

# Modern Mobility:

The role of ICTs in child and youth migration



Promising Futures,  
Community by Community

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Photo taken by youth participants in the Youth Empowerment through Arts and Media (YETAM) project in Cameroon.

## Foreword

Migration has been a part of the human experience since the dawn of time, as populations moved in search of resources and better conditions. Children continue to migrate to seek a better life — on their own initiative or with their parents' support and encouragement. Many children leave their place of origin due to violence, conflict, abuse, or other rights violations or simply to seek better opportunities for themselves. Though many organizations are working to improve children's well-being in their home communities, prevention work with children and youth will not end child and youth migration. But civil society organizations, together with children and youth, government community members, and other stakeholders can help reduce exploitation and keep children and youth safer while they are on the move.

The issue of migration has worked its way back to a central place in the political debate of many countries, including the United States<sup>2</sup> and the United Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> It is also becoming a major theme in the development discussion,<sup>4</sup> especially as development agencies and people around the world discuss and input into the new "Post 2015" agenda, which will replace the Millennium Development Goals. The 2013 UN World Youth Report focused on Youth and Migration, further helping to bring the topic to the forefront of global discourse.

**"Migration is the original strategy of people seeking to escape poverty, mitigate risk, and build a better life. It has been with us since the dawn of mankind, and its economic impact today is massive. ... As we consider the next-generation development agenda, it is also critical to understand that migration was a vital force in achieving the original MDGs."**

—Peter Sutherland, Special Representative to the Secretary General of the UN for Migration<sup>5</sup>

While the debate around migration grows, access and use of ICTs is expanding exponentially around the world. As we will discuss in this paper, children and young people are using ICTs to prepare for migration; to guide and facilitate their journey; to keep in touch with families; to connect with opportunities for support and work; and to cope with integration and forced repatriation. ICTs are also being used by civil society organizations to facilitate and manage their work; to support children and youth on the move; and to communicate and advocate for the rights of child and youth migrants.

Now is an opportune time to take stock of all of the various ways that ICTs are supporting children and youth who migrate and to better understand how the tools that are increasingly at our disposal can better aid us in our work. This report provides an overview of the existing landscape of how children and youth on the move are using new technologies and how those who labor to support and protect children are using these tools or could take better advantage of them in their work.



Tessie San Martin, PhD  
President/CEO  
Plan International USA

## List of Acronyms

AMWCY	African Movement for Working Children and Youth
CHI	Child Helpline International
CPAN	Child Protection Action Network
CSOs	Civil society organizations
DREAM	Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors
EU	European Union
GPS	Global positioning system
GSM	Global system for mobile communications
GCRRP	Guatemalan Child Return and Reintegration Project
ICTs	Information and communication technologies
IDP	Internally displaced people
IMSI	International mobile subscriber identity
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
KIND	Kids In Need of Defense
PIN	Personal identification number
PUK	Personal unblocking code
PAC	Protective accompaniment of children
RapidFTR	Rapid Family Tracing and Reunification
RSN	Refugee Support Network
SMS	Short message service
SIM	Subscriber identity module
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VoIP	Voice over Internet protocols
YICCs	Youth Information Contact Centers

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## Executive Summary

The following report presents an overview of how children and youth on the move are using information and communication technologies (ICTs) of their own accord and how civil society organizations are integrating ICTs into their work with and for children and youth migrants. It identifies a number of key considerations for integrating ICTs into work with child and youth migrants and makes recommendations for building knowledge and capacity in this area.

### **Child and youth migrants and ICTs**

There are an estimated 214 million international and 750 million internal migrants globally, and the number of global migrants is expected to grow to 400 million by 2040. Almost half of migrants are female. It is estimated that 33 million (or some 16 percent) of the total migrant population is younger than age 20, including 11 million children between 15 and 19 years old. Child and adolescent migrants make up a significant proportion of the total population of migrants in Africa (28 percent), Asia (21 percent), Oceania (11 percent), Europe (11 percent), and the Americas (10 percent).<sup>6,7</sup>

When children and youth migrate, they are subject to increased vulnerability. Access to information and being able to communicate and connect with family, friends, support systems, and services reduces this vulnerability and increases opportunities for improved well-being. The growth in access to ICTs may allow youth to better manage migration and reduce risk.

Though not all children and youth who migrate have access to ICTs, migrating children and youth are using ICTs in three primary ways during the migration process: to communicate and connect with family and friends; to access information; and to access services, as detailed in the body of this report.

### **ICTs, CSOs, and child and youth migration**

To some degree, development organizations working with children are behind the curve when it comes to integrating new technologies into their work. A concern about the risks that the Internet and other ICTs can pose for children — including trafficking, pornography, bullying, and exploitation — has made some organizations hesitant to explore the potentially empowering and positive aspects of new technologies in their work.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are, however, incorporating ICTs into their work with child and youth migrants in three main areas: research and data collection; program communications and delivery; and public engagement and advocacy around the rights of child and youth migrants. Additionally, seven trends in ICT-enabled programming for and with child and youth migrants have emerged: a) child-protection networks and protective accompaniment; b) information for safer migration; c) information on child- and youth-friendly support and services; d) information centers and safe spaces equipped with ICTs; e) incident reporting, counseling and support, referrals, and response; f) ICT-enabled development and income generation; and g) mobile and e-service provision.

### **Considerations when using ICTs in work with child and youth migrants**

A number of challenges present themselves when working with children and youth on the move, including the mobility of this population and their need to remain hidden at times; the lack of reliable and shared data; and poor coordination among CSOs, agencies, and governments. If well-designed, appropriate, and aligned to the context, programmatic work and outreach with this population — as well as improved CSO coordination — could be strengthened through the use of ICTs.

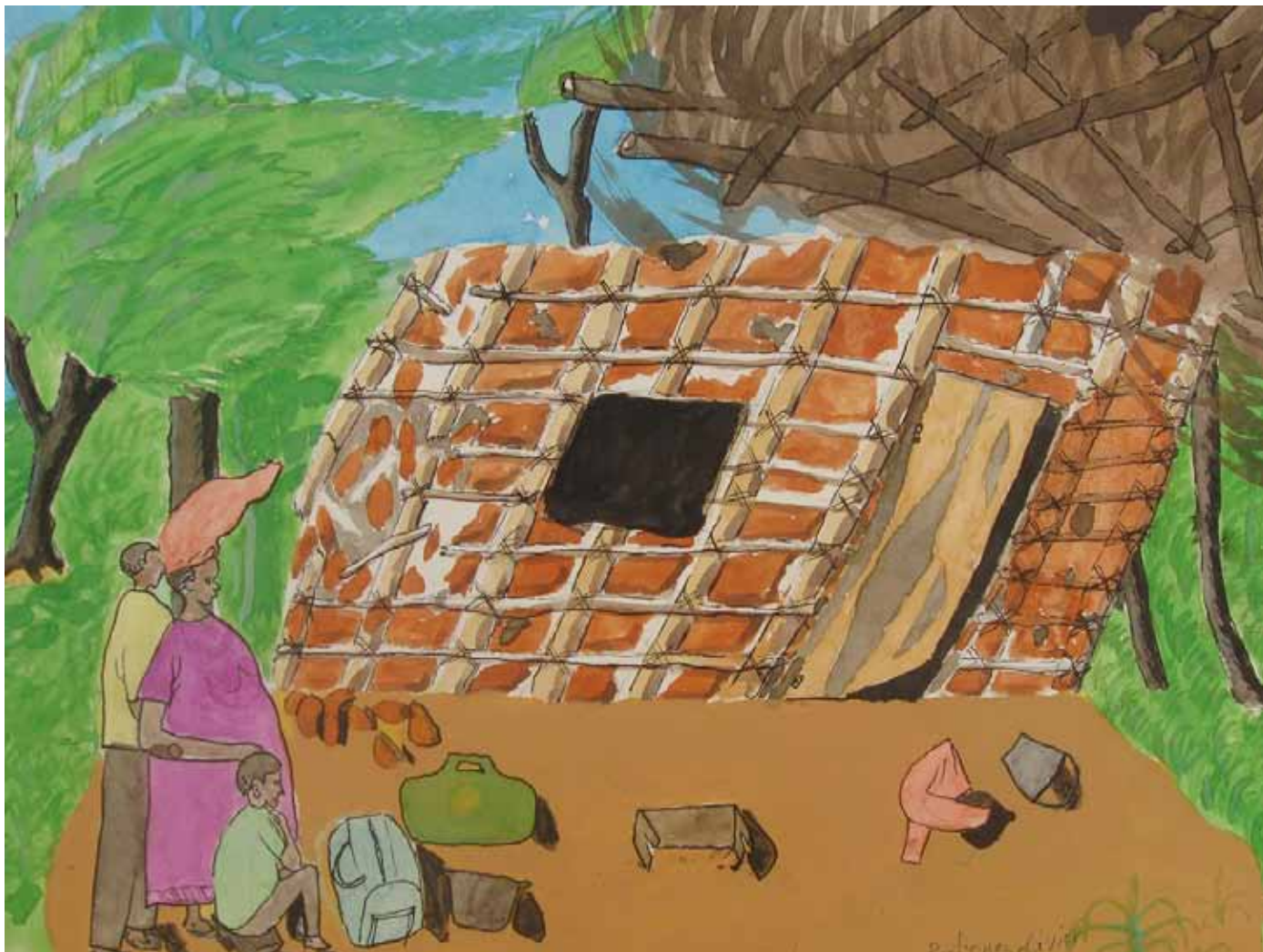
### **Conclusions**

Child and youth migrants are using ICTs across a range of areas and for a variety of reasons. The integration of new ICTs into CSO work with children and youth on the move has not yet been optimized or fully institutionalized. A number of trends have been identified, yet there is little focused research at the intersection of child and youth migrants and ICTs, and little evidence on the impact of ICTs or ICT-enabled programs and services on migrating children and youth, either positive or negative. Key informants interviewed for this research have insufficient information on how initiatives similar to their own are using ICTs, yet these informants have a great deal of interest in learning, sharing good practices, and improving their capacities to use ICTs in their work.

