

Data Inventory: Making Data Work for Children on the Move

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CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

Children are on the move today in increasing numbers. Some are displaced by violence and conflict, while others migrate on their own or with their families in search of better opportunities (see Box 1). Decision makers are not well positioned to target resources and design policies in ways that are responsive to what this vulnerable population needs because of persistent data gaps. Governments and implementing partners often lack basic statistics about where children on the move came from and where they live now, their sex and age, not to mention information on what they need or how effectively current programs are reaching them.

Improving data is central to achieving the goals set out by the Global Compacts for Migration and Refugees, and ensuring these efforts include children is vital. Initiatives like the joint call to action for better data for children on the move (COTM) and the recent launch of the International Data Alliance for COTM keep the focus on children. To inform these efforts, we have produced this data inventory as a practical reference guide for policymakers and practitioners working with COTM to identify information that may be relevant to their work, while being mindful of the strengths and limitations of the available data.

Although there are few data sources that explicitly or exclusively track this population, we examine in this paper whether and how decision makers might draw relevant insights on COTM from broader censuses, household surveys, and administrative data which are being adapted to better include people on the move, as well as new sources of data which may provide more timely and targeted information.

Specifically, we assess a wide range of data, including both official statistics and data collected by implementing organizations, to answer critical questions such as:

- Which data sources provide information on children on the move?
- To what extent are children visible in these data sources?
- How reliable are these data sources?
- What are the limitations of these data sources (e.g., timeliness, disaggregation, and coverage)?

The remainder of this paper is organized in three chapters: data to count children on the move (Chapter Two), data to highlight the needs and vulnerabilities of these children (Chapter Three), and data to connect resources to individual children in need (Chapter Four).

Box 1: Who are children on the move?

“Children on the Move” is an umbrella term, focused on the broad community of children moving within and between countries for a variety of reasons. The Inter-Agency Group on Children on the Move adopted the following definition:

“Those children moving for a variety of reasons, voluntarily or involuntarily, within or between countries, with or without their parents or other primary caregivers, and whose movement, while it may open up opportunities, might also place them at risk (or at an increased risk) of economic or sexual exploitation, abuse, neglect and violence” (Inter-Agency Group on Children on the Move, 2013).

However, no authoritative definition exists on which specific groups of children should be counted as COTM. For the purposes of this study, we restricted our analysis to the following groups:

- Migrant children, both accompanied and unaccompanied
- Child refugees and asylum seekers
- Children internally displaced by conflict or violence
- Victims of child trafficking and child labor

Methodology

The information in this paper is drawn from desk research, key informant interviews, and a working group of representatives from organizations that work on issues relevant to children on the move. In addition to this paper, which identifies and assesses the data available on COTM, AidData also published a policy brief, “Overcoming Blindspots: Making Data Work for Children on the Move.” This brief draws on the same research but highlights overarching gaps and limitations in the data that organizations produce on COTM, as well as factors that limit uptake of data for COTM. We also outline actionable recommendations for steps that funders, governments, and implementing organizations can take to improve data for COTM in practice.

Between 2018 and 2019, AidData conducted a desk review of relevant literature, as well as key informant interviews in three countries and with representatives from the headquarters of international organizations that work with COTM. The goal of this research was to better understand the data landscape and the role data plays in decision making for COTM at both the country and international level. The research team chose Nigeria, Colombia, and Jordan as the focus countries for this study.

In identifying key informants for this research, we conducted desk research to identify potential interviewees at both the global level and in the three case study countries. We also used snowball sampling to identify additional interviewees. In total, we interviewed individuals from 74 organizations whose work involves research, policy, or project implementation involving COTM, including government ministries, intergovernmental organizations, funding partners, academics, and international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In late 2019, AidData also convened an advisory group with representatives from international organizations to present findings and recommendations from this study and ensure that recommendations align with the needs of organizations working on issues related to COTM.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Data to locate and count children on the move

How many children on the move are living in which locations at any given point in time? This deceptively simple question is surprisingly difficult for organizations working with children on the move to answer. In this chapter, we will identify the most commonly used sources of data to count COTM, both where they are and as they move, and assess the extent to which these sources are fit-for-purpose for organizations delivering programming to COTM. We will examine the extent to which children on the move can be identified within existing data sources and the limitations of this data in terms of coverage, timeliness, and disaggregation. Finally, we will also introduce some newer data sources and assess their potential to complement or supplement traditional data sources to fill gaps relevant to COTM programming.

2.1 Understanding the use cases for population and location data

Organizations working with children on the move request detailed and up-to-date population numbers more than any other data as a critical starting point for their programming (IASC Information Management Working Group, 2016). Decision makers use this population data for many purposes, including:

- Targeting the right locations to provide COTM with services and resources;
- Providing sufficient assistance to reach all children who need it;
- Ensuring assistance arrives in time; and
- Monitoring the implementation and impacts of efforts to assist COTM.

Despite the importance many decision makers attach to population data on COTM, much of the data currently available is insufficient to meet their needs. Even when groups such as migrants or refugees can be identified within broader data sources, age is often not available, leaving children invisible. Furthermore, many sources of data are based on estimates, lack sufficiently detailed location information, and are often out of date.

2.2 Data sources to count children on the move at the global level

No single organization is responsible for collecting data on all groups of COTM or in all countries. Instead, a variety of stakeholders, including government agencies, intergovernmental organizations, and local and international NGOs, collect data on broader populations. They do so through a combination of nationally representative censuses, targeted surveys, and administrative data focused on specific groups like migrants and refugees. This data feeds into global statistics that organizations like the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) compile to produce topline numbers on migrants, refugees, and other key populations (Sarzin, 2017).

The quality and comparability of the data that feed into these topline numbers varies greatly, given the heterogeneity of stakeholders, data collection methods, and definitions involved. Since many data sources do not disaggregate by age or include children only as part of a family unit, it can be difficult for organizations working specifically with children to identify them. In the rest of this section, we examine the primary data sources available to count and locate migrants, refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs), and victims of trafficking and child labor at the global level. Specifically, we assess the extent to which children are visible within this data and identify key issues that impact data quality and availability for these different groups.

