

This review examines sexual exploitation and abuse of children on the move through a social ecological framework that takes into consideration important migratory time axes.[9] Bronfenbrenner's widely invoked model of human development[10] (see Figure 2.1) posits that both risk and protective factors to child well-being exist throughout the spheres that impinge on children on the move, from the individual to the macrosystem levels. Certain characteristics including gender and socio-economic status may make specific children on the move more likely to experience or be more vulnerable to sexual exploitation than others.[11] But because stages of the migratory cycle differ along relevant risk-related dimensions, it is important to examine these multi-level risk and protective factors along the continuum of the migration experience. The circumstances operating at each stage of migration, from pre-departure at the place of origin to resettlement in a new location or return to the country of origin can increase or decrease youth vulnerability to sexual exploitation and abuse.[12]

The report will suggest that prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse of migrating children requires more robust and consistent linkage between human development and migration spheres in order to generate vibrant and protective environments for young people at risk.

INTERSECTING RISKS

In recent years, there has been an emphasis on highlighting the human agency of children and moving beyond the perspective that considers them primarily as victims of broader social, economic, and political forces outside of their control.[13] Identifying and acknowledging the decision-making capacity and autonomy of children on the move is certainly an important step in developing meaningful policies and programs that reflect the participation of the children themselves.[14] However, exploring sexual exploitation and abuse of children on the move also entails jettisoning the dichotomy of "voluntary" vs. "involuntary" child migration and instead viewing children as operating within systems riddled with power imbalances that constrain the choices and options available to them.[15] The causes of sexual exploitation and abuse of migrating children can be best understood as a complex network of individual, family, community, and societal factors that, both by themselves and in interaction with one another, promote the co-occurrence of child migration and sexual violence.

These risks intersect with multiple levels of Bronfenbrenner's model. For example, demographic shifts affect not only the mi-
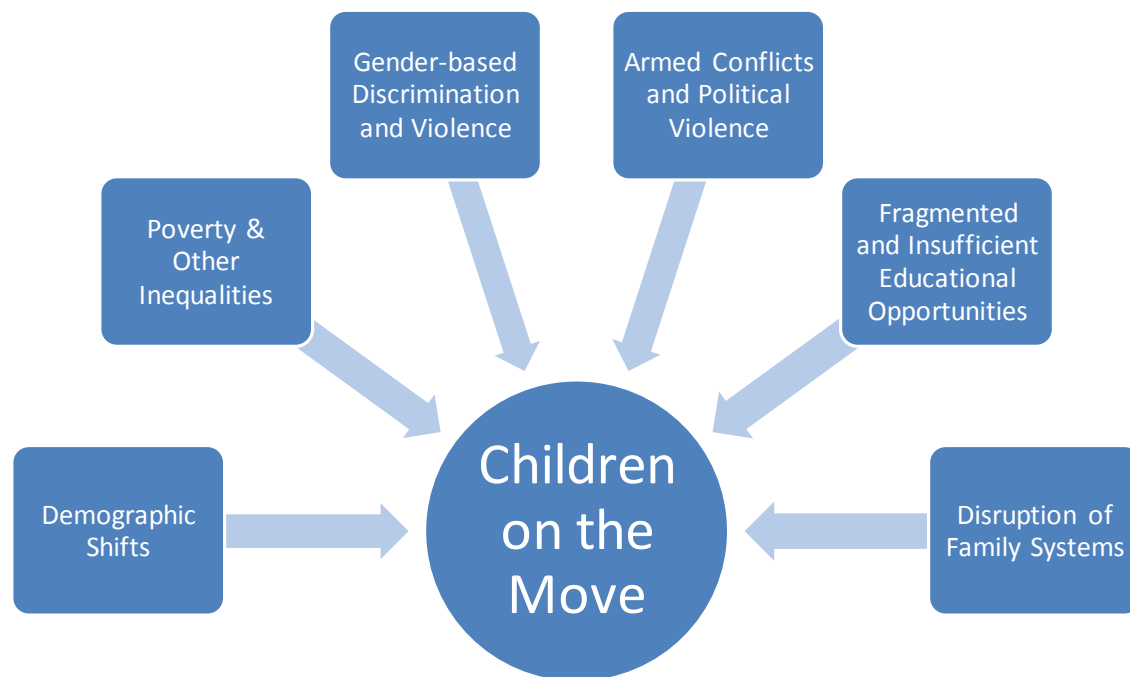
Figure 2.2: Children on the move face intersecting risks within national, regional, and global contexts

crosystem of societies as a whole, but also the microsystem of individual family sustainability and related migratory pressures. Similarly, gender-based discrimination and violence span the gamut of spheres inhabited by migrating children from their sense of self and confidence as individuals to their experiences in school, community, or other aspects of the mesosphere, to the opportunities afforded them before, during, and following migration within the macrosystem they have to navigate.

