

Topic 2: Establishing guidelines for the protection and integration of migrant adolescents who have travelled without their parents

Background:

As a result of current political situation all over the world, the numbers of refugees worldwide have doubled since 1975 and have already reached 200 million. While most migrants are adult, as much as 15% of them are under the age 20. Adolescent migrants seem to have similar objectives fleeing their country as adults do – most seek refuge, opportunity or were forced to leave by a war or a dangerous political situation, their journey is often more difficult and dangerous, due to their lack of funds and experience.

Despite the international human rights framework, which emphasizes the rights of individuals under the age of 18, adolescent migrants, especially those with irregular migration status, experience issues with accessing and exercising their rights due to administrative issues, fear of deportation or financial barriers among others. Oftentimes, their passage to education, housing or health and social security is denied from them.

Youth seeking refuge ostracized from the ordinary community life in refugee camps and urban slums may often experience criminal behavior from other refugees or even the guards and workers responsible for their safety.

Adolescent migrants encountering sexual coercion and violence are pressured to engage in risky sexual behavior as a way to make the money they need to move forward with their lives. Young female refugees are also most vulnerable to trafficking and rape. Unintended pregnancies occur in often malnourished female migrants with no access to contraceptives or reproductive health care and further embrace their already difficult new lives. As a result of unprotected sex, migrants are also exposed to sexually transmitted diseases, for which there is no treatment available in refugee camps.

Left with no other options, young migrants may also be exploited as illegal, cheap labor only earning minimal financial compensation for their efforts. Although *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* ensures that every individual, no matter the nationality, deserves just treatment in the workforce and an adequate standard of living, adolescents stay unaware to the laws that are there to protect them or simply have no ways to exercise their rights.

UN Involvement:

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been addressing the issue and presented several goals and suggestions to improve the situation, such as presenting alternatives to detention when dealing with children and adolescents, ensuring health care and education and protecting young migrants from exploitation and violence.

The UNICEF has been working closely with The Population Division of UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which provides the UN with accurate documentation and reports on population trends and facts, and UN Office for South-South Cooperation, which is set to strengthen the collective self-reliance of the states of the South.

The UN General Assembly has directly addressed the issue by adopting the resolution 69/187 on migrant children and adolescents in 2014, as has the Human Rights Council by adopting the resolution 29/12 in 2015 concerning unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents.

Bloc Positions:

- European bloc: European nations, being largely developed, experience massive migration waves and should, therefore, focus on easing the process of integration and ensure fair treatment of refugees.

- Latin American bloc: Latin American nations should focus on creating safe pathways for migration and safer environments in refugee camps and temporary accommodations, as well as on integration and fair treatment of migrants who wish to stay.
- Asian bloc: For some of the largest refugee camps are located in Asia, Asian nations should concentrate on the safety precautions in those accommodations, as well as on the health of inhabitants with special concern on sexually transmitted diseases and reproductive health.
- Western/North American bloc: Being largely developed, the nations of the western bloc are often coveted destinations of many refugees. They should, therefore, focus on easing the process of integration and protecting migrants from unfair treatment.
- African bloc: Some of the largest refugee camps can be found in African nations, thus it should be a priority to create safer and healthier environments in the temporary accommodations as well as safe pathways for migrants.

Possible Solutions:

Ways to improve current situation of adolescent migrants would include raising awareness of the issue amongst refugees and citizens and making any instances easier to report or avoid. The authorities responsible should better oversee and prevent the malicious practices on the job market

It is also important to address the issue of underage transactional sex and ways to improve current situation of adolescent migrants would include raising awareness of the issue amongst refugees and citizens and making any instances of unfair treatment or criminal behavior easier to report and avoid. The authorities responsible should better oversee and prevent the malicious practices on the job market by possibly enforcing more serious sanctions. Separating young migrants traveling alone from adults in refugee camps and ensuring their access to safer migration pathways is also plausible.

It is also important to address the issue of underage transactional sex and promote healthy sexual behavior to refugees by educating them and offering contraceptives.

Questions to Consider:

1. Which special precautions should be taken when dealing with adolescent refugees?
2. How can states prevent discrimination of young migrants and protect their rights to education, health care and housing?
3. How can states prevent and monitor sexual coercion on adolescents?
4. How can states improve current sexual and reproductive health care for migrants?
5. How can states ensure adolescent refugees are aware of their rights and are able to exercise them?
6. How can states prevent unfair treatment of young migrants in the workforce?
7. How can safe pathways for migration be established?

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