2.2.1 Child migrants

UN DESA produces estimates on international migrant stock¹ in all countries every five years, broken down by age, sex, and country of origin (see Box 2). This data is sourced from national statistics offices and is typically based on censuses, population registers, or nationally representative surveys (UN DESA, 2017a). The UN DESA numbers are the most comprehensive data available on people who have crossed borders, in terms of geographic coverage (i.e., the number of countries for which data is available) and the availability of age disaggregation. However, the number of migrant children under 18 years of age, as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), cannot be specifically quantified, as the UN DESA data groups together youth ages 15-19 (IOM GMDAC, 2020). To provide more precise numbers on migrant children, UNICEF uses this data to produce estimates of the number of international migrants under the age of 18.²

Box 2: Flow versus stock data

Most information on the number of migrants and forcibly displaced people is based on stock data. As defined by the UN, stock data on migration refers to the number of people present in a given place during a given period, while flow data represents the number of people entering or leaving a given place during a given period (UN DESA, 2017b). For refugees and IDPs, flow data represents the number of people who enter or leave the population of refugees or IDPs in a given place during a given period (EGRIS, 2018).

Flow data is even more limited than stock data. People are more difficult to track as they move, and an individual's status can change over time (IOM, 2017), making data both more difficult to collect and keep up to date.

As of 2015, data on recent migration flows was only available for a quarter of all countries, mostly in the OECD, and this data was not disaggregated by either age or sex (IOM, 2017). Accurate estimates on flows for forcibly displaced populations like refugees or IDPs are more difficult to come by (Hughes et al., 2016), with most refugee and IDP flow statistics based on either changes in stock data from year to year¹ (IDMC, 2018) or the number of people recorded through administrative sources, such as asylum applications or border crossing records. These methods of measuring flows are likely to be inaccurate, because of both undercounting (i.e., changes in stock numbers don't account for returns and therefore underestimate new displacement) and double counting (i.e., the same individual may move multiple times) (ibid).

In the absence of more comprehensive flow data from governments, alternative methodologies are increasingly used to estimate flows. Many of these initiatives focus on specific displacement events rather than nationally comparable statistics, but can provide useful information for decision makers who need timely data to inform programming during situations of displacement. For example, flow monitoring surveys can estimate flows in near real time by monitoring movement through key locations (see section 2.3.2.1). New technologies like remote sensing and cell phone record analysis can also be used to estimate population flows, particularly after disasters (see section 2.3.3). As with other types of flow data, the ability to specifically identify and track children using these sources is limited.

¹ See data at <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/index.asp>.

² See data at <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/migration/>.

³ The [UN DESA International Migration Flows](#) dataset provides statistics on international migration flows in 45 countries, while the [OECD's International Migration Database](#) provides data primarily from OECD member countries (IOM, 2017).

2.2.2 Child refugees

UNHCR compiles global statistics on refugees⁴ broken down by host and origin countries. This data is updated twice a year for most countries (One Campaign, 2017) and is sourced from national governments where possible. Nonetheless, in practice, data on refugees is collected by non-government sources (primarily UNHCR and NGOs) in a majority of countries.⁵ Most of this data is based on registration counts;⁶ however, 13 percent of data on refugees was sourced from estimations as of 2014 (Sarzin, 2017).

Refugee numbers, particularly for people who have applied for asylum, are often considered by end users to be more accurate than data on other subpopulations of people on the move, given the greater likelihood of registration and legal protections for refugees. However, refugees living outside of camps are less likely to be counted in existing statistics in many settings (Sarzin, 2017). Furthermore, identifying children within this data is still challenging. As of 2015, age information was only available for 58 percent of refugees included in the UNHCR data, and 29 percent of countries hosting refugees had not provided UNHCR with reliable information on their age breakdown.⁷ This includes countries like Turkey and Iran, which host large numbers of refugees but provide no age-disaggregated information on these populations (UNICEF, 2016).

2.2.3 Internally displaced children

Global statistics on internally displaced people are compiled by UNHCR and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC).⁸ Individual registration is less common for IDPs (Sarzin, 2017); this data is therefore more often based on profiling via varied data collection methods (e.g., focus groups, household surveys, and key informant interviews). Access to IDP populations also tends to be more challenging than for other groups of COTM (ibid), as they often live in areas experiencing conflict.

Beyond data collection challenges, there are also definitional challenges in counting IDPs, particularly with regard to the end point of a displacement event (IDMC, 2018). For example, Colombia is consistently listed as one of the countries with the most IDPs. This number is sourced from the government's official registry of internally displaced people (Registro Único de Víctimas) and includes all people who fled their homes at any time during the civil war. However, the government has never updated this data to reflect those who are no longer displaced. As a result, the database is likely overestimating the number of internally displaced people in Colombia today (ibid).

Beyond these limitations, very little data is available on the age and subnational locations of IDPs (IDMC, 2019a). Age-disaggregated data is available for less than one-fourth of the IDPs reported by UNHCR (UNICEF, 2016) and for only 14 percent of countries with people displaced by conflict (IDMC, 2019b). UNICEF uses the underlying age structure of the national population to estimate numbers of IDP children for countries where age-disaggregated information is not available (Hansen, Beise & You, 2019). However, these estimates may not be reliable and may be prone to under- or over-estimation. For example, in Nigeria, children make up a greater percentage of IDPs than in the general population, but in Haiti children are a smaller share of IDPs (UNICEF, 2016).

⁴ See data at <http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview>.

⁵ In 2014, national governments were the exclusive source of UNHCR's data on refugees in 38 percent of the countries for which they have data. UNHCR was the sole source of data in 72 countries, with the rest provided by joint UNHCR/government efforts (15 percent) and NGOs and other organizations (13 percent) (Sarzin, 2017).

⁶ Registration data is drawn from information collected when refugees register with governments or organizations like UNHCR.

⁷ This means that age was provided for less than 50 percent of the refugees within the country.

⁸ UNHCR's IDP data includes only conflict-affected IDPs to whom UNHCR has offered protection or assistance (UNHCR website). IDMC's data includes IDPs who were displaced by violence and takes into account a broader range of sources when compiling statistics, such as media reports (IDMC, 2018).

2.2.4 Child laborers and trafficking victims

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) compiles global statistics on human trafficking, surveying governments to produce a biannual Global Report on Trafficking in Persons. The 2018 edition included data from 142 countries, with numbers disaggregated by both age and sex (UNODC, 2018). Nonetheless, the UNODC statistics are broken down by region, not country, and the data that informs the report is not released publicly. Additionally, the International Organization on Migration's (IOM) Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC) provides case-level data from counter-trafficking organizations in a centralized dataset with information on over 90,000 victims in 172 countries, disaggregated by age and sex.⁹

A major limitation of trafficking statistics is that they are only as strong as the underlying capabilities of governments and organizations to detect victims. In other words, differences in trafficking numbers over time and between countries may speak more to variability in detection capacity rather than changes in the prevalence of trafficking. Moreover, the demographics of reported victims are likely skewed by the reality that some forms of trafficking, such as sexual exploitation, are more likely to be detected than others (UNODC, 2018).