Additionally, these risk factors exert their influence at all stages of the migratory process. For instance, exposure to armed conflict increases risk of sexual violence in the pre-migratory phase preceding flight and elevates the vulnerability of youth in transit because of social and economic pressures experienced in refugee camps and lack of adult protec-

tion. Likewise, poverty and other inequalities act as major push factors for youth migration and make youth vulnerable to sexual exploitation both while they are in transit and at the place of resettlement due to lack of employment opportunities and financial desperation.

Demographic Shifts

In many regions of the world the population of children and youth has grown at a pace disproportionate to the size of the adult population. Africa is an excellent example of this phenomenon. It is notably the world's youngest continent, with a population that is growing faster than that in any other part of the world. Half of Africa's citizens – roughly 477 million individuals – are under the age of 18.[16] In countries such as Uganda, Nige-

ria, and Kenya, for instance, children aged 0 to 14 comprise over 40 percent of the total population of the country, compared to a worldwide average of 26.1 percent.[17] These demographic shifts frequently result in high unemployment and a lack of opportunities for youth trying to enter the workforce.

In some regions, overall economic growth has faltered or failed to keep pace with the demands created by demographic growth.[18] Elsewhere, countries have invested in economic growth primarily in urban centers, shifting access to jobs and demand for labor from rural settings to large cities.[19] This has been the case in East and Southeast Asia, with thousands of individuals migrating nationally and internationally to meet labor demands in major urban centers throughout their region or in other parts of the world.[20] For youth in particular, the demographic shift means that migration becomes the primary means to improve their financial situation, with the result that youth leave home alone to pursue employment elsewhere.[21] The combination of financial desperation and an absence of social support renders youth prime targets for sexual exploitation during their journey or once they arrive at their destination.

Poverty and Other Inequalities

Along with demographic shifts and diminishing employment opportunities, poverty persists and economic inequalities continue to grow. For example, in Southeast Asia, poorly regulated economic growth, coupled with low prioritization of even income distribution, has led to an estimated half a billion people living on $2 a day despite an overall reduction in the proportion of people living in poverty.[22] Although Africa has experienced dramatic economic growth in recent decades, poverty rates have not declined; in fact, according to the World Bank, the total number of poor people in sub-Saharan Africa has increased.[23] Poverty and income inequalities come into particularly sharp focus in urban areas. Though major cities tend to have greater employment options than rural communities, the economic growth of large towns and cities cannot keep pace with the dramatic population shift into these areas. In Africa, over 60 percent of the urban population lives in slums.[24] Child migrants around the world often end up homeless, in poor quality housing, or in institutions once they arrive at urban destinations.[25]

For many children, economic inequality is deeply intertwined with discrimination, heightening the risk of both migration and sexual abuse. Research in Southeast Asia, for instance, indicates that low caste is a risk factor for sexual exploitation and trafficking, with "daughter-selling" a common practice among the lower castes because family members cannot find work.[26] Indigenous populations and individuals of African heritage often have reduced educational opportunities and thus, more limited employment options in Latin America.[27] In Europe, marginalization of Roma communities results in poor access to much needed services and employment, children living on the streets or in institutionalized care, and increased vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation.[28] The Rohingya case in this report highlights this intertwining of discrimination and inequality, with heightened risk of migration and sexual abuse. The lack of opportunity for Rohingya in Myanmar including their displacement into internal camps has led to widespread migration, with youth held in detention with adults and with many youth victims of sex trafficking, particularly in Thailand and Bangladesh.

Gender-Based Discrimination and Violence

Sexual exploitation and abuse of children is a deeply gendered issue,[29] with females being at much greater risk than males.[30] As mentioned earlier, statistics on sexual abuse and exploitation of children on the move is sparse and unreliable, with variations based on geographical and migratory contexts. A detailed discussion of this data is beyond the scope of this review. What is known, however, is that in many developing countries, adolescent girls migrate in greater numbers than boys.[31] Reasons for migration vary, ranging from seeking out economic opportunities to marriage. Issues of gender-based discrimination and violence frequently underlie both voluntary and involuntary movement. For instance, sexual abuse and violence often act as a catalyst for girls to leave their communities, with female youth identifying escaping sexual abuse by family members, child marriage, or female genital cutting as reasons for fleeing their home.[32] Like boys, migrant girls are also searching for employment and educational opportunities; however, the experience of having limited options may be more acute for girls than for boys given well-established gender norms and expectations concerning the role of females in society.[33]

Marriage remains one of the primary reasons why female youth migrate in developing countries.[34] For instance, child marriage is widely practiced in countries in South Asia, the region with the highest number of child brides in the world.[35] Regardless of whether or not a girl perceives the marriage itself as a choice, child marriage is a violation of human rights and is considered a form of sexual exploitation and abuse. The Rohingya case discusses how many girls in the Thai camps end up being sold as brides—in some cases by prearrangement before the journey. Practices of child marriage are embedded in cultural norms that devalue girls; these same norms and attitudes also serve to make the forced trafficking of female youth for purposes of prostitution a profitable business.[36]

Camps and detention centers often contain danger of sexual abuse for women and girls. For example, the Lesbos case reports that women and children at the Moria camp hesitate to use sanitation facilities located in the same areas as that of men, for fear of sexual harassment or abuse. As mentioned in the US and Australia case, the housing of children, unaccompanied or with their families, with adult strangers in US detention centers has led to reports of sexual abuse;[37] similar practices in Mexico and Australia may well lead to similar outcomes.

