

## *Protecting Children on the Move in Egypt*

Children *on the move*<sup>i</sup> make up a significant part of the large-scale and complex population movements currently taking place in many parts of the world, with an estimated **50 million** children on the move worldwide today. This number is growing dramatically.

The reasons and patterns of children's move are diverse and complex globally. This includes the promises of better life, an escape from poverty, abuse, violence or conflict, and seeking better economic and educational opportunities.

Children on the move, especially unaccompanied, become highly vulnerable to violence, abuse and various forms of exploitation both during their journey and once they reach their destination. This calls for protection and support mechanisms that are holistic, coherent and coordinated within and between countries.

Egypt is hosting refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants, with over 100,000 refugee children registered, including 4,000 unaccompanied and separated, in addition to a large number of migrants and unregistered children.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child remains the main international instrument to address the rights of children including children involved in migration, which Egypt attentively ratified in 1990, and which goes hand in hand with Egypt Child Law No 12 of 1996 amended by Law 126 of 2008. Egypt engagement in the best interests of the child is commendable, through its national laws and policies but also on its effective cooperation between several actors.

In January 2021, the Government of Egypt has endorsed the Standard Operating Procedures for the Protection and Assistance of Child Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and Victims of Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons (SOPs). The *Standard Operating Guidelines on Children on the Move* is the result of two-year joint cooperation between the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM), IOM, UNHCR and UNICEF. This cooperation is very much in line with IOM and UNICEF new strategic framework launched in May 2022 that will improve the ability to reach these children with the services, support and protection. It also comes in line with IOM and UNHCRs continuous efforts on ensuring safety, protection, and assistance to migrants and refugees.

And a total of 145 individuals have been trained on the operationalization of the SOPs across Egypt. This has demonstrated Egypt commitment and continuous efforts to protect migrant children. Moreover, Egypt is a Global Compact for Migration Champion; it reflects Egypt's mobilization toward people on the move and the decision to embark upon cooperation initiatives within the African region and beyond, including the European countries and the Arab world.

NCCM, IOM, UNHCR and UNICEF continue their partnership to assess together how the *Standard Operating Guidelines on Children on the Move* can further be deployed and promoted across the country, in view of reinforcing Egypt commitment to the national and international standards for addressing the rights of children.

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<sup>i</sup> The definition of *Children on the Move* covers children who have been trafficked; children seeking asylum; children who migrate to pursue better life opportunities; and children displaced by conflict or natural disasters.