The International Labor Organization (ILO) compiles statistics on child labor, publishing a quadrennial report on the global prevalence of child labor that draws on country-level household surveys. The most recent report from 2017 included data on child labor from 105 household surveys, but availability varies across countries. No data is available for many countries with high levels of conflict. Many high-income countries have never collected data on child labor, and some middle-income countries have stopped collecting this data. The worst forms of child labor, like sexual exploitation and forced labor, are also difficult to capture through survey data (ILO, 2017).

Despite these limitations, statistics on human trafficking and child labor are based on common, internationally accepted definitions. Even given differing interpretations across countries, statistics on trafficking and child labor tend to be more consistent than some other statistics on COTM (Van Dijk et al., 2016; ILO, 2017).

2.3 Types of data used to count and locate children on the move at national and subnational levels

The global-level estimates of children on the move we discussed in Section 2.2 are only as reliable as the underlying national-level data upon which they draw. In this section, we enumerate and assess some common methods that countries are using to count and locate children on the move. These include traditional approaches often used by national statistics offices (e.g., censuses, surveys, and administrative data), flow monitoring data collected by intergovernmental organizations and NGOs, as well as a host of non-traditional methods that open up opportunities to partner with the private sector and academia (e.g., phone and internet data, remote sensing, and predictive analytics). In presenting an overview of these diverse data types, we will briefly discuss the trade-offs that decision makers face, such as timeliness versus representativeness, when using this data.

2.3.1 Censuses, household surveys, and administrative data to count children on the move

Censuses, household surveys, and administrative data are among the most commonly used sources of data for counting COTM. This data can provide relatively comparable statistics, which enable decision makers to track changes in COTM populations within and across countries over time. However, this data is collected infrequently, which reduces its utility for organizations attempting to deliver programming to COTM populations in real time. Migrants and forcibly displaced people are also difficult to consistently identify within these sources, and children even more so.

⁹ See data at <https://www.ctdatacollaborative.org/>.

2.3.1.1 Census data

Population and housing censuses are the most comprehensive source of data available on migrants in most countries, but they are often less useful for identifying refugees or IDPs (Sarzin, 2017). Eighty percent of census questionnaires for the most recent census round included a question on place of birth, which allows migrants to be identified. Nevertheless, only a small percentage of the censuses included questions to specifically identify internal migrants or forcibly displaced people.¹⁰ Moreover, it is often not possible to distinguish between long-term and more recent migrants in available census data, as only 50 percent of censuses during the most recent round included a question on year of arrival (Juran & Snow, 2017).

UN DESA (2017b) and the Global Compact for Migration encourage the greater integration of questions on migration and displacement in censuses. Nonetheless, censuses remain prohibitively expensive to conduct at the high level of frequency that would be needed to produce near real-time data to support day-to-day targeting and monitoring of programming for displaced populations (UNICEF, 2016; Laczko & Rango, 2014).

Another important consideration is that COTM populations are at a higher likelihood of being under-represented and thus invisible in the context of traditional censuses. For example, displaced people often reside in locations disproportionately affected by conflict and resource constraints, which may make conducting a census less feasible for enumerators. (Sarzin, 2017). As a case in point: of the ten countries with the highest number of people internally displaced by conflict in 2018, only two had conducted a census in the last ten years, and several had not conducted a census in over 30 years.¹¹

Despite these limitations, censuses often provide the only regularly collected, nationally representative source of population data on migrants and displaced people. Censuses also generally provide better data on children than other surveys, since they include information on each household member (Castaldo et al., 2009). Nevertheless, our population of interest in this data inventory, children on the move, remains difficult to identify.

2.3.1.2 Representative household surveys

Nationally representative surveys are often conducted more frequently than censuses and allow for more detailed questions to be posed to help identify migrant or displaced populations (see Chapter 3). Nonetheless, most surveys do not presently provide sufficient information for implementers or policymakers to quantify the number of children on the move in a particular location.

Most commonly administered surveys that collect data on children, like Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) or Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), still do not provide enough information for migrants or displaced people to be consistently identified. Many fielded surveys do not include questions on migration status. Another constraint is sample size: non-migration specific surveys often lack a large enough representative sample to reliably quantify the total number of migrants or displaced people (Sarzin, 2017). Moreover, groups like irregular migrants and IDPs are often left out of the sampling frame altogether and are thus invisible in the resulting data (IDMC, 2018).

Even in migration-specific surveys, displaced and migrant children are frequently uncounted, as these surveys are not administered to all members of a household and the age criteria for participation varies. Furthermore, it is often impossible to distinguish between a parent and child's migration status (Castaldo et al., 2009).

¹⁰ An analysis by Statistics Norway of 150 questionnaires used during the 2010 round found that only 17% included questions on internal migration and just 7% included questions on forced displacement (UNICEF, 2016; International Conference on Refugee Statistics, 2015).

¹¹ The Democratic Republic of Congo last conducted a census in 1984, Afghanistan in 1979, and Somalia in 1975.

2.3.1.3 Administrative data

Administrative data (e.g., registries, border statistics, and service delivery records) provide an alternative source of data on children on the move to supplement censuses and surveys. This data is collected by inter-governmental organizations like UNHCR, government agencies, international NGOs, local civil society organizations, and front-line service providers. Unlike censuses and surveys, administrative data can be updated in near real-time. Since it has already been collected to serve particular administrative needs, this data can provide additional information at relatively low cost and effort.

A wide variety of administrative sources are used to gather data on children on the move. Registration databases provide the majority of data on refugees, such as those managed by UNHCR. Data on administrative procedures, such as the issuance of residence permits or applications for asylum, is frequently used to estimate the number of migrants or asylum seekers. Population registers and border crossing data can serve as further sources of information in some countries (Sarzin, 2017; Hughes et al., 2016). For certain populations, like refugees and asylum seekers, migration-specific administrative data (such as registries and asylum applications) can provide a reasonably good estimate of the numbers in a particular location. However, many gaps limit the reliability of these administrative data sources. For example, they often do not account for changes in status, such as applying for citizenship (Hughes et al., 2016).

Non-migration specific administrative data sources (e.g., population registers and education databases) frequently do not allow for identification by migration status. Moreover, these sources are often not comprehensive, covering only the portion of the population who are formally registered or receiving services (Hughes et al., 2016). This likely excludes many COTM who may be unwilling to register or unable to access services for various reasons.

While many administrative databases collect specific information on age and other characteristics, these sources may not identify children separately from their family unit. Even when age is available, it is not always reported to national statistics offices, contributing to a frequent inability to identify children within broader populations of people on the move. More broadly, administrative data is often inaccessible to people outside of the specific organization in question, meaning this data may not be fully analyzed or put to use by decision makers.