### **Recommendations**

Greater awareness and capacity should be developed among CSOs through:

- 1) establishing an active community of practice;
- 2) mapping and sharing current projects and programs;
- 3) creating a guide or toolbox on good practice for ICTs in this work;
- 4) providing guidance on how ICTs can help “normal” programs include children and youth on the move;
- 5) further documenting and developing an evidence base;
- 6) sharing and distributing this report for discussion, action, and comments.



Children and youth move for many reasons, including those related to disaster, environmental degradation, and drought. Drawing by Oliver, YETAM Cameroon project.

## 1/Introduction

Children and their families have always migrated. Population shifts are a part of human history, and today's world is no different. The “youth bulge” and the growing economic crisis have impacted migration patterns, and, as the global economy shifts, migration destination countries are diversifying. Internal and international migrations have both risen in recent years.<sup>8</sup>

Rather than try to prevent migration altogether, many organizations are working to improve the process for children and youth. Steady communication and access to information and

services make migration safer and more productive. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) help children and youth to communicate and connect with family and friends, to access information, and to access services. Civil society organizations are using new technology tools to conduct research and improve data management; to support program communications and delivery; and to promote their public engagement and advocacy work in favor of the rights of children and youth on the move.

The availability of mobile devices and the Internet



has grown exponentially over the past decade, including in many of the hardest-to-reach regions. Along with other new ICTs, the Internet and the mobile phone are changing how people of every age and walk of life communicate, all over the globe. New technologies are also changing the way that governments operate, and they are causing shifts in how CSOs conceive of and implement their work. New players are entering the space



Children and youth also move to seek seasonal work or sometimes because they are not interested in farming and they are attracted by the idea of working in urban areas. Photo: YETAM Youth Group, Kenya.

too, as for-profit companies seek to build a base of customers living in more remote areas who have fewer resources, and social entrepreneurs look for ways to make a profit while simultaneously supporting the social well-being of the less fortunate.

Although the use of cellular phones first gained ground among wealthier and urban populations, their relatively low cost and simple technology has made them ubiquitous. People everywhere, including rural areas of “developing” countries, now have and use mobile phones for making calls or sending text messages. Less common, but also on the rise, is the number of people using mobiles

to access the Internet, to conduct transactions, and to share information through a growing menu of mobile applications and services such as mobile money, digital birth registration, and digital mapping.

To some degree, development organizations working with children have been slow to incorporate new technologies into their work. The risks of trafficking, pornography, bullying, and exploitation have been a concern, and for this reason the potentially empowering and positive aspects of new technologies have not been explored to their fullest. At the same time, changes in technology continually pose new threats and risks that most CSOs working with vulnerable populations have not yet considered. A closer examination is warranted of how ICTs are changing the context in which children and youth migrate and civil society organizations operate.

This report presents an overview of how children and youth on the move are using ICTs and how civil society organizations are integrating ICTs into their work with and for child and youth migrants.

### Methodology and limitations

This state of the practice report was compiled between August 2012 and October 2013, based on a desk review of available articles and publications that refer to the use of ICTs by children and youth on the move. It includes empirical findings reported by nongovernmental organizations and interviews of children and youth on the move cited in secondary sources. To supplement desk research, an online discussion on ICTs and child protection was organized together with New Tactics<sup>9</sup> in October 2012, and a meeting of experts and practitioners was conducted together with Columbia University in New York City in April

2013. A number of interviews and email exchanges helped to gather information and examples; however, the field of ICTs and children on the move was found to be relatively new and not well-documented.



Sometimes children and youth move to escape crowded households or to find ways to provide economic support to their families. Photo taken by YETAM Youth Group, Senegal.

Though the authors recognize that the ecosystem surrounding child and youth migration includes many other actors, for this report we focus on child and youth migrants and CSOs. In addition, we have focused on a subsection of child and youth migrants rather than on the entire range of children and youth on the move in an effort to produce a publication of manageable size within our time frame and available resources.

A limitation of the research is that, for the most part, it was restricted to online, English-language sources. In addition, because many children and

youth on the move do not have and/or travel with appropriate legal documents, there is a considerable shortcoming in the collection of data and management of information at community, national, and international levels. Because children and youth on the move often try to remain underground to avoid detection, it is difficult to identify demographic trends. We recognize the limitations of the methodology due to the scarce amount of systematic data collection on children and youth on the move disaggregated by age, sex, geographic origin, and socioeconomic status.

The target audience for the report is practitioners working with children and youth on the move, and more specifically, those working with children and youth who migrate voluntarily in search of better opportunities and unaccompanied by parents or guardians. While not an advocacy document, the report aims to contribute to the field by providing a review of current uses of ICTs among child and youth migrants and civil society organizations that work with them. The report is aimed at providing a springboard for further discussion, research, and ultimately more effective and relevant programming and support for children and youth on the move globally. The research reflects a rights-based approach to children and youth, and the authors consider children and youth on the move as agents who are entitled to rights, not as victims. The authors do not consider movement of children to be a strictly negative phenomenon in need of prevention, because sometimes movement is in the best interest of the child or young person.



## 2/ Children and youth on the move

The term “children and youth on the move” refers to people younger than age 24 who are moving or migrating for a host of reasons, voluntarily or involuntarily, across or within countries, and without their parents or primary caregivers.<sup>10</sup> The term has been adopted by a number of organizations working with this segment of the population because funding categories, conceptual frameworks, and other silos have often meant that children are categorized in ways that are not conducive to holistic support and protection. In addition, children and youth move in and out of agency categorizations — a migrating child

can become a trafficked child or a street child or vice versa — meaning that strict categorization can be problematic. The umbrella definition and term “children and youth on the move” seek to recognize protection and support needs across a variety of categories and how they interlink.

The term refers to children and youth who have been trafficked; those who migrate (e.g., to pursue better life opportunities; to look for work or education; and to escape exploitative or abusive situations at home); children and youth displaced by conflict and natural disasters; and those who live

**Domestic violence, few opportunities to access education, and lack of decent work may push children and youth into migrating in search of improved wellbeing. Drawing by Patrick, YETAM Cameroon project.**

and work in the streets. The children and youth on the move concept does not assume that children and youth who move are victims of trafficking and exploitation but recognizes that at times children move of their own volition or with the support and encouragement of their families.

### Children and youth who migrate

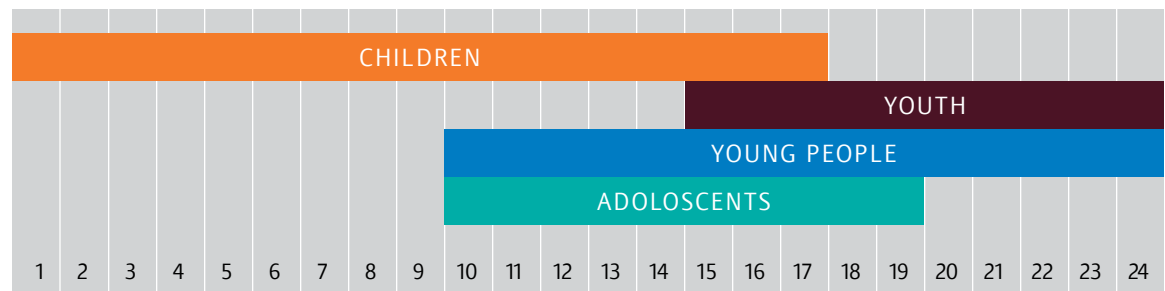
Although this report draws from the wider definition of children and youth on the move, a decision was made by the authors to focus on children and youth who migrate. Thus, the report does not go into depth on the situations of children and youth who have been trafficked, who have been displaced by conflict or disaster, or who are living in the street. The authors do recognize that children and youth who migrate may be more vulnerable to trafficking, that conflict and disaster often provoke migration, and that children and youth on the move may shift rapidly in and out of different situations. Therefore, many of the report’s findings and observations are applicable to the wider group of children and youth on the move. Within the report, we look at the situations of children and youth in four stages of mobility: predeparture, in transit, arrival and integration, and returning home.<sup>i</sup>

Available documentation on ICTs and child and youth migration does not always specify age groups or differentiate between children, adolescents, and youth; and all of these cohorts often share mobility experiences.<sup>ii</sup> In addition, there is no universal definition of “youth.” For this reason, the current report adopts the 2012 US Agency for International Development (USAID) definition, and focuses on children and youth who are 10 to 24 years old.<sup>11</sup> We use the term *children and youth* to include those who fall within the adolescent age group as well.