Armed Conflict and Political Violence

There are over 50 million persons worldwide currently displaced due to military conflict and persecution, with roughly a half of this number comprised of children and youth.[38] In some regions of the world, armed conflict is the primary reason children and youth make the decision or are forced to migrate.[39] Although all displaced youth are at heighted risk of sexual exploitation and abuse compared with non-displaced populations,[40] youth who are unaccompanied and separated from caregivers; in detention; child soldiers; adolescents; or disabled are particularly vulnerable.[41] Sexual violence regularly occurs at all points along the displacement continuum — from the pre-flight situation in the country of origin, through temporary stays in internally displaced persons (IDP) or refugee camps, and to resettlement contexts in a new country or back in the country of

origin. Sexual violence is a tool of war, and prior to and during flight, political groups, organized crime and gangs, and armed militia often victimize women and children.[42]

As the good practices, Lesbos, and Serbia cases all discuss, the conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria have pushed a tidal flow of migrants to Western Europe, with 54 percent of unaccompanied minors applying for asylum in the European Union in 2015 identifying their country of origin as Afghanistan.[43]

Children continue to be vulnerable to exploitation and abuse once they have left their homes; indeed, many women and children in male-dominated societies flee conflicts after losing male family members and enter detention or refugee camps unaccompanied by men.[44] Once in camps, youth are at increased risk of violence both within their communities and families via mechanisms such as domestic violence and child marriage[45] as well as sexual exploitation by aid workers and peacekeepers.[46] Among Syrian refugees, child marriage is on the rise, as it is viewed both as a way to protect girls from sexual violence and as a mechanism to ease financial pressures on the family.[47] There are additional pathways to sexual abuse for refugee youth working to support their families. Refugees often have limited access to legal employment, and children who do find work are vulnerable to sexual abuse by their employers or are only able to support themselves by directly engaging in prostitution.[48]

Fragmented and Insufficient Educational Opportunities

Educational pressures (whether opportunities or lack thereof) often act as a catalyst for youth to leave home and play a significant role in pathways to sexual exploitation and abuse. In many regions of the world, overall access to education has improved dramatically over the past few decades; however, many of the registered gains relate to primary school enrollment rates and not to school completion, let alone access to and pursuit of higher education. In some countries in Africa, for instance, less than 50 percent of youth complete primary school;[49] in other regions of the world completion of primary education has increased, but the number of youth attending secondary school is extremely low.[50] Access to safe schools is also of concern, with sexual abuse and exploitation of children widespread in some parts of the world.[51]

Seeking out educational opportunities is a major reason youth migrate to large urban areas, in hope that the quality and kind of education they could receive would be better than that available in many rural communities.[52] This may be particularly the case for girls, who are forced or pressured to drop out of school at much higher rates than boys.[53] In many developing countries, cultural practices favor the education of boys over girls, and include expectations that the education of girls will not lead to financial gains. Some migrant girls leave home with the intention of both working and advancing their education.[54]

The Rohingya case points out the very limited education opportunities for the Rohingya in Myanmar, and how that continues in camps once Rohingya youth have left the country, increasing their vulnerability to sex trafficking.

The relationship between education and sexual exploitation and abuse of migrant children is also frequently mediated by child labor. Children who are poor and from rural com-

munities are at greatest risk of dropping out of school, typically with the goal of finding jobs and supporting their families financially.[55] As outlined earlier in this report, finding jobs in turn often means migrating to larger urban areas with more employment opportunities. Research indicates that children engaged in work are at heightened risk factor for future sexual exploitation, even if their initial employment is legal.[56] Conversely, youth who cannot find legal employment become easy prey for child sex trafficking once they get to their destination.[57]

Disruption of Family Systems

Breakdowns and disruptions of family systems can increase the risk of child migration and also of ensuing sexual exploitation. In Africa in particular, death of one or both parents to HIV/AIDS often forces young people to leave home.[58] They frequently move to join relatives who then foster them. While this can be beneficial to the youth, it may also make them economically dependent upon extended family members and increase vulnerability to exploitation or abuse within the new home.[59] Youth may also migrate in order to escape dysfunctional family dynamics. Many migrant children report that parental breakups, sexual abuse, and domestic violence played a role in their decision to leave.[60] Violence in the home may make youth particularly susceptible to sexual exploitation because of heightened desperation to flee dangerous circumstances.[61]