2.3.2 Subnational and site-specific data for counting children on the move

Given the inherent limitations of using traditional data sources (e.g., censuses, surveys, and administrative data) in quickly evolving migration or displacement situations, governments and organizations are conducting their own site-specific data collection to inform their targeting and programming. While this data may provide more timely snapshots of specific population numbers and movements, its geographic coverage is often limited to specific hotspots or displacement situations.

2.3.2.1 Site-specific data and flow monitoring

Governments and organizations use multiple methods—site-specific surveys, interviews, focus groups—to collect supplemental data to inform their programming. For example, Terre des Hommes operates “hope points” in Nigeria, locations where migrant children are provided services and advice, and makes use of these sites to collect data on population numbers and demographics of child migrants living or transiting through the area. However, this type of data is often not shared beyond the organization in question.

Even if organizations do share their data, they often use inconsistent methodologies or definitions, which makes the data less comparable and more difficult to use for outside actors. Similarly, the extent to which groups like refugees and migrants or children can be identified within these organizations’ collected data varies significantly. Nevertheless, some organizations have started collecting data in a more standardized way across displacement settings. IOM has been particularly active in developing data products to measure populations of migrants and internally displaced people, including both people who are settled in specific locations and those who are currently on the move.

Children on the Move Data Inventory

For example, IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) system uses a variety of tools and methodologies to measure and track displaced populations (see Box 3). Two key components are most commonly relied on for population numbers: mobility tracking (which provides estimates of a population of interest in a defined area, such as a camp for displaced people or a particular administrative area) and flow monitoring (which estimates the number of individuals who travel through a certain area).

Some of the data collected is publicly available, and even the data that is not public can often be accessed by organizations working with the populations in question or by the public as topline population aggregates. DTM population data in some displacement settings can be disaggregated by age, although the availability of data by age and the specific age categories used tends to vary widely. The frequency with which data is released also varies across settings but is considered more timely than most other sources, with data released weekly in some locations like northern Nigeria.

While IOM is the largest producer of site-specific and flow data on displaced populations, other organizations collect similar information. UNHCR tracks IDP population movement in some emergency situations through the UN's Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Population Movement Tracking system. Through this system, UNHCR identifies and trains local NGOs to monitor key locations such as IDP settlements, bus stations, and roads to report on movements (Sarzin, 2017). However, the data collected does not record individual movement but rather is intended to show trends in new population movement. Similar to the DTM, the availability of data disaggregated by age is very inconsistent across countries.

Box 3: IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix

IOM uses the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) to collect and analyze data on migrants and displaced populations, from tracking where they are located and their movement patterns, to understanding their needs and vulnerabilities.

Data is collected through a variety of modules, using methods that include key informant interviews, surveys, and registration. The modules can be mixed and matched, depending on the local context, needs, and available funding, and can be adapted to changing situations. Data produced through this system is also available in a variety of forms, both as raw data and through regularly updated reports and visualizations. In some displacement situations, information can be released as often as weekly through Emergency Tracking Tool reports. Access to raw data, however, varies by country and the specific data product.

Since 2017, IOM has worked with the Child Protection Area of Responsibility and the Global Education Cluster to better incorporate data on child protection through the DTM for Children on the Move project (Child Protection Area of Responsibility, 2019). The specific information collected on children through the DTM depends on the local context, but can include demographics, shelter types, and access to services, like health, education, water and sanitation, and nutrition. Data can also be used to identify child protection hotspots.

2.3.3 Innovative sources and new technologies for counting children on the move

In recent years, a number of promising initiatives have shown how policymakers and implementers can leverage information and communication technologies to better estimate population size and movement. While many of these initiatives have not moved beyond the pilot stage or have been primarily used for research rather than programming, we provide a brief overview of some of these tools here, given their potential to provide timely information on vulnerable populations that may not be readily available from traditional data sources. That said, we acknowledge that children also tend to be much more difficult to specifically identify through these sources of data compared to other sources discussed previously.

2.3.3.1 Phone and internet data

In recent years, the use of cell phone data to track population movement has increased greatly. Data from call detail records (CDRs) has been used to track general mobility patterns as well as population movements following natural disasters in places such as Nepal, Haiti, and New Zealand (Bengtsson et al., 2011; Wilson et al., 2016; Statistics New Zealand, 2012). This data can provide near real-time insights on how many people are moving where and the rate at which they return to affected areas, allowing emergency responders to more effectively position resources and monitor recovery (Digital Impact Alliance & Flowminder, 2019).

Similarly, pilot projects have used geo-referenced data on internet use (e.g., web searches and website logins) and social media activity to estimate population movements. For example, Spyrtatos et al. (2019) used data from Facebook's advertising platform to record the increase in Venezuelan migrants in Colombia and Spain in 2018.

Although phone and internet data can often provide much more timely information on population movements than data from other sources, significant limitations restrict the uptake of this data in day-to-day decision making outside of post-disaster humanitarian response. Cell phone and internet data tends to underrepresent certain socio-demographic groups, including children. (Digital Impact Alliance & Flowminder, 2019). Identifying specific subgroups within broader populations on the move using phone and internet data is also difficult, as children and groups like refugees or IDPs are not easily differentiated from broader population flows. Furthermore, this data is often proprietary and not easily accessible, especially given privacy concerns surrounding personally identifiable data. Its volume and complexity also prove challenging (Laczko & Rango, 2014), making it difficult for decision makers to analyze and act quickly on information derived from this data.

2.3.3.2 Remote sensing

Remote sensing data, like that obtained from satellite images or drones, has similarly been used to track population size and movement among displaced populations. Researchers have used satellite images and deep learning methods to estimate growth over time in refugee camp populations (Quinn et al., 2018; Fureder et al., 2014) and the territorial expansion and build-up of refugee camps (Hassan et al., 2018; Rossi et al., 2019). In Nigeria, meanwhile, Vaccination Tracking System (VTS) data provides up-to-date population estimates in parts of the country that are difficult to access, helping decision makers understand movement patterns and preposition resources (see Box 4).

Box 4: Using vaccination data to track displaced populations in Nigeria

Reliable population data is hard to come by in Nigeria, where the last census was carried out in 2006. Since then, high population growth and extensive displacement have rendered this data unreliable. However, decision makers are able to derive up-to-date population estimates in northern Nigeria with the help of satellite data and GPS-derived estimates from the Vaccination Tracking System (VTS). UNICEF has worked with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to physically analyze high-resolution satellite images and develop subnational estimates of population. These estimates are constantly refined by on-the-ground vaccination teams that use GPS-enabled cell phones to locate unvaccinated children, at the same time providing up-to-date information on where people have moved. This data is used to predict fresh displacement, particularly in areas that are currently physically inaccessible, and allocate and position resources based on changing population levels.

