



MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT INITIATIVE

OUR WORK AND IMPACT



Save the Children

April 2022



An urgent global crisis

As the Ukraine Crisis once again reminds us, how we respond effectively to migration and displacement (M&D) is, and will continue to be, one of the defining challenges of the 21st century.

Child displacement is increasing dramatically. In 2020, conflict, violence, disorder and persecution forced at least 34.6 million children to move – out of a global displacement total of 82mn.¹ This has doubled in a decade and these trends will continue. Many of the top [global risks](#) foreseen by the World Economic Forum are drivers of further M&D, including climate change. In 2020, climate change displaced 10 million children, and by 2050, the [World Bank](#) estimates that at least 140 million people will move due to climate change alone.² For many, these moves aren't a short-term, one-off experience: millions of children have only ever known displacement.

Migration, particularly irregular migration, influences policies/contexts where Save the Children has programmatic and advocacy engagement. And whilst the numbers of irregular migrants are always difficult to estimate, it is clear that increasing numbers are children.

Save the Children's new Global Strategy hones in on the challenges posed to children by Conflict, Covid and Climate Change: all are substantial drivers of migration and displacement. M&D children are among those most impacted by inequality and discrimination, and we know, whether they are fleeing conflict, climate change, persecution or poverty, or whether they migrate willingly or under duress, children displaced or 'on the move' are acutely vulnerable. They struggle to access education and healthcare, and frequently face malnutrition and exploitation – with life-long impacts. We are witnessing growing opposition to migrants and the emergence of policies and practices aimed at restricting population movement, often to the detriment of children. Despite this, global M&D research, policymaking and programming often overlook children. Save the Children's Migrant and Displacement Initiative (MDI) exists to change that.

How we're tackling the M&D crisis

Placing children and youth at the heart of our response is a recognition not only of the disproportionate impact migration and displacement has on children, but also an essential component of any effective and sustainable 'solution'. The MDI explicitly focuses on migrant and displaced children, to help them get the support they need – now and in the future.

Our programmes, research and innovation work takes an agile, crosscutting approach to:

- 1 Strengthen and accelerate M&D knowledge, programmes and policies;
- 2 Develop tools and durable, scalable solutions to improve responses to M&D; and
- 3 Bring public, private and third sector partners together to tackle M&D.

This work influences policy and practice across Save the Children and other agencies to improve long-term outcomes for migrant and displaced children.

After five years in Save the Children's Programme Delivery ('Operations') function, MDI transitioned to Programme Quality and Impact (PQI) in January 2022. The Save the Children Movement is also embarking on a new and ambitious global strategy from 2022 to 2024. So, at this turning point, we wanted to share with colleagues and partners some of MDI's recent achievements and future plans.

We're proud of the impact we've delivered so far. But the growing and evolving nature of M&D means there's much more to do – throughout Save the Children and across multiple sectors. We look forward to working with you.

¹ UNHCR (2021) [Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2020](#)

² Save the Children (2021) [Walking into the Eye of the Storm: How the Climate Crisis is driving Child Migration and Displacement](#)

MDI Headlines³ (2017–21)