Disruption of families is a particularly salient issue for movement by youth affected by armed conflict. In qualitative studies with unaccompanied minors, separation from parents or death of one or both parents is frequently cited as the catalyst for youth leaving their country of origin.[62] Additionally, many unaccompanied minors report being separated from families during the migration process and struggle with family reunification.[63] While experiencing violence or the loss of a parent is in itself traumatic and detrimental to the well-being of youth, the absence of a strong social support system makes refugee children on the move more vulnerable to unsafe secondary migration, trafficking, and smuggling.[64]

Migration itself tends to disrupt the family system, particularly for refugees. As the Lesbos, US/Australia, and Rohingya cases suggest, conditions in most camps or detention centers are not adequate to meet children's needs. The Lesbos case notes that "the lack of available resources, squalid living conditions, and the trauma experienced make it almost impossible" for parents and caretakers to meet their responsibilities of insuring their children's safety and well-being. The US/Australia case cites a report by the Australian Human Rights Commission on children in detention, which found that almost all parents reported symptoms of depression and anxiety.[65] One mother summed up her feelings of powerlessness, "Enough is enough. I have had enough torture in my life. I have escaped from my country. Now, I prefer to die, just so my children might have some relief."[66]

The Serbia case alludes to a reversing of roles for some families, "While families with children move to the European Union to improve future prospects for their children, children traveling alone to Europe are often moving to improve future prospects for their family, with the hope of paving the way for the family's move via family reunification regulations in the European Union."[67] The good practices case discussion of Sweden touches upon how this can lead to child exploitation, increasing the likelihood of abuse, sex-

ual and otherwise—and as discussed below, often these children do not understand the dangers they face.

RESPONDING TO ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

As has been illustrated, sexual exploitation and abuse of children on the move is a multi-faceted issue with many contributing factors operating on both micro- and macro- system levels. Combating the problem entails addressing both root and proximate causes of abuse. This requires coordinated responses across government and nongovernment entities and between different systems of care, operating on multiple levels ranging from local to international efforts. The remainder of this report will highlight different dimensions of a coordinated response and identify challenges and successes in preventing sexual exploitation and abuse of migrating children.

Economic Growth and Development

A key imperative for governments is to address the larger economic context promoting the co-occurrence of migration and sexual exploitation of youth.[68] As noted throughout this report, a primary reason children migrate is to pursue employment opportunities in larger cities. The correlation between rural to urban migration and increasing economic well-being is illustrated by the fact that an estimated 75 percent of the world's poor reside in rural areas; the incidence of severe poverty is greater in rural than in urban communities.[69] Investing in government and nongovernment initiatives to promote economic growth in rural communities will benefit youth as well as overall national economies.[70] In turn, greater economic opportunities in local communities

can lead to less youth migrating for employment reasons and thus reduce their risk for sexual exploitation and abuse.

Organizations such as the World Bank and the International Labour Office have identified several initiatives around the world that generate overall improvements in rural employment opportunities and focus on particularly vulnerable populations such as women and youth.[71] In West Africa, for instance, the nongovernmental organization Songhai uses training and research centers to develop agricultural, agribusiness, and handicraft entrepreneurship in rural areas. The organization started as a national initiative in Benin but has expanded to other countries including Nigeria, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.[72] Linking activities of nonprofits such as this with national and international policymakers can serve to disseminate successful practices to a wider audience, potentially leading to the scaling up of best practices related to economic growth and development and improved access to employment for youth.