2.3.3.3 Predictive analytics

While the above examples primarily use data to quantify movement that has already happened, a number of organizations are trying to leverage statistical techniques to predict future movement. These predictive analytics models identify drivers of migration and make use of existing data on indicators like conflict, weather, and urbanization to anticipate future displacement. Most of these efforts are still in the pilot stages, so have not yet been used to inform programming. The goal of these projects, however, is to help organizations better plan and allocate resources, enabling them to respond to future population movements in a more timely and efficient manner.

Several examples include:

- UNHCR's Project Jetson, which developed a model to predict the movement of displaced populations in Somalia;¹²
- IBM and the Danish Refugee Council, who developed the Mixed Migration Foresight (MM4Sight) app to predict migration flows from Ethiopia to six target countries;¹³
- Save the Children and the Boston Consulting Group, who developed a prototype tool to predict the duration and scale of forced displacement in multiple countries where Save the Children currently works (Kaplan & Morgan, 2018); and
- The British Red Cross and the University of Leiden Centre for Innovation, who developed models to anticipate refugee flows in Europe one day in advance based on UNHCR data (IOM & McKinsey, 2018)

While the above projects do not specifically target children, some organizations are trying to make sure their models take children into account. Save the Children, for example, is working to incorporate age-disaggregated data into future iterations of their model. UNHCR is also in the process of developing a predictive analytics tool to identify unaccompanied and separated children in Europe.

¹² <http://jetson.unhcr.org/>

¹³ <https://www.ibm.org/initiatives/impact-grants/ig-2>

Box 5: Focus on child trafficking and child labor

Trafficking

Most data on trafficking comes from administrative records, such as police and NGO case registers. However, these numbers only include detected victims and so do not capture the true prevalence of trafficking. Despite an increase in reported victims in recent years, changes in case numbers over time may reflect policy changes or improved detection capacity rather than changes in the underlying number of trafficking victims. Detection capacity also varies greatly across countries and regions, making it difficult to reliably compare trafficking prevalence (UNODC, 2018).

Some types of trafficking are also more likely to be detected than others, potentially skewing the reported demographics of trafficking victims. Women and girls make up a large majority of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. Since this type of trafficking is more likely to be detected than trafficking for labor, male victims may be underrepresented in some countries (Eurostat, 2015). Similarly, recent research suggests that child trafficking victims may be harder to detect than adults (UNODC, 2018).

Most trafficking data includes information on sex and whether the victim is a minor, but the availability of more detailed disaggregation varies, limiting its use to inform policy and programming. For example, Eurostat compiles statistics on trafficking in Europe, using common indicators and levels of disaggregation, but not all countries are able to provide the level of detail requested. Only 17 of 28 EU member states were able to provide detailed age information on reported victims, and even fewer states provided information on the means of recruitment or types of assistance received (Eurostat, 2015).

Because of the limitations of case data, quantifying the overall prevalence of trafficking requires different approaches. Information on trafficking is difficult to capture through surveys because of stigmatization and the criminal nature of trafficking (ILO, 2012).

Multiple Systems Estimation (MSE) has been used to estimate the total population of trafficking victims in a country, including unreported victims, based on the number of individuals who are recorded in multiple data systems. In the Netherlands, researchers estimated the true number of trafficking victims was four to five times higher than the number of detected victims (Van Dijk et al., 2016). This methodology has since been replicated in several European countries but requires multiple sources of data on trafficking from NGOs or the government, limiting its potential implementation (UNODC, 2018).

Child labor

Several commonly fielded surveys provide data on child labor at the country level. MICS and DHS surveys include a common child labor module that captures information on the type of work, hours, and working conditions of children in surveyed households. ILO works with national statistics offices to conduct Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC) surveys, either as a stand-alone household survey on child labor or as a module in other household surveys. Many labor force surveys also include questions on child labor. Although the data from these surveys is comprehensive, the number of countries where data is collected on child labor is limited and surveys are not carried out frequently (ILO, 2017).

Data on sexual exploitation and forced labor is bound by similar limitations as data on trafficking. Stigma and the criminal nature of these activities inhibit reporting, and the small number of victims compared to the total population requires special sampling methods (ILO, 2012). Despite these challenges, ILO and the Walk Free foundation (2017) have produced global estimates of forced labor, using surveys from 48 countries as well as administrative data on trafficking victims assisted by IOM to estimate the prevalence of forced labor and the number of child victims. In 2018, the ILO also published common guidelines to measure forced labor, promoting more standardized definitions and concepts (ILO, 2018).

2.4 Concluding Thoughts

For organizations to reach children on the move, they need to know who these children are and where they are located. In this chapter, we have seen that although many data sources exist to measure and track the movement of migrants and displaced people, this data is not always well-aligned with what decision makers need. Children cannot be identified in many data sources. When they are counted, geographic coverage tends to be poor and data is often out of date. Despite these limitations, new sources of data and initiatives to better identify COTM within existing data provide concrete examples of how data producers are attempting to improve the status quo.

Now that we have a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of existing data to count children on the move, we turn to the question of what these children need. In Chapter 3, we assess the extent to which available data provides policymakers with sufficient information to design and target programs that respond to the needs and specific vulnerabilities of COTM.

CHAPTER THREE

3. Data to determine what children on the move need

Governments and organizations need to know not only where COTM live but also what these children need, in order to design policies and target programs that benefit them. Decision makers require disaggregated demographic data (e.g., age, sex, disability, level of education, national origin, and migration status), as well as information on how resource levels and outcomes vary, to understand the vulnerabilities and needs of different groups of COTM. In this chapter, we will identify data sources that shed light on the vulnerabilities and needs of COTM, as well as assess the extent to which this information is sufficient to inform policy decisions and direct resources.

3.1 Understanding the use cases for needs and vulnerability data

The majority of the very limited information available on the specific needs and vulnerabilities of COTM is based on qualitative studies of children's experiences rather than readily comparable quantitative data (Hansen et al., 2019). Most data sources lack even basic disaggregation by age and sex, which limits understanding of how COTM's needs vary across these demographic attributes (UNICEF, 2016).

Having better data on what potential beneficiaries need would help decision makers:

- Identify critical needs and prioritize interventions;
- Ensure the right kind of assistance goes to the groups that need it;
- Inform more targeted policy and interventions; and
- Adapt programming as needs evolve.

3.2 Data sources to identify the needs of children on the move

The limited statistics produced on the needs of COTM at the global level rely on many assumptions and estimations to fill gaps in available evidence. As a result, our understanding of these needs and vulnerabilities relies largely on data produced at the local and national levels. The extent to which these local sources—from censuses and household surveys to administrative registers—can be relied on to clearly and consistently identify COTM-specific information varies greatly by country. Notably, one-off data collection exercises carried out by implementing organizations are the most commonly used sources of data for programming related to COTM.

