

## Final Action Plan

**Introductory note:** The initial draft of this text was developed based on discussions at workshops in Geneva (May 2018), New York (July 2018), and Rome (July 2018). It included comments and feedback received from partner organizations, the international advisory committee members, and other individuals and organizations through the end of September. During the [Global Forum on Faith Action for Children on the Move](#) participants discussed the draft version and proposed amendments and additions reflected below in the final draft to be presented to the Forum for review and approval. We recognize that children on the move encompasses different experiences of boys and girls who migrate with parents or caregivers, alone or who are left behind, who seek refugee status and who are internally displaced. This plan represents the road map for Faith Action partners to respond and scale up action for children<sup>1</sup> on the move.

Partner organizations are now sharing this document widely and planning specific programmatic and advocacy activities to strengthen faith action for the care and protection of children on the move. For more information or to join the collaboration, please contact Andrea Kaufmann who is providing coordinating support to the implementation of the action plan at [globalpartnersforum@wvi.org](mailto:globalpartnersforum@wvi.org).

### Principles

1. We recognize that children are the hope of humanity, and must be protected and empowered to experience life in its fullness and to transform the societies in which they live.
2. We believe that life is sacred and that children, who are vulnerable, demand the highest protection of their human rights.
3. We embrace the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols; and in particular, the general principles of non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; to participate; and respect for the views of the child.
4. We will empower children and youth to share their experiences and needs, and involve them in decision-making, co-creating and designing programmes, activities, and interventions.
5. We recognize that the periods of early childhood, childhood, and adolescence are critical stages in the process of growth and development of the person; children need to be nurtured to grow holistically: physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, and in safety.
6. We affirm that parents and caregivers are a first and essential point of reference for children, and acknowledge the need to include a family's well-being to support them in their efforts to protect and raise children in a safe, caring, and loving environment.
7. We will ensure opportunities for intergenerational dialogue and listening to children.
8. We recognize that girls and boys on the move experience significant and distinct vulnerabilities and are at increased risk of all forms of violence; we affirm that it is an urgent moral responsibility to protect and empower children in complex and challenging environments.
9. We highlight children's resilience, capabilities and power to overcome negative experience and thrive, and we recognize children on the move as partners and agents of change for building peaceful societies, for helping communities change behaviour, and for ending violence against children.
10. We recognize that spiritual support to children on the move, their families and their caregivers enhances healing and resilience.
11. We believe that faith actors have a significant role to play in reducing conflict and promoting peaceful, inclusive and sustainable societies for children and their families, and highlight the important role of faith

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<sup>1</sup> Under age 18

actors in empowering marginalized children and groups including women, minorities, LGBTQ and people with disabilities in periods of displacement.

12. A faith-based response to displaced people and children on the move entails a distinctive depth of compassionate accompaniment of people in the midst of crisis and suffering, which goes beyond the kind of response that a humanitarian agency is able or mandated to provide.
13. We believe that as faith-based organizations and actors we are stronger together, together we can reach the most vulnerable, and together increase our positive impact for children on the move.
14. We also recognise that partnering among different beliefs and religious traditions enhances respect for freedom of religion.
15. We acknowledge that religious narratives and communities sometimes have been and are used as vectors for violence and exclusion. We condemn all violent, xenophobic and discriminatory narratives and reaffirm the need to speak up with words of solidarity, welcome and love. We welcome intergovernmental, governmental, or other civil society parties to support us in our agenda towards peaceful societies, free from all violence. We wish to walk with them in solidarity with immigrants and all those who are on the move.
16. We acknowledge that migration is a symptom of other systemic oppressions and will work to address root causes of displacement.
17. We recognize that 2019 represents a unique juncture in the history of international protection for children and displaced populations including the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the formal implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration; the 20th Anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement; as well as the Sustainable Development Goals review process. We will work to continue to contribute and influence relevant international bodies and processes.

We acknowledge that faith-based organizations and religious leaders have not always acted in the best interest of children, including children on the move. Therefore, we *share commitment to*:

- Ensuring our organizations establish the strongest safeguards to prevent, detect, address and speak out on instances of violence against children by our leaders, members, staff, and anyone else;
- Ensuring that organizations partnering to protect children on the move will foster respect for each other, promote freedom of religion and expression for all, and to provide access to support to children on the move in their own religious tradition;
- Fostering a spirituality that helps children engage with themselves, others, nature and what they call God, Divine Presence or ultimate reality. A spirituality that strengthens children's own religious beliefs and worldviews, enhancing their resilience, their sense of purpose and belonging to their communities;
- Enabling children to become active partners in the implementation of the Action Plan;
- Working within and across our own organizations and networks towards greater collaboration, action, generation of evidence, and advocacy in the areas outlined below;
- Creating safe spaces for children within our religious communities to share their views and be heard.