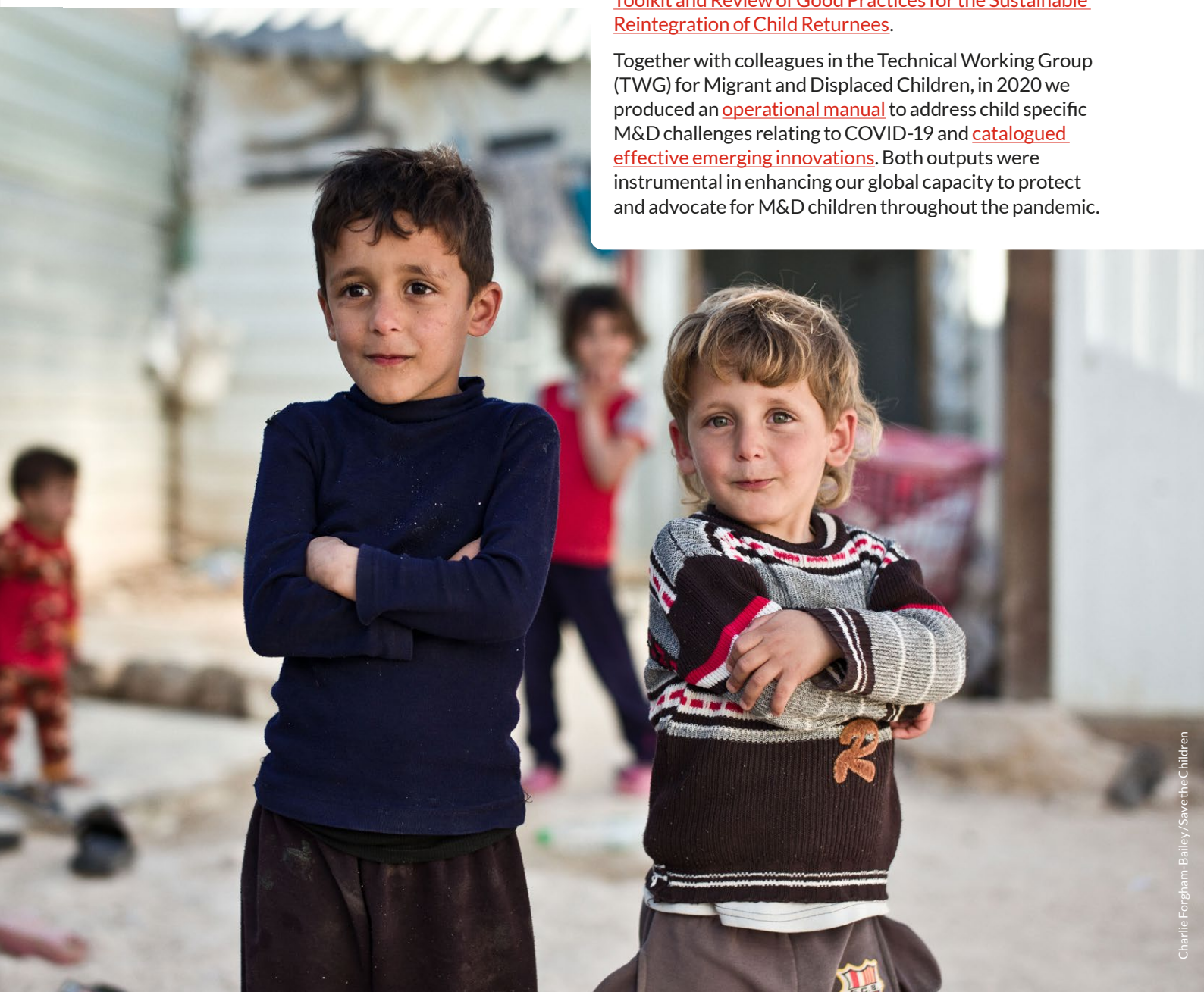
Programmes

Internally, we led the formation of regional M&D hubs in the Balkans and North Africa and supported similar processes in East/Southern Africa and LAC to greater strengthen our global M&D footprint and voice. We delivered programme design, policy, advocacy and technical support around various M&D issues, including [child detention, trends and programmatic responses to child return and reintegration](#)⁴. We provided technical support to a wide range of regional and national 'hotspots' and crises such as those in Northern Central America, Syria, Horn of Africa, Myanmar and Venezuela. We also helped develop and test a toolkit for counselling children on the move.

Our work influenced other global M&D frameworks that guide governments and agencies, including the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, and the Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration.

In 2019, we rolled out a groundbreaking [Durable Solutions for Children Toolkit](#), marking the first time that children were included as a core target of the influential Durable Solutions agenda. It marked an important step towards ensuring that children are at the heart of future displacement solutions. Recognising its relevance to *migrant* children, in 2021 the International Organization for Migration (IOM) incorporated substantial elements of the toolkit into its global [Monitoring Toolkit and Review of Good Practices for the Sustainable Reintegration of Child Returnees](#).

Together with colleagues in the Technical Working Group (TWG) for Migrant and Displaced Children, in 2020 we produced an [operational manual](#) to address child specific M&D challenges relating to COVID-19 and [catalogued effective emerging innovations](#). Both outputs were instrumental in enhancing our global capacity to protect and advocate for M&D children throughout the pandemic.



Charlie Forgham-Bailey/Save the Children

³ This section includes a snapshot of some key achievements/areas of focus between 2017 and 2021.

⁴ These links lead to documents internal to Save the Children International. For those external to the organisation, please feel free to reach out for access.

Research

Since our inception, the MDI has delivered a range of child focused M&D research initiatives centred on what we perceive to be high priority 'thought leadership' research topics.

Our research work are typically collaborative, informed by children, Save the Children colleagues and external experts, as well as other stakeholders. We share our findings and recommendations to deepen knowledge, drive forward key debates and produce practical guidance to improve responses to child M&D – and to build Save the Children's profile and evidence base in the M&D space.