3.2.1 Censuses and household surveys

Household surveys and censuses provide rich demographic data unavailable in most other sources. When children on the move can be identified, this data allows for analysis by their age, displacement status, and national background, and supplies information on the impact of migration and displacement on children (UNICEF, 2017). Living Standards Measurement Surveys (LSMS) and DHS include many topics, such as health, education, and child labor, that are highly relevant to understanding differential outcomes and experiences (Castaldo et al., 2009).

Although household surveys are highly prized by people working with COTM, per our interviews, they often cannot be used in programming for these populations in practice. As discussed in Chapter 2, migrants and displaced people are invisible in most surveys or present in insufficient numbers to draw conclusions. Moreover, large-scale surveys are costly and carried out infrequently. Even when data is available, the information may not be timely enough to inform real time decision-making. Despite these limitations, growing efforts to more effectively incorporate migrant and displaced people, including children, in censuses and household surveys are welcome.

One avenue to improve COTM data through surveys is through more intentionally incorporating questions or modules on migration status within existing instruments, while also ensuring that sampling frame designs effectively capture this vulnerable population. One notable example is Jordan's 2017-2018 Household Expenditure and Income

Survey, which provided invaluable information on poverty and living standards among refugees in the country through adjusting the sampling design to incorporate mobile populations (World Bank, 2018).¹⁴

Although the number of censuses that include questions on migration or displacement status has increased in recent years, most commonly fielded household surveys still do not include questions on migration status as part of the standard survey questionnaire. Some surveys, like the LSMS and DHS, provide optional migration modules, but the modules are not always consistent or fielded in many countries (Castaldo et al., 2009). Most information on minors is also based on their parents' migration status, although children 15-17 years old can be interviewed directly for DHS surveys (ibid).

Designing household surveys specific to refugee or migrant populations is a second avenue to generate more COTM-relevant data. Given their focus, these surveys are likely to have larger samples of migrant and displaced populations that lend themselves to finer disaggregation by multiple factors associated with vulnerability than general population surveys. However, these surveys are uncommon due to cost considerations and competing priorities within statistical offices.

Regardless of whether we are dealing with a general population survey or a COTM-specific survey, developing sampling frames to reliably identify and include COTM populations is difficult, particularly for irregular migrants and unregistered refugees and IDPs. However, there are some indications that new methodologies and technologies may be deployed in ways that help decision makers get closer to a representative sample of COTM populations in their surveys. For example, in Turkey, the World Food Programme (WFP) combined geospatial and respondent-driven sampling methods to survey hidden populations of refugees (Bozdag & Twose, 2019). The results provided detailed information in areas like health and education and allowed policy makers to understand how needs differed among registered and unregistered refugees.

3.2.2 Administrative data

Administrative data has the potential to be a low cost, up-to-date source of information which decision makers can use to identify the needs of COTM in a timely way. However, this valuable data is often hidden behind firewalls that deter use. Privacy concerns also inhibit data sharing with regard to the personally identifiable information of vulnerable populations. Fragmentation of administrative data collected by different agencies and organizations, using different methods, and in different formats limits interoperability and effective use. Furthermore, many decision makers lack both the time and knowledge to analyze administrative data. Fortunately, there are a growing number of new tools and methodologies which lower these barriers to entry to combine and use administrative data from multiple sources simultaneously to identify the needs of COTM.

Statistics generated through tools like the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS), for example, aggregate case-level information across multiple implementing organizations. Data can be anonymized and aggregated by system managers in line with security protocols. This allows decision makers to more effectively target resource gaps, identify special protection concerns like high rates of child labor, and prioritize actions across multiple implementing partners.

In Nigeria, UNICEF produces factsheets with statistics derived from CPIMS on reported child protection cases broken down by age, sex, type of displacement and living situation (i.e., IDPs in camps versus in host communities), subnational geography, and specific risk factors (e.g., unaccompanied or separated children, or children at risk of neglect, labor or abuse) (UNICEF, 2019).

Similarly, the UNHCR PRIMES (Population Registration and Identity Management EcoSystem) platform includes a tool for reporting and data analysis as a core feature of the system, allowing users to more easily leverage administrative information collected through the PRIMES platform for analysis (UNHCR, 2018a).

¹⁴ In addition to Jordan, the World Bank and UNHCR have also worked with national statistics offices in Uganda, Kenya, and Chad to develop and test ways to more effectively capture refugee populations within existing household surveys (Dang & Verme, 2019a).

In places where data is sufficient, decision makers can combine survey and administrative data to identify needs, reducing the burden of new data collection. A recent study estimated poverty among Syrian refugees in Jordan by combining household survey data with administrative data from UNHCR's Profile Global Registration System (proGres) database. This method provided more accurate information on household poverty than other existing methods for estimating poverty, but at much lower cost than a large-scale survey (Dang and Verme, 2019b).

3.2.3 Location-specific surveys and needs assessments

Site-specific assessments are the most frequently used source of information to inform programming decisions related to the needs of COTM, according to our interviewees. Given the frequent lack of timely, accessible data at the local level, organizations often must collect their own data to inform a particular intervention.

Although these individual data collection exercises provide timely and specific information, they are usually not designed in a way that will inform broader policy or decision making beyond the scope of the individual project in question. Organizations use a variety of inconsistent methodologies, indicators, and disaggregation categories, which result in fragmented data that cannot easily be compared or put to use by outside organizations. Decisions on what data to collect are often driven by funding partners rather than local priorities, and results are not commonly shared with outside stakeholders. Similar data is collected repeatedly, even in the same geographic area, resulting in wasted time and resources. The resulting data may also be inaccurate, as many implementing organizations do not have the experience or resources needed to effectively conduct sampling or collect representative data.

Some organizations are working to provide more comprehensive data at the site or local level. IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) collects detailed information on displaced people in specific locations, like IDP camps or subnational administrative regions. This data comes in multiple forms, including surveys of migrants and displaced people, as well as data from key informant interviews on topics like demographics, health, education, and child protection. Although the DTM includes data about children, most is based on surveys or interviews with adults. IOM does not interview children under 14, and older children are only surveyed in limited areas (see Box 6).

DTM data is available for a large number of countries and is more uniform than data produced by many individual implementing organizations, but topics covered are not consistent across sites. Both the availability of age disaggregated data and the specific age categories used also vary greatly across countries.