### Why do children and youth migrate?

Experiences vary across countries and contexts for children and youth who migrate. Some children make the decision on their own, whereas others are pressured by parents or accompanied by parents on the journey, and some are forced into migration. Children who have lost their parents may decide to leave their home communities and live on their own, or with relatives who foster them.<sup>13</sup> Both boys and girls migrate, but their reasons for doing so and their migration experiences often differ according to sex and gender.

**Figure 1. Common age labels applied to children and young people<sup>12</sup>**



<sup>i</sup> These stages of movement are explained in the next section of the report.

<sup>ii</sup> The Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments imply certain responsibilities for States and civil society groups working with children and adolescents younger than age 18.

### Why do children and youth migrate?

- To seek opportunity: seasonal work, education, employment, or the allure of living in the city
- To escape: domestic violence, early marriage, crowded households, poverty, or other family problems
- When forced: by war or civil conflict
- Due to climate change: disaster, environmental degradation, or drought
- Culture: traditions or rites of passage

A range of push and pull factors contribute to the movement of children within countries and across international borders. Some forms of mobility are criminalized, such as trafficking.<sup>iii</sup> Yet despite popular perception, many children and youth who move are not victims of trafficking or exploitation. Children and youth migrate for a number of reasons, including seeking seasonal work, education, or employment; the allure of living in the city; or escaping domestic violence, early marriage, crowded households, poverty, or other family problems.<sup>14</sup> In some cases, children and youth who move gain access to new opportunities, “some of which enable them to exercise more of the rights listed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).”<sup>15</sup>

Though emphasis is often placed on the negative consequences of child and youth migration, some positive elements have been identified as well, including education and training opportunities, economic opportunities, acquisition of skills and mobility, opportunity to access services, improved security, and personal development.<sup>16</sup>

### How many children and youth are on the move?

There are an estimated 214 million international

and 750 million internal migrants globally, and the number of global migrants is expected to grow to 400 million by 2040. Almost half of migrants are female. It is estimated that 33 million (or some 16 percent) of the total migrant population is younger than age 20, including 11 million children between 15 and 19 years old. Child and adolescent migrants make up a significant proportion of the total population of migrants in Africa (28 percent), Asia (21 percent), Oceania (11 percent), Europe (11 percent), and the Americas (10 percent).<sup>17 18</sup>

The mobility of children and youth on the move makes it difficult to develop programs to support and protect them while they are in transit. Most protective services are statically located in one place and are not designed with mobile populations in mind.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the fact that children and youth who move often remain out of sight due to fear of persecution or apprehension; because they are hidden by adults; or because they do not have documentation or birth records, makes it difficult to quantify the number of children and youth on the move. Little data is available beyond the micro-level on annual, seasonal, and temporary internal migration flows.<sup>20</sup> At the international level, most independent child migration is undocumented or irregular, as children of working age have limited legal channels through which to migrate.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the varying circumstances of children and youth on the move make it difficult to categorize and coordinate efforts among the different actors who are involved in support and protection efforts.

### Where do children and youth obtain resources for movement?

Children and youth who migrate come from a spectrum of different socioeconomic backgrounds and move for a variety of reasons. For this reason it

<sup>iii</sup> The United Nations’ Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines “Trafficking in Persons” as the “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.”

is difficult to generalize the economic backgrounds of all children and youth who migrate or to determine where they obtain resources to move. A common belief holds that children and youth who migrate come from the most poverty-stricken situations; however, this is not always the case, as some resources are usually necessary for migration.<sup>22</sup> A study in Afghanistan indicated that Afghan families raise \$7,000 to \$20,000 to fund the costs of their child's migration to a Western country. Although, some children pay for their own migration costs, often children are indebted to their families and repay large loans over time once they arrive at their destination.<sup>23</sup> Research in South Africa revealed that extremely poor families were willing to acquire debt or even undertake bondage in order to obtain funds to pay for their child's migration.<sup>24</sup>

### Stages of the migration process

The migration process is not necessarily a linear one. Some children and youth migrate for a period of time and then return home. Others assume a seasonal or temporary migration pattern, leaving and returning periodically. Others move to a destination only temporarily and then continue on to a new destination or destinations. Some may not return "home" but rather move back to a previous destination. Yet others may be forcibly returned to their country of origin. For this paper, we outline four stages of the migration process<sup>iv</sup> yet recognize that migration is a fluid phenomenon and that children and youth will likely move in and out of these stages rather than follow a linear trajectory.

- 1) **Predeparture:** This refers to a stage where children or youth are living with birth parents or others in a family or family-like situation. For a number of reasons — including violence; abuse; lack of basic services; lack of opportunities and well-being in their home communities; cultural traditions; or curiosity — they decide to seek a better life elsewhere and begin planning their move.<sup>v</sup>
- 2) **In transit:** This stage is when children are in the process of migration or movement, either by foot or being transported in one way or another. This phase also includes the short, temporary stops that children and youth make on the way to another destination.
- 3) **Arrival and integration:** This stage refers to when children or youth have arrived to a semipermanent destination and are employed or looking for employment or other means of survival; they are seeking to integrate or have decided to remain and integrate fully into their new location. (Not all children and youth will decide to integrate. They may continue moving on.)
- 4) **Returning home:** This stage covers the phase when a child or youth voluntarily returns home or is forcibly repatriated.<sup>vi</sup> (Not all children and youth will return home. Some may integrate into a first or second destination, and some may continue to move.)

<sup>iv</sup> The Global Movement for Children's Children on the Move concept (2010) considers pre-mobility, mobility, and post-mobility. For this paper we have included a fourth stage of "returning home," given that ICTs also play a role in the repatriation process and post-return. This is similar to the stages of "children still at home/in a similar environment; "children currently on the move" (either in transit or at a permanent or temporary destination); and "children who return home or are no longer mobile," outlined by Terre des Hommes International Federation (2012).

<sup>v</sup> Many efforts by governments and civil society organizations seek to prevent migration by improving local development or addressing the "push" factors that drive children and youth to move. Often, however, children and youth end up migrating, either within their own country or across borders, alone or with others, for voluntary or forced reasons. In this paper we do not cover the multitude of ways that organizations are using ICTs to improve local development contexts.

<sup>vi</sup> These are general phases, and it is recognized that each child or youth's situation is different, and these phases may not be fully applicable to every context or every individual.



### 3/ Information and communication technologies

The explosion in access to and use of new technologies, along with the increasing attention being placed on migration, make it an opportune time to further examine how children and young people are using ICTs to prepare for migration, to facilitate their journey, and to manage integration into a new location and upon their return home. It is also a useful time to take stock of the ways that ICTs are being used by CSOs to facilitate and manage their work; to support children and youth on the move; and to communicate and advocate for the rights of child and youth migrants.

Before further examining how children and youth migrants and CSOs are using ICTs, it is useful to establish a definition of the term “information and communication technologies” or “ICTs” and to explore what is known about ICT access and use among the general population, children and youth in general, and adult migrants.

#### What are ICTs?

No single definition has been agreed upon; however the term “ICTs” normally refers to a range of digital technologies, platforms, frameworks, and

Factors such as gender and level of education often compound disparities in terms of access to and use of ICTs. Drawing by Francine, YETAM Cameroon project.

devices that are used for collecting, analyzing, and sharing information and communicating in multiple directions.

The terms “new ICTs,” “new media,” or “new technology” usually include the Internet, computers, mobile phones, tablets, and global positioning systems (GPS). “Traditional ICTs” often include electronic media such as radio and television. Advances in digital technology have impacted the previous functioning of older technologies in many cases. For example, people can listen to the radio through their mobile phones or on the Internet. Voice calls can be made via the Internet, and television and video can be watched online. Radio stations may have a website, and they may pull information from social media to read aloud on their shows, and encourage listeners to use short message service (SMS) or call in with opinions on a topic.

Digital technologies and the Internet enable the use of applications and tools such as email, text messages, blogs, on-line document storage, video and radio streaming, photo sharing, and use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and a variety of other social networks. Access to media production and sharing via these platforms is less restricted than that of traditional media.

Of particular interest for many development practitioners is the basic mobile phone,<sup>vii</sup> given that its use is growing at a rapid pace. In addition, feature phones<sup>viii</sup> and smart phones<sup>ix</sup> (which can access the Internet) expand the possible uses and applications of the mobile phone, and access to these devices is also on the rise. The range and uses of ICTs are constantly changing as new ways of combining them emerge and as new innovations spring up and/or become obsolete at a rapid pace.

