

UNICEF 1 A-B

UNICEF

TOPIC B:

“Creating a Policy Towards
Unaccompanied Child
Migrants”

NC
MUN
2018





“Migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity. They are children, women, and men who leave or are forced to leave their homes for various reasons (...)”

-Pope Francis

Nieves Padilla Rabell
Undersecretary of UNICEF

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Topic B:

Creating a Policy Towards Unaccompanied Child Migrants

UNICEF'S mandate expanded to help children whose lives were at risk in developing countries, it works in 190 countries and territories to protect the rights of every child. UNICEF has spent 70 years working to improve the lives of children and their families. Defending children's rights throughout their lives requires a global presence, aiming to produce results and understand their effects.

Children under the age of 18 traveling without their parents or an adult guardian have always been a part of global migration flows. Within the past decade or so, however, their numbers have grown.

More than 23,000 unaccompanied minors applied for asylum in the 28 member countries of the European Union, according to the United Nations. 91% of the children who arrived in Europe on their own were boys, and 51% were from Afghanistan. 60,000 unaccompanied children, mostly from Guatemala, Honduras, or El Salvador, expected to enter federal custody after crossing the border.

Unaccompanied children may arrive clandestinely, hidden by traffickers or paid smugglers, or they may attempt to migrate through normal immigration checkpoints. They may present false documents to border officials, or arrive in desperation with no documents at all. They may be apprehended while trying to enter the destination country, or evade border patrols all together.

The U.S. government recognizes that the flow of unaccompanied children across its southern border is a genuine migration emergency. The problem is enormously complex; there is no single policy approach that is going to bend the curve on unaccompanied child arrivals.

Media coverage of Central American arrivals in 2014 portrayed their entry as a failure of border security, but the actual policy failures were in the processing and adjudication of claims for relief from child migrants presenting in a mixed migration flow of humanitarian and irregular migrants. Inadequate judicial and legal resources left some unaccompanied children waiting two years or more for a hearing before an immigration judge. Such delays amounted to a de facto policy of open admission for children and families. Furthermore, the Obama administration's responses to the rising Central American flows, including greater law enforcement resources at the border, expanded detention facilities, and the establishment of dedicated child and family immigration court dockets, focused exclusively on immediate needs rather than longer-term solutions and they failed either to adequately protect vulnerable immigrants or to prevent future unauthorized flows.

Analyzes the root of the policy challenges posed by these flows, and outlines U.S. and regional policy responses to address the crisis. It also makes recommendations on policies that advance both critical protection and enforcement goals in situations of complex, mixed flows, and provides additional policies that the United States, Mexico, and the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras might adopt to better manage child and family migration

pressures today and in the future.

Points to address:

- How children rights be protected in those circumstances?
- How host countries or NGO's should act to protect and ensure the welfare of unaccompanied minors?
- How children will be protected from violence in transit routes?
- What policies can be implemented while hosting unaccompanied children?

SOURCES

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