Our research projects include:

Climate Change and Child Displacement (2021) takes a closer look at the intersection between climate change and child M&D, and clearly demonstrates that the climate crisis is already driving widespread and increasingly risky child migration. Its findings, informed by 230 children from 5 countries and 125 experts, will shape M&D programming in this growing area of concern.

COVID's Educational Time Bomb: Out of school children global snapshot (2021) investigates who is out of school due to the COVID-19 pandemic, how and why through a Rapid Assessment conducted in 6 countries with Save the Children's Safe Back to School (SB2S) initiative. Phase 2 will provide a 'deep dive' in Malawi and Peru to improve understanding of the problem and concurrently test the effectiveness of different measurement tools to improve real time data collection.

Why Children Stay⁵ (2018–2022) examines children's M&D decision-making in insecure areas of Sub-Saharan Africa and Central American contexts. Unlike most studies, our research focus not on those who leave, but those – the vast majority – who choose to *stay*. The study highlights that most children would prefer to remain with their kith and kin if and when they feel that their life aspirations can be realised at home.

Digital Safeguarding for Migrating and Displaced Children (2020) provides an overview of the current context and trends in the digital child-safeguarding realm, looking at potential risks, opportunities and practical next steps. This study is a key catalyst in accelerating Save the Children's internal prioritisation of Digital Child Safeguarding.

Achieving Durable Solutions for Returnee Children (2019) offers a comparative child-focused analysis of reintegration conditions across four priority returns contexts: Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria, which captures the difficulties returning children face in accessing basic services and realising their rights.

Displaced Children and Emerging Technologies (2019) identifies key new technologies in the M&D space and outlines the risks and benefits for child M&D policies and programmes.

The Journey from Child Migration to Child Trafficking (forthcoming in 2022) looks at the exploitation risks faced by children migrating from the Horn of Africa – and focuses in particular on the relationship between child smuggling and trafficking.



Innovation

Existing capacity and funding is insufficient in addressing the scale of the M&D challenge, thus placing a premium on identifying cost-effective and scalable innovative solutions. The innovation pillar is a core part of MDI's work, and we collaborate with numerous creative partners in our mission to develop and test new tools and solutions. These include:

Predictive Displacement: Harnessing the power of data to transform support to displaced children

Poor-quality data around displacement trends makes it difficult to anticipate and appropriately address people's needs. Consequently, governments and agencies often prioritise responding to short-term rather than prolonged crises, despite the fact that 76% of refugee crises last 5 years or more⁶. Such inefficient allocation of resources has a dramatic, negative impact on the lives of displaced children.

Predictive analytics are a potential game changer, enabling aid agencies, governments, donors and partners to make better-informed decisions, deliver more sustainable responses, target support to children more effectively and make evidence-based cases for the funds and support needed to save children's lives.

Since 2019, our pioneering [Predictive Displacement](#) project has used cutting-edge data analytics to predict mass displacement in granular detail, such as the groups of people expected to be involved, where they are likely to move, when and for how long. This level of empirical detail will help inform decisions around child displacement and shape more targeted responses.

In 2021, we further developed this project by:

- Developing machine-learning models to predict international refugee trends over multiple years
- Trialling agent-based models that build the big picture from small-scale behavioural and decision-making patterns, an approach that crucially can track internal as well as cross-border displacement
- Initiating a game-changing academic collaboration that uses satellite data to detect levels of infrastructure damage – a good predictor of displacement – which could generate invaluable information for humanitarian actors
- Deepening our partnerships with academics, notably the University of Virginia and Brunel University, to access world-class expertise in predictive analytics, research and development



Jonathan Hyams / Save the Children

Bloom: Transforming the lives of displaced and host community youth, through holistic and innovative entrepreneurial support

Of the 82 million people globally displaced, it is estimated that over 10 million are youth who have little to no access to employment and entrepreneurial opportunities and lack the requisite resources, networks and learning to be successful. To address this clear need, Bloom provides displacement-affected youth with access to basic business training, bespoke professional mentorship, peer-to-peer networks and substantial start-up capital through novel avenues for funding.

[Bloom](#) is unique for not only the substantial and holistic entrepreneurial support that it provides, but also its ability to leverage *alternative* channels for capital beyond humanitarian aid, including crowdfunding – a previously untapped funding resource with significant transformative potential. Bloom's approach is scalable and gender-sensitive, with a focus on building harmony and reconciliation through supporting the livelihoods of both displaced youth *and* those in the communities that host them.

In 2021, Bloom's pilot cohort in Lebanon completed its training, produced substantial business plans, and are now running enterprises in their communities.