### **Global access to ICTs**

Across the globe, access to mobile devices and other forms of technology continues to increase. According to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), by the end of 2013 there will be 6.8 billion mobile-cellular subscriptions and mobile-cellular penetration should reach 96 percent of the global population. Mobile broadband grew by around 40 percent annually between 2010 and 2013. Mobile cellular penetration increased by 11 percent worldwide. Mobile broadband grew at a rate of 40 percent globally, 23 percent in the developed world, and 78 percent in developing countries, and this growth is expected to continue at double-digit rates over the next few years.<sup>25</sup>

Macro-level indicators such as these appear promising, yet there are often large differences in access within and among countries, including a digital gap between urban and rural areas, the

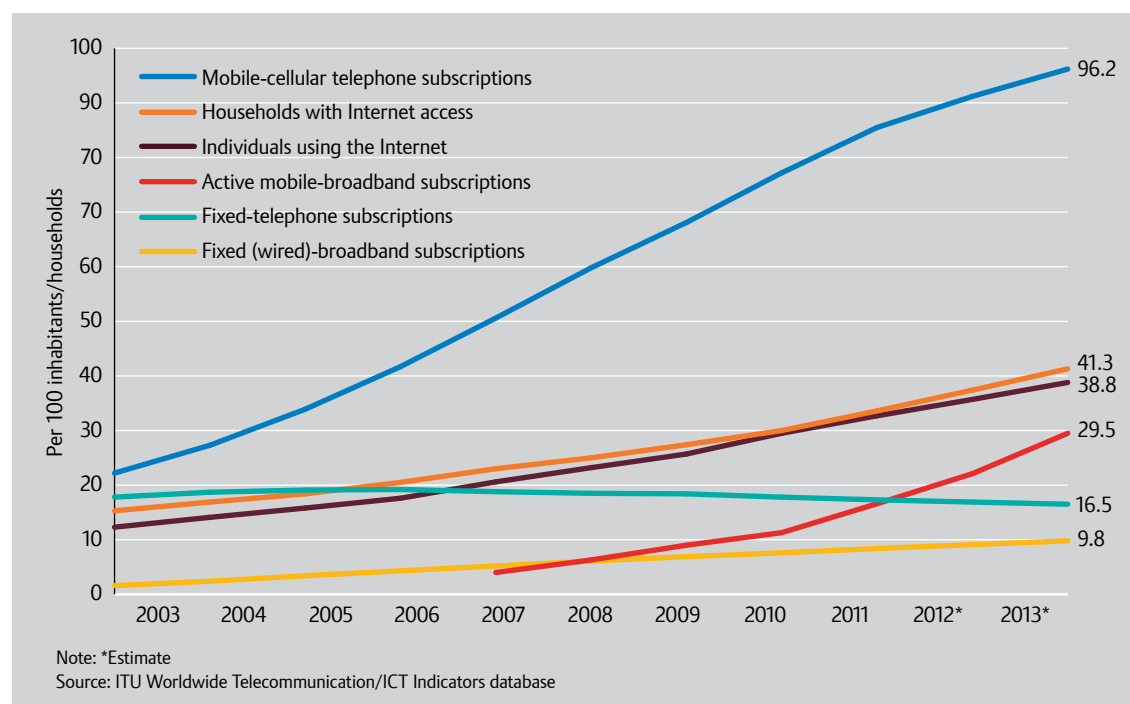
<sup>vii</sup> Basic mobile phones characteristically support little functionality besides voice calls and text messaging. The simplest mobile phone—sometimes called a “dumb” phone—is now the most widely available and owned communication device in the developing world.

<sup>viii</sup> Feature phones are the most inexpensive cellphones that are capable of hosting and running third-party mobile application software. Feature phones sometimes come with data plans, and the difference between a feature phone and a smart phone is blurring as technology advances.

<sup>ix</sup> Smart phones offer faster processing power, networking support, larger screens, higher screen resolution, and support for touch screens and virtual keyboards. Smart phones give users greater ability to produce and consume multimedia. Higher-end feature phones and lower-end smart phones are converging in both price and functionality, and mobile network operators and Internet service providers are working hard to bring data access to lower-income segments of the population through hybrid data plans or zero-cost mobile Internet browsing (GSMA, 2013).



**Chart 1: Global ICT developments, 2003–2013\***



rich and poor, and males and females. Individual access to a mobile device, for example, cannot be determined based on household access because a household phone may not be available equally to all of the members of the family.<sup>26</sup> In addition, ownership of multiple SIM cards<sup>x</sup> and devices skews this number, as the distribution of SIM cards and handsets is not equitable.<sup>27</sup> For this reason, the excitement over expansion of mobile phones and the Internet needs to be tempered with the realities of access and use, as multiple economic, geographical, biological, social, and cultural factors contribute to how or even if an individual interacts with ICTs.

### Trends in ICT use by children and youth

Some general trends can be identified in relation to children’s and youth’s access and use of ICTs:

- **ICT use among children and youth is growing, regardless of location and economic situation.** A 2010 study in Brazil, for example, surveyed youth from a range of communities and economic levels — including shantytowns, favelas, and private schools — and found that ICT use was quickly growing, particularly among 15- to 17-year-olds. Eighty-six percent of girls in this research had mobile phones and 82 percent used the Internet. Just over a quarter of respondents said they were “always online.”<sup>28</sup>
- **Factors such as gender and education compound disparities in access to ICTs.** Girls tend to have less access to ICTs than boys for a number of reasons, including discrimination; language barriers; and lack of confidence, time, money, and freedom.<sup>29</sup> Males in general continue to have higher levels of access, especially to more advanced ICTs.

<sup>x</sup> A “SIM” Card is a small chip with a unique serial number that fits into a mobile phone and carries information such as the international mobile subscriber identity (IMSI); security authentication and ciphering information; temporary information related to the local network; a list of the services to which the user has access; a personal identification number (PIN); and a personal unblocking code (PUK) for PIN unlocking.



Girls are finding ways to overcome the digital divide yet in many places they lag behind. Simple mobile phones are still more common in rural communities than “smart phones.” Photo: Linda Raftree, Plan International.

A study by the GSM Association (GSMA)<sup>xi</sup> in Uganda noted that of 1,000 mobile data users, 87.5 percent were male and 85 percent had a secondary education or higher.<sup>30</sup> A similar study in Ghana noted that the majority of mobile data users were male (82.5 percent) and 72 percent had secondary education or higher.<sup>31</sup> In both countries, two-thirds of mobile data users were students. Those groups with lower levels of education and fewer disposable resources will likely not have access to the Internet or smart phones.

- **Girls and young women are finding ways to overcome the digital divide.** A 2010 study on women and mobile phones surveyed more than 2,000 women older than 14 in four countries and found indications that almost 90 percent of girls in those countries could likely access a mobile phone in some way.<sup>32</sup> A 2011 study by Plan International consulted with 33 girls, ages 12 to 18, from both urban and rural areas in 13 countries in Asia, West Africa, and Latin America and found that many girls accessed

mobile phones and several had their own mobile phone. Among those who did not own a phone, most were able to borrow a phone from a family member (most commonly a parent) or friend.<sup>33</sup>

- **Simple mobile phones are more available in rural communities than “smart phones,” computers, or Internet.** By the end of 2013, the ITU estimates that there will be some 2 billion mobile-broadband subscriptions globally. In other words, there will be a global penetration rate of about 30 percent. In Africa, however, there is only an 11 percent penetration rate (up from 2 percent in 2010) of mobile-broadband. Growth is expected to continue over the next five years, yet countries and communities vary significantly in terms of smart phone ownership, and not all countries will have widespread smart phone usage in the very near future.<sup>34</sup> Even when there is a high level of penetration at the country-wide level, this does not mean that the most vulnerable or children and youth have access. For example, the above-mentioned Plan study notes that very few of the girls surveyed spoke of smart phones. Girls who owned their own phones often relied on parents to provide phone credit. Hardly any of the girls had their own computer or could access one in their home. Many, however, said they could access computers through their schools, a nongovernmental agency, a youth group, or an Internet café. Most of the girls had used mobile phones, many on a daily basis. Computers and the Internet were used less frequently. Several of the girls surveyed — all from rural areas — had only heard of the Internet but had never used it, or had very infrequent access to it.<sup>35</sup>
- **Mobiles are more widely accessible than other ICTs.** A study on the use of new ICTs by the African Movement for Working Children and

<sup>xi</sup> The GSM Association is the global coordinating body for mobile service providers.

Youth (AMWCY) in West Africa revealed a number of ways that the organization uses ICTs, including sensitization efforts via radio, video, and mobile phones. It notes, however, that “the mobile phone is the most widely-used ICT within most grassroots groups due to its accessibility and facility” and that “the mobile phone does not create the same risk of exclusion as the computer creates.”<sup>36</sup>

### **Trends in ICT use by migrant populations**

While little data exists on ICT use among migrating children and youth, some trends can be noted based on research on adult migrants and the ICTs they employ. Given that much of this research does not specify age, we assume that some participants in these studies fall within the under-29 age group.