## **1. Providing spiritual support to children, families and caregivers as a source of healing and resilience**

*Spirituality supports children's resilience during displacement. Religious meanings, networks, and places can have an impact on the development of the individual and collective identity of children on the move. Psychosocial support that does not recognise children's spirituality, as well as their questions about their own faith traditions and other traditions, will miss a crucial part of children's lived experience. We recognize children have an innate capacity for spiritual development, and we acknowledge that religious communities play an important role in nourishing children's spirituality in ways that are respectful of their religious beliefs and cultures.*

**1.1.** Provide spiritual support and accompaniment (respecting children's beliefs, religions and traditions) and activities that promote prevention of violence, healing and increased resilience, in particular with children who are survivors of violence and have been subjected to trauma.

**1.2.** Empower children as key actors in their own spiritual development and that of their peers.

**1.3.** Provide spiritual support and accompaniment (respecting their beliefs, religions and traditions) to families and caregivers who are survivors or witnesses of all forms of violence so they may provide a consistently safe, loving and supportive home for their children and a conducive environment for their development.

**1.4.** Adapt faith-sensitive guidelines and resources for working with children on the move for spiritual and psychosocial support, mental health, and building resilience.

**1.5.** Enrich psychosocial, mental health, and resilience programmes with a sensitivity to faith and spirituality. This includes training faith actors and caregivers, where appropriate, to provide support to children on the move, particularly to survivors of all forms of violence, according to their faith traditions.

**1.6.** Promote faith literacy, interfaith awareness and collaboration so as to best serve children in multi-faith contexts.

**1.7.** Support the establishment of and access to safe spaces for worship and/or help connect children to places of worship, according to their wishes, so faith actors can assist in strengthening children's sense of belonging and identity.

**1.8.** Support the establishment of safe and friendly spaces for children with age-appropriate activities to protect them from violence and support them in healing and resiliency.

**1.9.** Draw on the relevant existing recommendations of religious bodies concerning principles for encouraging and supporting religious practices as they relate to children on the move and in displacement, especially unaccompanied children.

**1.10.** Build further evidence on the impact of spiritual nurture as a source of healing and resilience for children on the move.

## **2. Strengthening the continuum of care for child protection**

*Faith actors' grounding in local communities allows them to build the community's trust in and ownership of child protection mechanisms. Faith actors build bridges – between faith actors, government actors and other organisations, and with the host community – that are crucial for the success of child protection programmes for children on the move.*

*Community and grassroots initiatives need capacity training, resources, and support from broader networks in order to effectively contribute to the protection of children on the move. Religious networks, which span countries and regions, support faith actors to provide for children on the move and advocate for continued protection.*

**2.1.** Raise awareness of the dangers children on the move face, provide information on preventative and responsive measures and, when possible, refer children to safe places along the way.

- 2.2. Equip faith actors in and across countries of origin, transit and destination to strengthen the child protection system and services, including the areas of psychosocial support, mental health, resilience, spiritual nurture, and referral mechanisms.
- 2.3. Empower and support faith actors to advocate for and serve children on the move to ensure access to healthcare, early child development and quality education services in a way that respects and integrates the child's traditions and religion.
- 2.4. Support and scale local programs for children on the move and host communities. Build capacity in community-based protection, gender, psychosocial first aid, child rights, and humanitarian standards with faith actors.
- 2.5. Promote adherence by all actors to best-practice international standards including the Minimum Standard for Child Protection (CPMS).
- 2.6. Ensure protection and support for vulnerable caregivers.
- 2.7. Promote coordination amongst child protection systems, referral mechanisms, and formal and informal actors including faith actors internally and across borders.
- 2.8. Protect children on the move through countries of origin, transit, and destination from all forms of violence including the promotion of safe corridors and prevention of human trafficking.
- 2.9. Support and improve relationships and communication between faith actors and other agencies serving migrant and refugee populations, especially children.
- 2.10. Work towards the full protection of children on the move throughout their journey, including through the promotion of humanitarian access and protection of child rights, particularly the most vulnerable, including girls and children with disabilities.
- 2.11. Advocate for family preservation and reunification, effective child protection mechanisms, and an end to child detention in all its forms.
- 2.12. Serve as bridges among faiths, government actors, other organizations, and host communities to strengthen the overall child protection system.
- 2.13. Build evidence on the role of faith actors in strengthening the continuum of protection.