Box 6: Including children's voices in data collection

The voices of migrant and displaced children are often invisible in the data that is collected about them. Many organizations do not allow children to be surveyed directly, especially those under age 14. As a result, most data does not reflect the direct experiences of COTM themselves. Several recent initiatives are attempting to fill this gap, surveying migrant and displaced adolescents on their experiences and needs.

IOM includes a limited number of older adolescents (ages 14-17) as part of its Flow Monitoring Surveys in some locations. Findings from the initial surveys in Europe provide information on migrant and refugee children's experiences during and after migration along the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes. This data highlights risk factors that increase vulnerability to abuse, such as educational background, country of origin, and migration route (UNICEF & IOM, 2017).

Digital surveys can also capture information directly from COTM. UNICEF used U-Report (an SMS- and social media-based survey platform) to poll refugees and migrants 14 years and older on topics such as access to healthcare and education, services available to them, and why they left home (UNICEF, 2018b).

3.2.4 Innovative sources and new technologies

The use of new technologies to identify COTM's needs is less apparent than their use in tracking population size and movement. Nevertheless, several initiatives have demonstrated how innovative data sources are used to assess needs and quickly gather data from target populations.

As discussed in chapter 2, cell phone data is increasingly used to track population size and movement. This information can also provide insights on what kind of support people on the move may need. For example, when the World Food Programme tracked displacement in Haiti following the 2016 hurricane, they used information on where people were moving from in order to contain the spread of an existing cholera epidemic (Digital Impact Alliance & Flowminder, 2019).

Cell phone- and internet-based tools are also used to survey target populations, including children. UNICEF uses the U-Report survey platform to collect information via text messages or WhatsApp. When people register, they can choose to provide information on their age, gender, and location, and the results are then used to target programs and outreach (Raftree, Appel & Ganness, 2013).

3.3 Concluding thoughts

In this chapter, we assessed the extent to which data sources provide information on the demographics and associated vulnerabilities of COTM. This information is often in short supply, but it is vital for targeted policy and interventions that are responsive to the needs of migrant and displaced children. The lack of comparable, quantitative data on COTM means that decision makers tend to rely on limited, one-off data collection exercises to inform programming. A lack of consistent definitions, methodologies, and disaggregation categories further contribute to a fragmented data system that is not sufficient for meeting the needs of vulnerable children. At the same time, initiatives like IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix and improved survey methodologies are examples of how improved data can provide more detailed and consistent information that organizations need to support COTM.

In Chapter 4, we turn to the question of how data is used to connect individual children to resources and services. We review how data platforms hosted by government agencies and implementing organizations are used to both track and monitor assistance to individual children and better coordinate efforts to assist COTM.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Data to connect children on the move to resources and services

The data and tools cited in chapters 3 and 4 can help decision makers understand the scope of a problem and the level and types of programming needed to help children on the move. However, many implementing organizations also need to track and monitor individual children to ensure they receive specific resources and services. In this chapter, we will assess data sources and tools through which organizations collect and manage individual-level data. We will examine common limitations of these data sources and highlight initiatives to promote greater coordination and harmonization of data for COTM.

4.1 Understanding the use cases for data to connect children to services

Implementing organizations have always gathered information to track individual beneficiaries. In the past, many of these activities were often carried out via paper records or simple spreadsheets. Today, advanced data systems allow organizations to more efficiently track cases and share information with other organizations. Decision makers use such data to:

- Refer children to specific services;
- Track and follow-up on protection concerns; and
- Monitor and evaluate outcomes.

4.2 Data sources to connect children on the move to services

Almost every organization that provides direct support collects data on the children they serve. This information includes basic demographics, the child's background and experiences, such as level of education, health challenges, living situation, and reason for displacement, and the child's past interactions with the organization. These organizations collect data through registration or profiling interviews or may receive information from a referring organization.

Unlike some other data collected on COTM, this information is intended primarily to respond to the needs of specific individuals. Case workers use this data to refer children to the services they need based on their background and vulnerabilities, follow up on protection concerns like neglect or a lack of identity documents, and track individual outcomes. However, this information can also feed into broader research or planning processes.

Most of these data sources are internal to specific organizations or government agencies. While protocols for sharing information among organizations sometimes exist, these processes can be long and complex. In practice, organizations often collect information on the same people, resulting in duplicative data systems and greater data collection burdens for individual beneficiaries. Overlapping systems also mean that individuals are both more likely to fall between the gaps of different organizations' efforts and be double counted, receiving the same goods and services from multiple organizations. Furthermore, fragmented data systems make it more difficult to track whether individual children receive the support they need.

Given the variety of data sources available even within a single country, the following sections will not be comprehensive. Rather, we will highlight different databases and information systems that provide examples of how this data used to support individual children.

4.2.1 Government databases and registers

Governments host a variety of platforms that each maintain individual-level data. Some are specific to migrant or displaced populations. Others, like population registers, target broader groups but may include children on the move. For example, the Colombian government maintains numerous data systems relevant to COTM, including registries of internally displaced victims of conflict in Colombia (Single Victim Registry, RUV), Venezuelans who recently fled to Colombia (Administrative Registry of Venezuelans in Colombia, RAMV), trafficking victims (Human Trafficking National Data System), and child laborers (SIRITI), as well as databases with information on vulnerable individuals in general (SISBEN) and school enrollment (SIMAT).

Unfortunately, these disparate registries and databases are seldom linked, as they are maintained by different ministries or departments that are not necessarily incentivized to ensure their information is interoperable or at least readily comparable. Even in cases where a government wants to link its data systems, it can be technically challenging, and privacy concerns can further inhibit data sharing. As a result, there are huge missed opportunities to link records and triangulate information across multiple data systems to help decision makers monitor the needs of individual COTM and target resources accordingly.

4.2.2 Individual organizations' data systems

Beyond government, both local and international implementing organizations maintain systems with data on program beneficiaries. Although paper records are still used in some places, many organizations are moving towards more advanced digital systems that provide real-time information to service providers, allowing them to make more informed decisions about what an individual needs.

For example, the World Food Programme launched the Conditional On-Demand Assistance (CODA) platform as part of its broader SCOPE beneficiary management system. CODA combines an electronic database on individual beneficiaries with a personal smartcard that records a patient's past treatment for malnutrition, current nutrition status, and follow-up needs. This system allows service providers to more easily provide appropriate nutrition services for individual COTM and monitor results (WFP, 2020).

One of the largest data systems is UNHCR's Profile Global Registration System (proGres) information management system, developed since 2003 as a common registration and case management system for UNHCR in the more than 70 countries in which it works. This system records individual-level demographic data, information on individual needs and specific vulnerabilities, and, increasingly, biometric information. The proGres system has been adapted over time to provide real-time, shared information between UNHCR and partner organizations, leading to improved coordination. While previous versions of the system stored data in local databases, the current version operates as a single online database, enabling partners to directly access the system (see Box 8) (UNHCR, 2018b).