- **ICTs have increased the range of communication channels open to migrants.** ICTs are used in regular and irregular migration, supporting families and maintaining family relationships, and sustaining cultural identities.<sup>37</sup> While ICTs remain out of reach for many people in the world,<sup>38</sup> their impact is still felt because the content of online communication travels back and forth between the online and offline worlds, and across developing and developed countries.<sup>39</sup>
- **The variation in ICT use between migrant and local populations is not consistent across**

**contexts.** Use of ICTs may rise upon arrival to a destination country if there is more availability, and ICT use may depend on other factors such as economic levels and education. One study found that, aside from Asian immigrants, immigrants in the United States were 20 percent less likely to make use of the Internet at home than nonimmigrants. Education and family income are the most significant factors contributing to Internet use in the US. In Australia, Canada, and the EU, however, average use of computer and the Internet tended to be higher among international migrants than for native-born residents. Some research notes that for Canadian immigrants, the need to communicate with family and friends abroad and the relatively low cost of doing this via the Internet may be the reason for higher ICT use. In the EU, immigrants are often young, and this may impact their higher use of computers and the Internet.<sup>40</sup>

- **It is important to be aware of the disparities and inequalities of access and use** that exist between groups and among countries, as this has serious implications on migrants’ access to ICTs, their ability to use these tools, and for their families and friends residing in their country of origin. These considerations are especially relevant when discussing international migration, because the level of development of both origin and destination countries impacts availability and use of ICTs.<sup>41</sup>



## 4/ How and why are child and youth migrants using ICTs?

Children and youth are using ICTs during migration to keep in touch with family and friends, access information, and access services. Drawing by Kelly, YETAM Cameroon project.

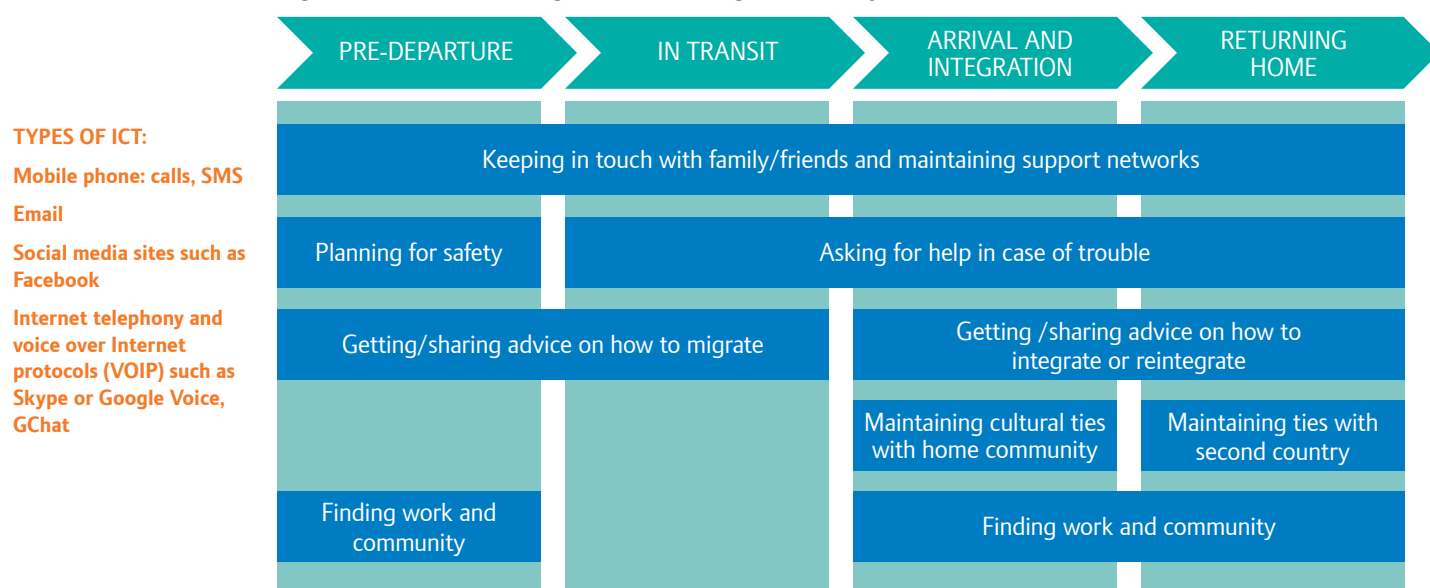
Although there are no large-scale, reliable studies available on the use of ICTs by child and youth migrants, our research identified a number of trends in how children and youth are using ICTs at the different stages of the migration process. Access to ICTs by child and youth migrants varies according to context: their stage in the migration process; their economic and education background; the level of ICT use in both their place of origin and their new location; and aspects such as use habits,

level of comfort with ICTs, language, culture, gender, cost, and availability.

Our research identified three ways that children and youth migrants are using new technology in the different phases of the migration process:

**1) communicating and connecting with family and friends; 2) accessing information; and 3) accessing services.** We further divided these into subcategories based on the information and

**Figure 2. Communicating and connecting with family and friends**



communication that children and youth are seeking or providing and the phase of migration.

### 1) Communicating and connecting with family and friends

Children and youth use a variety of channels to maintain contact with friends and family and connect with their support networks during the migration process. In the past, communication and connection were done through word-of-mouth or sometimes a landline telephone or by post. Now, in addition to the more traditional communication channels, new technologies allow connections to be maintained and/or established from afar, via mobile phone voice calls, SMS, email, social media, and Internet telephones such as Skype or Google Voice.

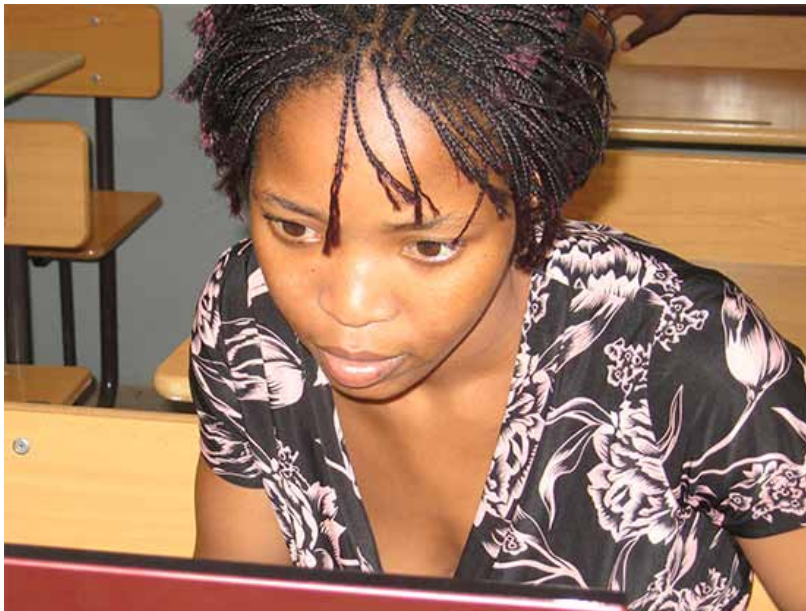
Children and youth migrants communicate and connect for a number of reasons, as noted below. As access to new technologies becomes more widespread, ICTs are increasingly being used to facilitate the process:

**Keeping in touch with family and friends and maintaining support networks.** Contact with family

and friends, trustworthy advice, and practical support facilitate the migration process. In fact, contact with family and friends who have migrated can encourage children and youth to migrate. One study found that children and youth in Niger who had access to mobile phones had more contact with those who had migrated and were more inclined to move.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to keeping in touch with families and friends back home, children and youth are using ICTs, especially mobiles and online social networks, to keep their support networks intact and to facilitate their own integration into their destination countries. Emerging literature suggests that migrant girls working long hours in tedious factory jobs in China and southeast Asia are creating and maintaining personal social networks through mobile phones and text messaging. Text messaging was observed to form a virtual social life and helped the girls to maintain connections with parents and family. It provided space for flirtation, “something quite new as compared to relatively restrictive cultural norms in rural homes.”<sup>43 44</sup>

Migration has become a source of income for entrepreneurs along common migration routes. “One-stop communication shops” have become common across Africa, for example. These shops offer a range of services: telephone calls, faxes, sending and receiving funds, Internet access, etc. Though not all children and youth have a phone while traveling, a combination of mobile access and these small communication shops are an important way to keep in touch.<sup>45</sup>



Some youth are able to access computers in order to connect via Facebook.  
Photo: Linda Raftree, Plan International.

#### Planning for safety/maintaining support networks.

Before migrating, some children and youth plan ahead by listing those people who they can contact during the journey and upon arrival. They can also prepare by memorizing phone numbers and international calling-card numbers that they will need along the way. Mobile phones can allow children and youth to call for help if they run into trouble during their journey or upon arrival.<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately, phones are often stolen or children and youth might not own a phone. Some detention centers provide children and youth with hotlines, free telephone calls, airtime, or use of mobile devices or the Internet to enable them to access