⁶ UNHCR (2021) [Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2020](#)

Learning Tree: A scalable child- and teacher-facing application to access learning content anywhere, any time

M&D children often lack access to educational resources, undermining their present and their future. Designed in collaboration between MDI and the Save the Children U.S. Return to Learning team, [Learning Tree](#) is our solution to tackling this education challenge. Learning Tree, which builds on existing tools, is a low-cost, scalable digital platform that makes tailored, child-facing educational content and teacher-facing professional development material accessible anywhere, any time.

In 2021, working alongside SB2S colleagues, our Learning Tree pilot in Pakistan and Colombia reached hundreds of out of school children, including those in protracted displacement contexts. The team is currently developing plans to further scale up and expand Learning Tree.

Introducing Learning Tree on the Move – a groundbreaking approach to ensuring that children on the move have the life-changing opportunity to learn



Elena Heatherwick / Save the Children

[Learning Tree on the Move](#) orients the Learning Tree concept towards maintaining educational links for children *on the move*, introducing an innovative approach to providing education in emergencies to *mobile* populations. Providing essential services to communities undergoing intermittent, yet persistent, mobility has long posed a challenge to humanitarian practitioners, and as a result, millions of M&D children are denied the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Learning Tree on the Move addresses this challenge through a flexible, cost-efficient, and scalable mobile application, contextualised curriculum and educational content and an innovative delivery model along the displacement/migratory route. This visionary project has the potential to impact beyond education, creating an approach for service provision that serves mobile populations across numerous sectors and themes.



Chris de Bode / Save the Children



Looking ahead

While the MDI has made progress since inception, the ever-increasing scale and scope of child M&D demands that we not only continue to effectively leverage and scale up ongoing and existing work, but also identify new, cost effective, child-focused solutions.

Our core mission over the next three years is to play our part, from an M&D perspective, in ensuring that Save the Children delivers its ambitious Global Strategy. And, as the MDI transitions to PQI, we look forward to better embedding the M&D lens across our global portfolio whilst maintaining our agile and entrepreneurial approach of recent years.

We will continue to keep pace with innovations both technological and ‘no-tech’, and invest in sector-leading new research across all of our work streams. We will enhance our focus on climate driven child mobility and prioritise disaggregated data to deepen understanding of child M&D. We will work with and help coordinate existing M&D hubs, Thematic Groups and colleagues across the Movement to build a global Save the Children child M&D platform, to more effectively leverage our impact and resources and enhance our unique, global, child focused voice. And across all these areas of work, we shall step up our collaboration with advocacy partners to ensure that our learning and expertise helps better shape the policy environment.

Additional 22/24 objectives include⁷:

Programmes

- Providing technical and fundraising support to priority displacement and migration crises
- Continuing to roll out and expand our **child focused Durable Solutions** work
- Integrating **climate induced child M&D** analysis and approaches into our and our partner’s work
- Minimising COVID-19’s impact on M&D children with a particular focus on our collaboration with SB2S
- Improving our organisational capacity to identify/respond within M&D contexts to particularly vulnerable groups, with a focus on gender equality and disability inclusion

⁷ This section includes a snapshot of intended MDI activities/focus across Programmes, Innovation and Research, until the end of 2024. It is by no means an exhaustive list.

Research

- Examining the **impact of climate displacement on urbanisation** in small and intermediate cities and exploring how urbanisation can be developed into something inclusive, innovative and sustainable by amplifying refugees’ voices so that they are part of the solution
- Exploring the scale and impact of **being born in displacement** to highlight this issue, help prevent it, and provide guidance on how these children can access vital rights and protections
- Updating our **digital safeguarding** guidance in line with emerging technologies

Innovation

- **Sharing our Predictive Displacement model tools** and rolling them out across Save the Children and externally – the primary aim in 2022/23 is to ensure that the tool is relevant and is used practically in our country-based contexts
- Broadening the potential application of our infrastructure damage detection initiative and strengthening our private sector and academic partnerships
- Building on Learning Tree through the **launch of Learning Tree on the Move**, a tailored platform to facilitate continued education, even for repeatedly displaced children and those without access to teachers
- Scaling up Bloom, our youth livelihoods initiative, across a range of country contexts
- Developing a new innovation work stream, through, in part, a number of **M&D related Innovation Sprints**, linked to the M&D ‘intersect’ with our Strategic Goals, in Q2 2022
- If you’ve got a great idea, or you’re in a country office working on innovations relevant to M&D contexts, please get in touch



Victor Leiva / Save the Children

We'd love to hear from you

To find out more about our work or opportunities to collaborate, please get in touch.

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