Access to Education

The links between child labor, school dropout, child migration, and sexual exploitation are clear.[73] Thus, improving youth employment opportunities must not come at the expense of children's education.[74] Ensuring universal access to quality safe education is fundamental for ending sexual exploitation of children. A substantial body of data suggests that while access to basic education has improved,[75] there are many factors that make school completion challenging for youth and families. For instance, a study in Bangladesh found that, because of indirect or "hidden" costs such as books and lunch, allegedly "free" education was financially dif-
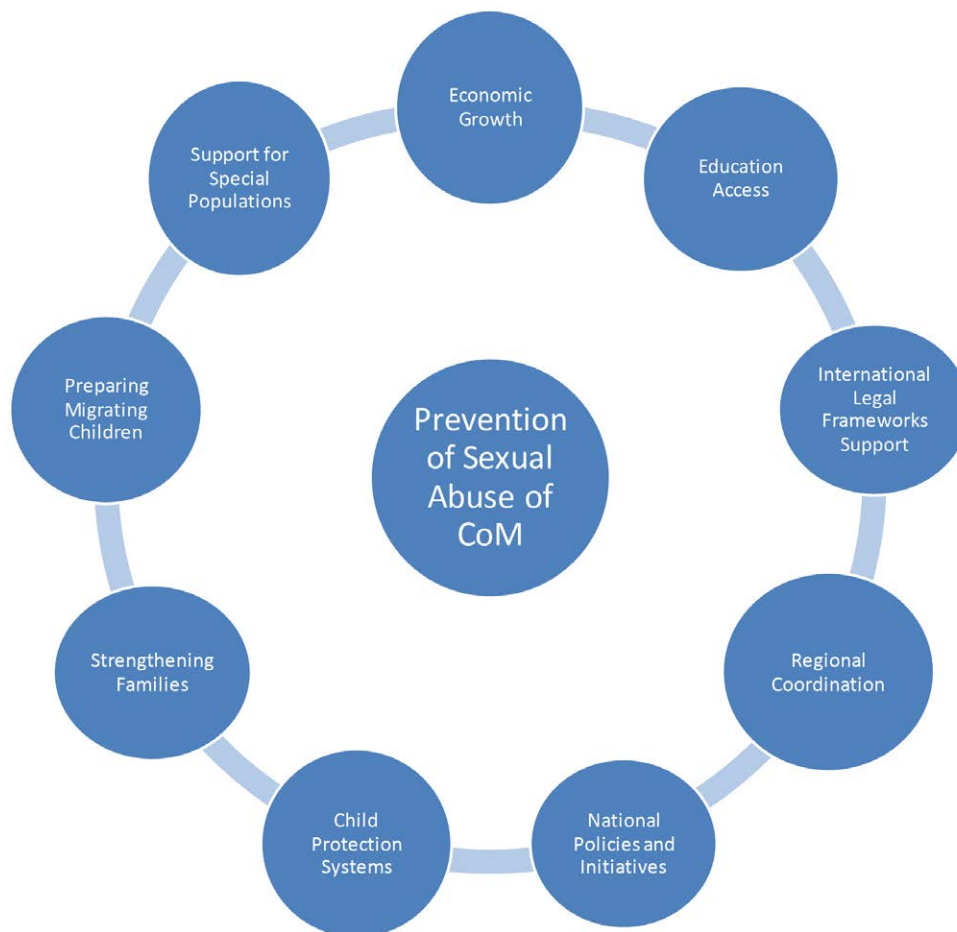
Economic
Growth

Support for
Special
Populations

Education
Access

Preparing
Migrating
Children

Prevention
of Sexual
Abuse of
CoM

International
Legal
Frameworks
Support

Strengthening
Families

Regional
Coordination

Child
Protection
Systems

National
Policies and
Initiatives

Figure 2.3: Children on the move need coordinated responses for protection

ficult for families. The distance and time to get to school were also factors driving families to pull children out of school, particularly in rural areas where youth were needed during harvesting seasons.[76] As noted earlier, the benefits of girls' education in particular are often questioned due to cultural attitudes and norms.

Ensuring that children engage in education requires measures that go beyond the availability of schools. Changes in family, community, and national attitudes towards the importance of education are essential.[77] A

pilot program in rural Ethiopia exemplifies a program that engaged in community awareness building to alter traditional practices. Along with financial incentives to encourage families not to marry off their daughters, the *Berhane Hewan* project (2004-2006) engaged in bimonthly neighborhood meetings with members of the community to discuss the importance of education and the harmful effects of child marriage.[78] Similar programs are being recommended to address child marriage among Syrian refugees.[79]

Another promising strategy is to develop partnerships among government, labor in-

dustries, and local communities communicating a unified message: that an educated and skilled workforce obtained by completing children's educations will ultimately be of greater benefit to the economy than shorter-term gains achieved through child labor.[80] The Community-based Innovations to Reduce Child Labor through Education (CIRCLE) project has found innovative ways to target and provide support for some of the most at-risk youth. In Mali, the ENDA project funded the establishment of schools and literary centers in rural areas for children who worked in the rice fields; these educational opportunities facilitated the transition of youth to formal education institutions.[81]

As stated earlier, pursuit of educational opportunities is also a major reason some youth make the decision to migrate. In addition to improving education in rural areas to prevent migration, developing quality education opportunities at points of transition or migration destination is important. As discussed in the good practices case in response to the 2015-2016 flood of immigrant children, Germany has made a major effort to increase the number of teachers and to provide educational opportunities for child migrants. Funding vocational education such as apprenticeships and skills training programs can better link education with local labor-market demands and reduce vulnerability to sexual exploitation.[82] Developing quality education systems at points of transition is particularly important for youth migrating due to war and political conflict. *No Lost Generation* is an initiative launched in 2013 by UNICEF, UNHCR, Save the Children, World Vision, Mercy Corps, and other partners to address this issue. One of the primary goals of the initiative is to provide both formal and non-formal learning opportunities for the estimated 2.1 million

Syrian youth still in Syria and 700,000 Syrian refugee youth in other countries that are not in school.[83] In prolonged refugee crises such as this, education interventions cannot wait until children and families have achieved third-country resettlement or returned home. Additionally, these interventions can reduce the prevalence of child marriage and other forms of sexual exploitation of refugee youth.[84]