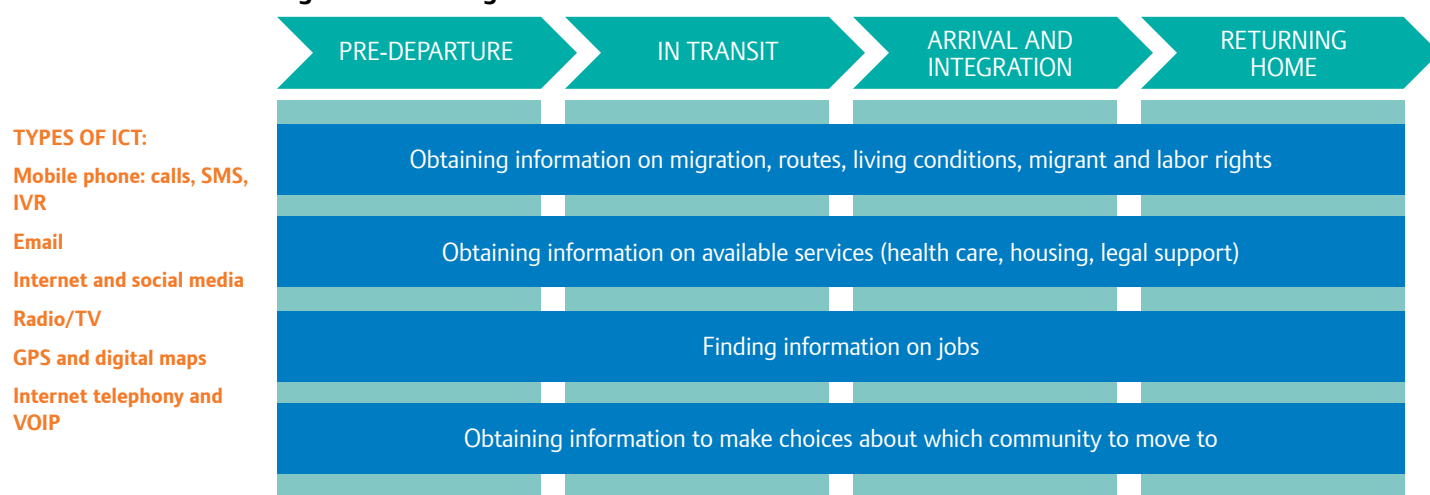
the support networks they need when they are in a precarious situation. Other centers, however, might confiscate phones.<sup>47</sup>

**Getting/sharing advice.** In addition to keeping in touch, maintaining support networks, and accessing help in case of emergency, children and youth use ICTs to gather and share information and advice about the migration process. For example, some children and youth seek someone to accompany them or to learn about the most convenient routes and paths to follow, and where to go upon arrival to find a welcoming community or work. Youth in northern Uganda, for example, said that they listen to the radio to gather information about jobs, the economy, and the general living situation in communities to which they are considering migrating, and this helps them make their decision. They also noted that after returning to their home communities, they used Facebook to connect with youth in other countries who were experiencing migration and conflict (e.g., Syria), to share their experiences and offer support.<sup>48</sup>

**Maintaining cultural ties.** When children and youth arrive to a new community, they often use ICTs to maintain ties with those at home. Social networks have been shown to ease children and youth’s integration into new communities.<sup>49</sup> These networks can be sustained and expanded through the use of mobile phones and social media. In the case of refugee populations, the Internet is helping to maintain connections with family, culture, and news from home, and to keep in touch with resettled refugees in other parts of the world. International call services, phone cards, reduced-rate calling plans, and the Internet are all helping families who have been separated by migration to stay in more frequent communication.<sup>50</sup>

**Finding work and community.** Finding work and integrating into a new community or country are paramount for children and youth who migrate.

**Figure 3. Accessing information\***



\* Information provided by the media, civil society and youth organizations, government, private sector, or persons not personally known to the youth

Connecting with family and friends before departure to find work and to plan for the journey can be done across borders using mobiles or the Internet. Upon arrival, ICT tools can serve to help young people continue the search for work, and, after time away from their country of origin, children and youth can use new technologies to connect with peers and adults upon their return.

## 2) Accessing information

As new technology becomes more available to people around the world, child and youth migrants are relying more and more on ICTs for accessing information above and beyond what they can obtain from friends and family. Whether explicitly seeking or passively receiving information, children and youth can become more informed before, during, and after migration by using ICTs.

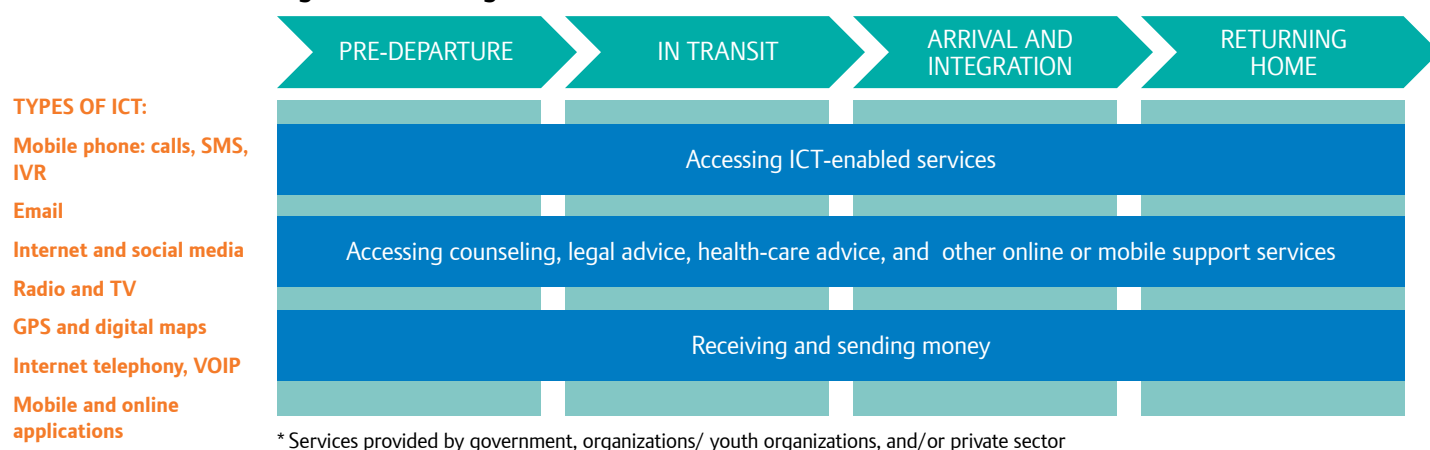
**Obtaining information about migration.** In an effort to be prepared, young migrants might try to find out as much as possible about their journey and final destination before they depart, including information about travel routes, migrant rights, living conditions at the place of destination, labor laws, where to access services, and other core topics.<sup>51 52</sup> Many children and youth rely on face-

to-face information sources, as outlined in the previous section, yet the Internet and mobiles are increasingly used to discover and share information about migration outside of the circle of known friends and family and through official or online information sources. In West Africa, for example, researchers noted the existence of a website with detailed information on irregular migration, seasonal considerations, starting points, drop-off points, and guidelines for avoiding danger as much as possible during the journey.<sup>53</sup> The website suggested that a GPS unit would be useful for navigation. Both ICTs and traditional media (such as radio and television) can play up the benefits of life in other countries or in the city, and children and their families might need support to determine which information is valid and reliable to avoid getting deceived.<sup>54</sup>

### Obtaining information on available services.

Immediately upon arrival in a destination country, children and youth might need to find out where they can access basic services such as health care and housing. They might also seek information on ways to legalize their status. In the case of detention, children and youth might need

**Figure 4. Accessing services\***



help navigating a complex system, especially in countries with low levels of respect and care for child migrants.<sup>55</sup> In many cases, this information is sought through word of mouth, but it can also be found on the Internet or through hotlines that point to support and friendly resources. Because children and youth might want to stay “under the radar” and avoid detection, organizations tend to seek ways to deliver social services that do not limit or threaten young people. When available, the Internet and mobile phones are useful for providing resources to children and youth on the move because young people can access information on their own timeframe, at their own pace.<sup>56</sup> Mobile phones and the Internet can also offer children and youth a certain level of anonymity when seeking information, and this might appeal to them and encourage them to seek support.

**Finding job information.** Though most jobs are found through word of mouth, job listings might be advertised on the Internet and specifically targeted to migrants. These present a good deal of risk as well as potential opportunity, however, and can be difficult to verify. In some cases, public-access spaces — such as information centers, telecenters, libraries, and Internet cafés — allow children and youth to look for work.

### 3) Accessing services

Advances in technology and innovations in thinking have enabled some goods and services to now be directly accessible via the Internet or a mobile device; for example, funds can be transferred through a mobile phone and the Internet has opened up opportunities for online learning. Depending on their levels of access and sophistication of use, children and youth might be able to directly access services through ICTs during the different stages of migration. ICT-enabled services will be further explored in the section on how civil society organizations are using ICTs in their work with child and youth migration, because many of the services that migrating children and youth are accessing are provided by or involve CSOs.

**Accessing ICT-enabled services.** One of the key reasons that children and youth migrate is the lack of access to basic services and opportunities in their community, such as jobs and income; educational opportunities; social protection mechanisms (insurance, pensions, social welfare, etc.); freedom from violence; and legal support.<sup>57</sup> Movement of children and youth often increases in the face of poverty or a real or perceived lack of adequate opportunities locally. Many civil society organizations are integrating ICTs into different programs in an effort to improve community



development and expand services to children and youth in marginalized areas. Services at all stages of the migration process are being altered (slowly or rapidly, depending on various factors) as technologies change. In some cases, they are becoming more accessible to children and youth who migrate.



Stations to top up airtime or to send mobile money are found along major migration routes, and in most rural areas as well. Photo: Linda Raftree, Plan International.

Accessing counseling, legal services, health-care advice, and online or mobile support. Although children and youth on the move have unique needs, service providers often operate on a model that caters to static populations rather than those on the move.<sup>58</sup> A number of government and civil society organizations offer legal advice, health counseling, and support for victims of violence or abuse through hotlines and other mobile support services, and children and youth are able to access these via mobile phone or the Internet. In some instances, civil registration can be done online or

via the mobile phone, facilitating protection for children and youth who are planning to migrate or who are at risk due to lack of identity papers.