### **3. Building peaceful societies and opposing xenophobia, racism and discrimination**

*An awareness of the embeddedness of religion in social, cultural, political, and economic realities will help all actors to understand the nuances of faith partnerships. For example, though faith actors may work to combat xenophobia that affects children on the move, they may simultaneously perpetuate other social norms that negatively affect children. Because children on the move are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, faith actors are compelled by their beliefs to speak out for the protection of children and advocate for better practices, especially among people of the same faith. By speaking out for children on the move and raising awareness of their needs and migration journeys, faith actors can shift attitudes and behaviours towards children to enhance their protection.*

- 3.1. Welcome and listen to children on the move and their families, provide protection and promote integration as an expression of hospitality and an opportunity to welcome the stranger.
- 3.2. Design and implement projects and initiatives aimed at promoting respect for and understanding of minority groups, including those with different beliefs, faiths, and religions to reduce violence, xenophobic narratives and nurture peaceful societies.
- 3.3. Maintain high standards of protection, including against bullying, oppose xenophobia and racism in educational settings, curriculum and other systems where faith actors are highly engaged.
- 3.4. Work with leaders and local faith communities to advocate for durable solutions, encourage a whole of society approach (multisectoral) and promote diverse partnering and collaboration for children on the move.

- 3.5. Challenge narratives of fear. Provide faith-based alternative narratives to xenophobia and build bridges between host communities and refugee populations, locally and globally.
- 3.6. Recognize children as peacebuilders themselves. Support child and youth-led programs that include host community and refugee or displaced children to build relationships and challenge xenophobia.
- 3.7. Speak out against injustice where children are victims of violence and at risk of displacement or trafficking, including crises and forgotten conflicts.
- 3.8. Raise awareness of the impact of displacement on child development, the increased vulnerability experienced in early childhood and adolescence, and the issues children on the move face, including all forms of violence, discrimination, exclusion and marginalization.
- 3.9. Leverage social media and use of technology to challenge exclusive narratives and promote positive narratives. Equip religious leaders to engage in social media.
- 3.10. Create safe spaces for dialogue for people with diverse perspectives on migration within and across faith communities.
- 3.11. Create space for religious education about other religions and learning from people of different faith traditions.
- 3.11. Challenge the elevation of national identity and national borders above the recognition of the God-given dignity of every human being.

#### **4. Working Together**

- 4.1. Share expertise, evidence, and project models and approaches which support children on the move.
  - 4.2. Continue mapping current initiatives undertaken by faith actors with children on the move and strengthen the evidence base for what is working, what is not, and where we can do more together.
  - 4.3. Identify a common language to frame coordination within religious communities and with secular organizations.
  - 4.4. Align outreach, communications, and advocacy work, including the development of awareness raising materials to end violence against children on the move. Share positive stories of hope, love, and children as active agents of change.
  - 4.5. Strengthen joint advocacy on the unique contributions of faith actors and faith based organizations to protection children on the move based on the evidence of impact across all the pillars. In doing so, we will reclaim the faith narrative.
  - 4.6. Call for action at all levels—global, national and local—to end violence against children on the move.
  - 4.7. Continue and deepen coordination with local, national and international faith bodies, states and United Nations actors and mechanisms, especially in the framework of the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the Global Compact on Refugees, the Sustainable Development Goals, and other global and regional mechanisms.
  - 4.8. Develop multi-stakeholder partnerships with faith communities, NGOs, governments and other actors that can help strengthening our actions, close the silos and build bridges of trust for common action.
  - 4.9. Create a virtual mechanism for communicating, sharing and coordinating initiatives related to the action plan.
  - 4.10. Coordinating organizers will meet in a year to revisit progress against action plan.
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FAITH ACTION  
for Children on the Move

### **Additional Resources**

[18 Commitments on Faith for Rights adopted in Beirut 2017](#)

“Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World” (Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, World Council of Churches, World Evangelical Alliance)

JLI Learning Brief: [Continuum of Protection for Children](#)

JLI Learning Brief: [Spiritual Support](#)

JLI Learning Brief: [Peacebuilding and Combatting Xenophobia](#)

[Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes](#)