International Legal Frameworks

This learning review only touches on the international legal frameworks available to address child migration and sexual exploitation; the framing review provides greater detail. In addition to the Convention on the Rights of the Child,[85] child labor regulations and standards established by the International Labour Organization (ILO) with the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor and the Minimum Age Convention, as well as the UN Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (2000) have generated mechanisms to protect migrating children from sexual exploitation and abuse.[86] Most countries have signed and ratified these legal instruments, with a few exceptions.[87]

The exceptions can create great hardship and risk for migrant children, even when the law involved does not directly address sexual abuse. For example, as the Rohingya case points out, Malaysia, along with other countries in Southeast Asia, is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and so makes no distinction between economic migrants and asylum seekers.[88] Thus all Rohingya arriving in Malaysia are automatically detained until their cases are dealt with by UNHCR (a process that may take months),[89] and Rohingya youth

face the additional risks of sexual abuse that arise in overcrowded detention centers.

Even more variable, however, is the extent to which countries are in compliance with these standards, and to which domestic laws keep pace with international regulations. Research indicates a large disconnect between ratification and implementation; prevention and mitigation of sexual exploitation and abuse of children can only be achieved through multi-level buy-in and support.[90]

Regional Coordination

Child migration and sexual exploitation are phenomena that transcend national borders and require collaboration between countries on a regional level. It is important to take into consideration country-level specificities that impinge on the degree to which a pressure to migrate exists;[91] however, a siloed, country-level approach to prevention will not address both push and pull factors that motivate youth to cross national boundaries. Regional efforts can serve to address issues that arise at points of origin, transition, and destination that increase vulnerability of youth to sexual abuse.[92]

Coordination at the regional level includes the development and ratification of regional standards related to sexual exploitation. South Asia is one example of this, with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) ratifying the Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and the Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia in 2002.[93] This level of organization helps to codify standards across countries in the region, but also points to another characteristic of legislation pertaining to child welfare and

sexual exploitation – a siloed approach to dealing with the issues, as opposed to the development of an integrated response. Legal standards on trafficking typically focus on adults and fail to address child trafficking as a distinct issue that requires more coordination between legal, child protection, and development departments and competences.

Regional efforts vary greatly in terms of success, with challenges similar to those experienced in international efforts – failure to implement, operationalize, and enforce multi-country agreements at the national level. The work of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM), a forum on child migration that includes representatives from Central America, North America, and the Caribbean, illustrates some of these shortcomings. The RCM agenda focuses on three issues: migration policies, human rights, and migration and development.[94] Progress on protecting human rights of migrants in the region has gained little ground. Oral commitments by individual countries have not been backed by enforced human rights instruments or mechanisms by which these commitments can be operationalized. Indeed, analysts point to examples in the region of policies adopted by individual countries that directly contradict the RCM agenda.[95] Other regions of the world, such as Europe, have been more successful in using fora such as the European Union and the Council of Europe to fund regional-level programs to protect children from trafficking and abuse.[96] However, as the Serbia case notes, ensuring the safety of children crossing multiple borders requires much greater regional coordination among states focused on child migration in its entirety and not simply on trafficking.

National Policies and Initiatives

End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking (ECPAT) International identifies the development and ratification of national plans of action to combat sexual exploitation of children as an important step in securing the welfare of children on the move. Implementation of such plans varies widely.[97] In Africa, for instance, coordinated national-level responses are rare; few countries in the region have any national legislation related explicitly to sexual exploitation of children.[98] A major priority for the region is to strengthen legal frameworks nationally and regionally to be aligned with international standards.[99] Other countries have been more successful in this regard. In India, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights was established in 2007 after legislation passed in 2005.[100] The Commission is charged with producing and disseminating information on child rights, investigating complaints and violations, and reviewing existing policies and programs for implementation and effectiveness.[101] More recently, the Indian government's Ministry of Women and Child Development spearheaded the enactment of the 2012 Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.[102]

International support and guidance for national strategic plans is of critical importance to humanitarian intervention in the Syrian refugee crisis. UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration, in conjunction with other parties, recently developed and published regional and national responses addressing the needs of refugees migrating through Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan countries.[103] These plans include identifying the unique humanitarian needs and vulnerability of refugees in each country and developing concrete strategies directed at impinging on a variety of issues ranging from the provision of necessities such as food and shelter to outreach activities to enhance community support and acceptance of refugees.[104] Ensuring safe migration and protecting women and youth from sexual exploitation and abuse are also identified as national-level priorities.[105]

Child Protection Systems

Because of their marginalized status, children on the move often fall through the cracks of child protection systems.[106] There is a need for child protective services specifically designed for children on the move, as well as the extension of existing services to meet the distinctive needs of this population. While comprehensive systems of care are ideal, priority can be given to subgroups of children that are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation because of their specific circumstances. For example, one study in sub-Saharan Africa highlighted the need for more robust child protective services in border towns.[107] The highly transitory nature of migrating children in border towns increased the likelihood that local governments had an inadequate investment in and accountability for the well-being of migrating youth; at the same time, children in border towns are often on the cusp of either embarking on unsafe international migration or trying to find ways to return to their countries of origin.[108] The Serbia case criticizes the current Serbian model of decentralized child protection systems based in local municipalities, as being inadequate to the needs of children on the move for precisely these reasons. The individual circumstances of youth, combined with fragile local economies, lack of access to safe housing and education, and the presence of

unscrupulous employers, renders migrating children in border towns particularly at risk for exploitation and abuse.