**Receiving and saving money.** Mobile money allows people to send or receive money. These services are important to migrants who have reached their final destination, but they are also used during transit.<sup>59</sup> Money-transfer services can help protect migrants from theft because migrants no longer need to carry large sums of money with them to cover their expenses during the journey. Money-transfer points are not only found in major cities; they are increasingly found in smaller villages and secondary cities along migration routes, and they are critical for regional and international migration.<sup>60</sup> These centers, along with mobile money transfers in countries where mobile banking systems exist, may also support children during transit. Most commonly, children and youth on the move state that having or receiving money is their most important need.<sup>61</sup> Although there is no research body demonstrating that children and youth are using mobile money services, emerging research indicates that a majority of migrant girls in Kenya save their money and send remittances back to their families. Of adult migrants in Kenya, 90 percent had sent money with their mobile phone domestically in the 30 days prior to a 2012 survey.<sup>62</sup> Based on this, it is assumed that as mobile money services become more common, more children and youth will use them. One consideration is whether age limits apply for any of these mobile money services, or if other elements hinder children and youth on the move from accessing them.



## 5/ Trends in the use of ICTs in child and youth migration work by civil society organizations

CSOs are using ICTs in three main areas in their work on child and youth migration: 1) research and data; 2) program communication and delivery; and 3) public engagement and advocacy. Efforts include initiatives at the primary (preventive) level that target the whole population and seek to provide support and education on migration; programs at the secondary level that focus on vulnerable and at-risk populations; and services at the tertiary level that target those who are experiencing an acute need.<sup>63</sup>

In some cases this work is fairly advanced and in others it is just emerging and less developed and documented. For the purposes of this paper, we consider “CSOs” to be youth-led organizations; community-based organizations; local and national nongovernment or nonprofit organizations; international development organizations and UN agencies; and others working in this space who are not part of the government or the private sector. The following section explores some of the trends

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are at varying levels of capacity when it comes to using ICTs in their programming with child and youth migrants. Drawing by Christian, YETAM Cameroon project

**Figure 5. Ways CSOs use ICTs in their work with child and youth migrants**

RESEARCH AND DATA	PROGRAM COMMUNICATION AND DELIVERY	PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND ADVOCACY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Research, consultation, data collection, data visualization</li> <li>■ Child protection systems, inter-agency coordination, and cross-border communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Information centers and safe spaces equipped with ICTs</li> <li>■ Mobile and e-service provision</li> <li>■ ICT-enabled development and income generation</li> <li>■ Child protection networks and protective accompaniment</li> <li>■ Information on child and youth-friendly support and services</li> <li>■ Incident reporting, counseling referrals, and response</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Education, engagement, and advocacy</li> <li>■ Youth voice and representation</li> </ul>

identified in relation to CSOs using ICTs in their work with child and youth migrants.

### Research and data

New technologies are having a strong impact on how CSOs collect, manage, analyze, visualize, and share data. In terms of ICTs and child and youth migration, two trends to note are: a) the use of ICTs for research, consultation, mobile data collection, data visualization for decision making; and b) the use of ICTs to improve child-protection systems, interagency coordination, and cross-border communication and prevention of abuse and exploitation. Below we offer some examples.<sup>xii</sup>

a) **Research, consultation, mobile data collection, and data visualization.** Broader access to ICTs among the child and youth population is leading some agencies to experiment with online and mobile consultations. The United Nations set up an e-consultation to pull in youth voices and opinions for the 2013 World Youth Report on Youth and Migration. Youth were also encouraged to send in their migration stories to be highlighted in the final report. Google Hangout<sup>xiii</sup> was used, as well

as a survey and opportunities to submit photos, drawings, and animations on the topic.<sup>64</sup> This information was used to orient and shape the report, which will guide the UN’s work with youth and migration going forward. Another project in which ICTs are used for consultation is UNICEF’s U-Report project,<sup>65</sup> which works with more than 100,000 “U-Reporters” in Uganda. Child and youth U-Reporters receive survey questions on topics related to development in their communities. They share their insights via SMS, and their ideas and opinions are consolidated and analyzed in order to influence UNICEF and government efforts and interventions.

The African Movement of Working Children and Youth (AMWCY) uses ICTs to track children by conducting searches in the 3,028 neighborhoods where it is organized to find lost children and to identify their parents. ICTs are also used by the organization to aid in protection efforts by interviewing children to assess their living and working conditions, and to share contacts with children who are mobile.<sup>66</sup> In some

<sup>xii</sup> These examples are not exhaustive.

<sup>xiii</sup> Google Hangout is an online video platform that can be used to host video meetings and online panel discussions.

cases, community child-protection groups record the names of people who enter and leave the community, including children and youth on the move (using national registration numbers or other identification) and keep track of young people's contact details, transportation plans, routes, and intended destinations.<sup>67</sup> ICTs play a role in some of these processes.

The Caucus for Children's Rights in Tanzania has been gathering data and generating support for the establishment of a national child-protection policy through a radio show on child protection that encourages listeners to submit by SMS instances when they have protected or helped a child, as well as their location. The SMS reports are mapped in order to visualize where support for child protection is found within the country. The data will be used to build a national constituency of child-protection advocates who will support the law.<sup>68</sup>

Mobile data-gathering tools are being used by many civil society organizations to conduct monitoring and evaluation.<sup>xiv</sup> In addition, academics and various organizations are looking at ways that "big data," including mobile-phone records and "data exhaust" left behind when people search the Internet can be used to track migration patterns and to predict movement, conflict, and other related phenomena.<sup>69</sup> Visualizations of the data captured can help organizations make program and funding decisions, and to shape advocacy campaigns. Some of this information supports interagency coordination and can help improve information management in support of child-protection systems, as outlined below.

#### b) Child-protection systems, interagency coordination, and cross-border communication.

As national, regional, and global coalitions work to establish and implement child-protection systems that provide support to all children in an organized and holistic way, it becomes more critical that information-management systems are interoperable and that information is shared. ICTs can help connect child-protection networks and actors such as community volunteers and community-based protection mechanisms, community organizations, counselors, health-care officials, social-services workers, and legal-aid providers with children and youth on the move, who often fall outside of the system because of their mobility, especially while they are in transit. The Children on the Move Interagency Working Group recommends an integrated approach based on information exchange, research, and data analysis, and ICTs play a strong role in these systems.<sup>70</sup>

In Senegal, for example, data on vulnerable children are being collected through mobile phones as part of an interagency child-protection data system pilot project. The tool supports case management and referral and facilitates the provision of family welfare services and reintegration. Through a data system, a common referral pathway with clear standards, policies, and levels of access to data is shared across services. Children are referred for emergency care services and case management before reintegration, or they go directly into a reintegration pathway with family or others. The system enables better collaboration among agencies on individual cases. Mobile applications have been developed to either orient a child to a service or to allow caseworkers to identify, register, and monitor children and fill out a survey via the smart phone. Advantages of the system include

<sup>xiv</sup> For a thorough exploration of mobile data-gathering tools and how they can be used in the M&E process, see <http://www.theclearinitiative.org/mobile-basedtechnology.html>.

improved coordination and networking, and faster information and referral. Challenges include finding qualified and trained people to manage the system at each level; integrating judicial services in the process; creating institutional support; and encouraging often reluctant, older social workers to make a behavioral and cultural shift from paper to digital data collection.<sup>71</sup>



**Rather than attempt to prevent child and youth migration, many organizations are seeking ways to help make migration safer and more productive. ICTs can play a role in some instances.**

**Photo: Linda Raftree, Plan International.**

In situations of crisis or forced movement, children might be separated from their families, especially if there are limited communications. A system called RapidFTR (Rapid Family Tracing and Reunification) was developed by UNICEF to help aid workers to collect, sort, and share photographs and information about children to help register them for services and reunite them with their families. RapidFTR can work as a stand-alone system or it can be synchronized with the Inter-Agency Child Protection Information System, a case-management tool used by the child-protection subcluster

during emergency response. Information on a child is uploaded to a central database whenever a network connection is available. Aid workers can both register children and search entries to help parents and relatives find missing children.<sup>72,73</sup> Similarly, Refugees United offers a social network with profiles modeled after Facebook, with which people can search for lost family members. The family-tracing project in Kenya helps refugees in Nairobi, Dadaab, and Kakuma track down and reconnect with one another through a secure database.<sup>74</sup> Plan International is developing a three-country missing-child alert system in Bangladesh, Nepal, and India that is designed to allow people to report missing children or alert authorities when children appear to be in a difficult situation. The system relies heavily on a number of ICT tools and input channels as well as shared country databases. It aims to improve cross-border efforts to find and rescue children who are trafficked.<sup>75</sup>

Lastly, ICTs help in the sharing and coordination of information and services across borders. The Guatemalan Child Return and Reintegration Project (GRRP), operated by the US-based organization Kids In Need of Defense (KIND), matches unaccompanied children with pro bono attorneys from major law firms and organizations, so that children do not face immigration proceedings without support. The organization relies on ICTs to make possible and affordable KIND's reintegration work in the United States and Guatemala. Intakes and assessments are completed by a social worker through Skype videos. KIND then submits the referral to a local NGO partner in Guatemala using Skype, mobiles, and email. KIND's local NGO partners in Guatemala contact the family of the unaccompanied child by phone.<sup>76</sup>

### **Program communication and delivery**

As ICTs become more accessible across the globe, ICTs are becoming a more integral part of CSO programming. Though ICTs might still exclude those who do not have access or cannot use them, and while good program design is critical,<sup>xv</sup> new technologies in some cases can expand and deepen program reach.