Box 8: UNHCR's proGres platform

ProGres V4 is part of the broader PRIMES (Population Registration and Identity Management EcoSystem) platform UNHCR introduced in 2017 as an interoperable system of tools to support registration and case management for individuals registered with UNHCR. Tools included as part of PRIMES include those for offline registration and data collection, biometric information, and tools to allow registered refugees to receive either cash or in-kind assistance (from proGres to PRIMES). The system is also designed to allow interoperability between UNHCR tools and those of other partners, such as the CPIMS+ (Child Protection Information Management System) and GBVIMS (Gender-based Violence Information Management System) systems. (UNHCR, 2018a).

This system provides many advantages over previous versions of UNHCR data systems. UNHCR and partners can more easily deliver and track protection and assistance services as children move or receive services from different implementing organizations, avoiding duplicative registration and intake procedures. With direct access to the PRIMES platform, implementing partners have a better view of the entire case management process, enabling better coordination among UNHCR and partners.

4.2.3 Multi-stakeholder data systems

Joint data systems to support case management across organizations for specific topics like child protection and gender-based violence are used by an increasing number of organizations. These tools are designed to improve interagency coordination, allow individual children to be tracked over time, and facilitate information sharing among different service providers.

CPIMS+ (Child Protection Information Management System), developed by the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, and UNICEF, is currently used by over 50 organizations to monitor child protection in emergency situations. This system supports a number of case management functionalities, recording information from case workers and tracking individual-level interventions and services such as family reunification and referrals.¹⁵

However, the effectiveness of such systems depends on local factors. An older version of the system (CPIMS) is still used in many countries despite its more limited functionalities. In Jordan, CPIMS/CPIMS+ systems have almost completely replaced paper files for participating organizations and are interoperable with some other systems targeting refugees. However, in other countries, the system is not as effective. Case workers often lack sufficient training or bandwidth to input required information in the system and internet connectivity can be limited.

Box 9: Ensuring data protection and privacy for children on the move

Without appropriate data protection and privacy measures, children can be put at risk. The same information that is used to support and protect them can be used against them if it falls into the wrong hands.

Organizations that collect and use data on COTM must implement strict data protection and privacy measures to ensure children's rights are protected. At the same time, these measures can be at odds with calls for more data sharing, better disaggregation, and the use of new technologies in data collection.

Although privacy concerns often focus on individual-level data, efforts to improve the quality of aggregated data can also increase risks. Greater disaggregation makes it easier to link data to specific individuals, especially when precise geographic information is included, necessitating extra anonymization efforts (The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2019). New technologies, such as the use of cellphone data and biometrics, also entail greater privacy risks. Beyond just physical risks, children's right to privacy requires that they give informed consent for how their data will be used and who will have access to it.

Because of these concerns, organizations are understandably hesitant to share data if they lack confidence in others' data protection and privacy standards. Standards differ among organizations, and the extent to which these standards are effectively put into practice can vary even more. Data security and privacy measures need to incorporate technical concerns (i.e., ensuring that data is stored securely and that appropriate anonymization is applied) but also ensure that requirements for informed consent and confidentiality are consistently upheld by the people collecting and managing data.

¹⁵ See <https://www.cpims.org/>

4.2.4 Innovative sources and new technologies

New forms of technology and data can help fill gaps in situations where existing data systems do not function effectively or where children who need support are not currently being reached by existing systems.

In addition to its survey function (see Chapter 3), UNICEF uses the U-Report tool for case management. In Nigeria, U-Report provides one-on-one answers to questions submitted anonymously by WhatsApp. The dashboard then forwards messages based on keywords to relevant partners that provide individual responses (UNICEF, 2015).

Similarly, communication tools like WhatsApp have been used to overcome poor reporting and follow-up mechanisms in existing systems. In Nigeria, the Child and Youth Protection Foundation set up a WhatsApp group to act as a resource platform open to all child protection actors. Cases are reported to the platform and then referred for particular services based on the needs of the case. Stakeholders on the platform are able to gather information, follow up on cases, and provide technical support.

4.3 Concluding thoughts

Children on the move are among the world's most vulnerable people. In this chapter, we have seen how some organizations are leveraging data to more effectively track and monitor services and outcomes for individual children. These efforts, such as common information management systems, help organizations collaborate to better meet the needs of children on the move and ensure they are receiving the services they are entitled to. Too often, however, data systems and platforms are not used to their full effect due to limited access and poor interoperability.

In chapter 5, we conclude by exploring what needs to happen if efforts to improve data on COTM are to result in better outcomes for COTM. The production of more and better data for COTM needs to be accompanied by greater uptake of this data by practitioners if it is to have a real impact on children's lives.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we examined the data status quo for governments and implementing partners to serve children on the move. We highlighted a number of pain points that end users of this information experience in their work. Basic data on COTM is often unavailable. Data is insufficiently disaggregated by key characteristics like age and sex, is often out of date, and has limited geographic coverage. Inconsistent definitions, methodologies, and indicators make it difficult to aggregate or compare data across different sources. Fortunately, a growing number of data producers and implementing organizations are taking steps to improve this status quo. We profiled several examples of these efforts in practice.

Improving the quality of data on COTM is important; however, these investments will only translate into better results for vulnerable children if practitioners are able to use this information effectively in their policy and programming decisions. Too often, a disconnect between data producers and practitioners working to support COTM means that data cannot be used to its full potential. Many decision makers do not trust the data that is available to them, both due to concerns about accuracy and a lack of transparency. Access to data is often limited, whether due to competition and territoriality or legitimate privacy concerns. Moreover, practitioners often lack sufficient training or bandwidth to make full use of the data that is available to them.

Overcoming these challenges will require greater investment in data collection and collaboration between producers and users, as well as better promotion of how data can be used to inform programming for COTM. To this end, we propose five recommendations for funders, governments, and implementing organizations for improving the production and uptake of data for COTM:

Recommendations from “Overcoming Blind Spots: Making Data Work for Children on the Move”

1. Increase the supply of data on children on the move through greater collection and methodological innovation
2. Make data on children on the move from different sources more comparable.
3. Incentivize transparency and information sharing to increase trust and uptake among prospective data users.
4. Increase data literacy among people working with children on the move.
5. Provide greater external analytical support for decision makers working with children on the move.

We further elaborate on these recommendations in our accompanying policy brief, “Overcoming Blindspots: Making Data Work for Children on the Move.” Through these recommendations, we hope to highlight ways that the initiatives detailed in this paper to improve data production can be paired with efforts to improve data uptake, increasing their impact on the lives of COTM.

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