The cases in this report also suggest that guardianship, a major tool for protection of unaccompanied minors, needs careful scrutiny. The Lesbos case points out the dysfunctionality of the current Greek system of giving the responsibility to the Public Prosecutor of Minors; the Serbia case calls for selecting independent guardians for minors. The description of Swedish practice highlights their work in recruiting independent guardians, although the system has experienced high-volume recent migration. An important factor in keeping children on the move safe is speed in delivering services and explaining options. The good practices case reports that one very positive aspect of the UK's multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs), local multi-agency bodies connecting the core services required for child protection, is that it reduces time waiting for social services, "and as a result, the time in which a child could go missing."

In more recent years, there has been increased attention to the potential for community-based child protection networks to play a role in overseeing the well-being of children on the move.[109] This approach emphasizes a bottom-up strategy to developing, implementing, and sustaining child protection efforts, with local community groups collaborating and linking with formal systems of care.[110] The rationale for such an approach is that for many contexts in which migrating children exist, such as armed conflict and refugee situations, local and national governments may be unable or unwilling to play a role in safeguarding these children.[111] One example of a successful bottom-up child protection system can be found in Southern

Sudan, where Save the Children Alliance facilitated the development of over 100 community-based child protection networks.[112] These local groups advocate for the rights of children in their communities, conduct trainings on child protection, and identify vulnerable children that need assistance.[113]

A rigorously coordinated, systems approach is also needed to protect children on the move.[114] The UNHCR's "Live, Learn and Play Safe" Initiative in Africa strives to address this issue with the implementation of more comprehensive services that address child protection and development.[115] In Ethiopia, for instance, UNHCR is working in collaboration with the Ethiopian Government's Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) to improve the access of refugee children to schools, health care, and the judicial system in the country. Cross-organization collaboration is being promoted with the development of a Child Protection Working Group that includes representatives from UNHCR, UNICEF, government agencies and local NGOs, and that meets monthly to address child protection issues.[116]

Concerted efforts are also being made to improve social services such as case management for youth living in refugee camps. Thanks to this initiative, the number of Best Interest Determination assessments conducted on behalf of unaccompanied and separated children has increased.[117] These assessments facilitate the identification of interventions that will best meet the children's individual needs and respond to their preferences or fears. They help children understand options for family reunification and develop plans to safely move onward beyond the camps. Work is also being done to create alternative living arrangements for unaccompanied youth. These interventions some-

times rely on institutionalization in group care facilities. By contrast, the "Live, Learn and Play Safe" Initiative promotes kinship care, foster care, and independent living options for youth, with social workers assigned to monitor the well-being of children in these care arrangements.[118]

Strengthening Families

Addressing family-level factors and dynamics that increase the risk of child migration and sexual exploitation is of critical importance. As discussed earlier, parental violence, abuse and neglect are commonly cited by youth as reasons inducing them to leave home.[119] Even if youth are migrating with parents and other family members, the strains generated by the migration experience can increase the risks of maladaptive family functioning and of abuse, as recent studies and the Lesbos case suggest.[120] Family-level and parenting interventions can be instrumental in preventing violence and promoting positive youth development.

Family strengthening interventions have been developed to meet the unique needs of at-risk families in low- and middle-income countries. Several such interventions have been effective in reducing harsh parenting and improving positive parent-child relationships.[121] Such interventions are critically important for families in refugee camps as well as after third country resettlement.[122] UNHCR has implemented positive parenting classes in group or individual family-level formats for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan.[123]

Preparing and Equipping Migrant Youth

While primary prevention efforts to curb the migratory pressures on youth represent a critical strategy to protect them from harm, many risk factors precipitating exposure of children on the move to sexual exploitation, such as armed conflict and poverty, will not disappear. Given that some children and youth will continue to be forced into migration, it is not realistic to focus exclusively on macrosystem levels to combat exploitation. Individual-level interventions targeting youth themselves can serve to reduce the risk of sexual abuse both in transit and when they reach their destinations.

Participatory research with children on the move has been a useful strategy for identifying opportunities for intervention. Youth are often ignorant about migration-related risks and about strategies for protecting themselves. In one study of migrating youth, only 20 percent of the sample knew what exploitation was; less than half felt they were adequately informed about dangers and risks such as trafficking and sexual violence, while 38 percent felt confident that they could protect themselves from these dangers.[124] Children themselves have recommended that they be provided with access to information about what to expect when they embark on international migration so that they are adequately prepared. Particular attention has been paid to educating youth about the documentation they should bring with them, including birth registration or identification papers, in order to facilitate access to a range of services, including education and employment opportunities in transit and at their final destination.[125] As the good practices case mentions in its discussion of Sweden, countries are tightening regulations to push back the high volume of migrant youth arrivals. Sweden has start-

ed requiring youth to show identification at the border and turning them back if they lack it. For children unable to get identity papers, such as the Rohingya, these measures will cause additional hardship and increase the likelihood of their being trafficked.

Another promising strategy is to promote and improve connections between children on the move and family/friends in the country of origin or at their final destination, as well as a related strategy of developing informal and formal peer networks among migrating youth. In one survey of youth, 100 percent thought that maintaining contact with family was "very important" when they were migrating, and they recommended that something as simple as creating a small phone book including numbers of contact people would be useful.[126] The Serbia case cites a recent study in which unaccompanied children on the move named local communities and ethnic and peer groups as key supports for their safe journey.

Upon arrival at their destination, many youth are isolated, a situation which increases the risk for their exploitation.[127] Improving young people's awareness of community groups and organizations designed to promote connections among migrating children helps to build social capital.[128] Recent initiatives have focused on utilizing information and digital technologies to support children on the move. Although access to mobile phones and other devices varies widely between children, in part related to differences between the child migrants and stages of migration or economic background, research suggests that overall mobile phone usage is on the rise.[129] These technologies are a promising way to help child migrants keep in contact with family and friends, obtain information about migration, and access services.[130]

Special Populations

More research, advocacy, and programming are needed to support particularly vulnerable groups of children on the move, such as those with disabilities. The World Health Organization estimates that persons with disabilities make up between 7 and 10 percent of the world's population.[131] Research indicates that youth with disabilities are 3.7 times more likely to be exposed to violence than those without such disabilities.[132] There is a dearth of quality data on the migration of individuals with disabilities,[133] data that are essential to promote a more comprehensive understanding of the needs of child migrants with disabilities.[134] Even less is known about sexual exploitation and abuse of children on the move with disabilities. The Women's Refugee Commission conducted fieldwork with displaced populations in seven countries. Their research revealed that women and girls with disabilities felt more vulnerable to gender-based violence than their peers without disabilities. They reported being abused in their own homes by family members, as well as being sexually exploited by community members.[135] Unfortunately, gender-based violence prevention and response programs often overlook individuals with disabilities.[136] More concerted outreach to migrating youth with disabilities is necessary; this population needs to be consciously addressed and included in generic CoM programs.[137]

Another marginalized population is comprised of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ) children on the move. As is the case for children with disabilities, there is a dearth of information on the number of LBGTIQ youth in transit and their experiences of sexual exploitation and abuse.[138] What is known is that LGBTIQ youth, whose migration is often prompted

by abuse and/or persecution in the home or community,[139] are at heightened risk of sexual exploitation and abuse throughout the migration process. The legal process for LGBTIQ youth trying to obtain asylum can be particularly challenging,[140] and qualitative research indicates that LGBTIQ youth face discrimination in places of resettlement and experience difficulties in securing housing and employment, all factors that increase vulnerability to exploitation.[141] The organization *Belong To* is an LGBT advocacy and services organization based in Ireland that has developed best practice guidelines for working with LGBTIQ youth on the move within their specialized Asylum Seekers and Refugees Project.[142] Overall, this project emphasizes the need for the development of networks between LGBTIQ and CoM experts and service organizations in order to provide specialized care that meets the unique needs of this population.[143]

CONCLUSION

This review has explored current knowledge about sexual abuse and exploitation of children on the move with special attention to factors that promote and precipitate enhanced risk for particular groups of children, both prior to the start of migration in a child's original or previous environment, during the different phases of the migration journey and then during arrival, resettlement, and integration. It documents the impact of available services as well as of immigration insecurity, power imbalances, socio-economic distress, absence of family care, and lack of viable survival options on the probability of exposure to sexual exploitation and abuse. Based on these precipitating vulnerabilities, the report identifies policies, practices, and strategies

that may be scalable for future interventions and institutional and legal reforms.

We are at a critical point in which the intersection of mass migration, global inequality, and child violence is increasingly under public scrutiny. There is overall a call for the integration of developmental and humanitarian perspectives when it comes to children on the move and greater focus on child protection in response to the sexual exploitation and abuse risks specific to the migration cycle. Development work building educational, skill training, and employment opportunities as well as incentives for developed country stakeholders to invest in such opportunities are important components in combating sexual exploitation and abuse of children on the move. Much works need to be done to combat harmful gender-based discrimination and violence on family, community, and national levels. Additionally, there are promising scalable individual and family-level interventions that can serve to prevent and mitigate the risk of sexual abuse. Ultimately, only a coordinated, multi-level response will effectively increase protective environments for young people at risk of exploitation and abuse and promote their healthy growth and development into adulthood, whether or not they migrate.

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