In our research, we identified seven trends in ICT-enabled programming for and with child and youth migrants: a) child-protection networks and protective accompaniment; b) information for safer migration; c) information on child- and youth-friendly support and services; d) information centers and safe spaces equipped with ICTs; e) incident reporting, counseling and support, referrals, and response; f) ICT-enabled development and income generation; and g) mobile and e-service provision.

**a) Child-protection networks and protective accompaniment.** Protective accompaniment of children (PAC) refers to the prevention of risk throughout the migration process. Through a PAC mechanism, children, their families, and their communities organize themselves to actively participate in creating a protective and accompanied environment for children and youth who are migrating.<sup>77 78</sup> The AMWCY implements a PAC consisting of more than 17,000 members in 311 associations in 24 African countries. Though 71 percent of AMWCY's members are children and many do not have formal education and/or have been abandoned at a young age, they are active actors in the protection of their own rights, having created a substantial support system that listens, informs, and intervenes to protect children. An AMWCY organization can be found approximately every 200 kilometers throughout West Africa.

AMWCY supports children's rights to remain in their place of origin and advocates for the well-being of children and youth to prevent migration. However it also recognizes that, at times, migration is unavoidable.

PACs can be enhanced by connecting them to one another or connecting members through mobile phones. These are known as "mobile-protection networks" and they serve as accompaniment programs during transit. The AMWCY has set up a mobile-protection network in Benin in partnership with a local phone company that agreed to a flat-fee subscription rate for all phones that are part of the network. The network in Benin offers information about destination and departure cities with the aim of safeguarding children. AMWCY's member villages provide phone numbers to call where children can access information to help them safely move from one city to another. For example, if a child wants to migrate from Ketou to Cotonou, the AMWCY members in Ketou will contact members in Cotonou to provide the child with the number. Both cities work together to confirm departure and arrival of the child. The arrival city monitors the child regularly, enabling the child to contact their city of origin at no cost to the child. This program is also currently in place in Burkina Faso, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, and other West African countries. Radio and other media channels help to alert children and their families to PAC networks.

**b) Information for safer migration.** Organizations often target the children and youth most likely to migrate with information on its advantages and disadvantages. This might include guidance on how to distinguish between reliable adults and those with ulterior motives. Media awareness campaigns about migration can also help parents and

<sup>xv</sup> See section 6 for more information on elements to consider when designing programs in the area of child and youth migration.

guardians fully understand the risks that children and youth on the move face.<sup>79</sup>

The AMWCY conducts sensitization efforts via radio, video, and mobile phone, including distribution of text messages on its 12 Working Children and Youth Rights manifesto. The organization also organizes festivities aimed at making the objectives of the movement known to nonmembers; hosts competitions for children and youth; and shares videos with the public to sensitize them on “practices that endanger the security and development of children and youth.”<sup>80</sup> In a similar effort in Afghanistan, the Child Protection Action Network (CPAN) and Youth Information Contact Centers (YICCs) reached out to communities via radio and television to provide information on smugglers, physical and psychological demands of transit, and safety concerns.<sup>81</sup>

**c) Information on child- and youth-friendly support and services.** As mentioned, access to information online and through mobiles is sometimes welcomed by youth who wish to remain under the radar or those who want to access information in their own time frame. Digital Undoc is an initiative that aims to increase understanding of how social media and digital technology can help provide information and advice as well as support the needs of children and youth who have irregular immigration status in the United Kingdom. The organization held a contest whereby eight projects were pitched: a secure, online referral system that will help youth apply for a special funding scheme when they have been denied legal aid; a multilingual text-messaging service that would help new migrants locate services; an application to help youth who are unaware of their status to connect by live chat via a pseudonym with those who can

support them; a music application downloadable in community centers that comes with information about support services; an online map that allows youth to link with their local community; an application that would send messages, images, and songs to inspire young people; a bilingual site that allows young people who will be forcibly returned to their country of origin to think through how they will manage their first day back; and a database of videos about people’s experiences and advice for young people on accessing services and information. Winning projects received funding for developing their applications.<sup>82</sup>

Another organization working on a mobile application is the UK-based Refugee Support Network (RSN), which works with Afghan refugee youth living in the United Kingdom who are facing forced repatriation upon reaching age 18. The youth often return to a country that feels foreign to them, where they have few contacts, and where they might be viewed as suspicious given their Westernization. In many cases, youth use their mobile phones upon arrival in Kabul to call their social workers in the United Kingdom to seek support. Most of the youth have smart phones while in the United Kingdom, and RSN plans to create a mobile application that would provide youth with maps and other information as well as contact information for support services located in Afghanistan to help them prepare for their return, and to provide support upon arrival in Kabul. A challenge is that youths’ smart phones might be stolen upon arrival and replaced with low-end phones without an Internet connection. Additionally, Afghan support agencies have expressed fear that being referenced on a mobile application might be security risk for them.

d) **Information centers and safe spaces equipped with ICTs.** Information is essential for children and youth in every stage of the migration process. One way to provide information to migrants is through migration information centers. A 2006 report tells of NGO-run centers that offered migrant workers information on job opportunities and favorable conditions to help them in their migration experience and to reduce risks. The centers had a telephone line, Internet access, and employment databases and offered placement services to migrant workers for a nominal membership fee. The centers lowered the costs of internal migration in India and created safety nets for migrant workers. The centers' success was related to their use of a participatory rural appraisal approach and effective use of ICTs.<sup>83</sup>

Another approach is the establishment of “safe spaces” where children and youth can meet with other children, store their possessions, bathe and wash clothing, or retreat from the streets. Safe spaces are a good practice in working with children and youth on the move, and these drop-in centers provide them with valuable advice, information, and resources.<sup>84</sup> Offering access to computers, the Internet, and Facebook at these centers can encourage children to visit and access other services.<sup>xvi</sup>

e) **Incident reporting, counseling and support, referrals, and response.** Hotlines that offer counseling and referrals or that allow people to report incidents of violence or abuse have been around for many years. With the advent of new ICTs, these have become available to more people, and new forms of reporting and referral are emerging. Every year, for example, children and youth make more than 14 million calls to

telephone hotlines within the Child Helpline International (CHI) global network, which operates in 136 countries. As technology changes, CHI adds new channels to its repertoire based on the local context and the type of communication channels available to and most used by children and youth. When Childline Kenya first started, for example, it had a fixed line with a free call number and received around 600 calls per month. The organization moved to mobiles in 2009 and began receiving 20,000 calls per month.<sup>85</sup> Support is now accessible through email, web forums, chat rooms, SMS, and instant messaging.<sup>86</sup>

Some child hotlines offer 24-hour support services that are effectively being used by migrant children from where they begin their journey. Save the Children, for example, ran a program in Myanmar to assist children during transit. Before departure, children from a village in the northern Shan state registered for migration at an information center set up by a child-protection committee. Each registrant was given the number of a 24-hour mobile phone hotline to call in case they needed help during transit or on arrival. As such, when some were abused and exploited in China, they called the hotline and were subsequently traced and rescued.<sup>87</sup>

In Togo, a free line called “Hello 111” is available for reporting cases of child abuse; it also triggers an intervention system.<sup>88</sup> In Benin, SMS reporting of child rights and violence against children has been piloted in two districts by Plan International. Children, youth and other stakeholders were involved in the design of the system and in identifying potential risks related to reporting violence. In this case, Plan promotes the reporting system and supports youth-led training among community leaders and children and via the local

<sup>xvi</sup> It should be noted that ICTs can open up new vulnerabilities and risks for abuse, and it is important to update organizational child-protection protocols to include new media and new points of contact with children.



radio station to raise awareness of the reporting system and to provide instructions on how to report. Reports have uncovered patterns in child trafficking, high rates of forced marriage, and sexual violence. Plan staff and local child-protection authorities follow up on each report according to national protocols.<sup>89</sup> Recently the program was expanded to the capital city, where taxi drivers were trained on how to spot and report potential cases of child abuse and trafficking while on their normal routes.<sup>90</sup>

**f) ICT-enabled development and income generation.** Starting with the premigration phase, many organizations are doing holistic prevention work using ICTs in their community-based health, education, reproductive health, economic empowerment, child rights, participation and governance, and other development programs in an effort to improve local conditions to prevent migration.<sup>xvii</sup> The AMWCY notes that ICTs have been an effective catalyst in rural villages because they help children develop skills and generate incomes, and ICTs have deterred the migration of children and youth by increasing opportunities in rural villages.<sup>91</sup> Young people in northern Uganda were supported by War Child Holland to establish an ICT and media center in their community, and this now generates income for them as a youth association.<sup>92</sup>

**g) Mobile and e-service provision.** When ICTs are available, child and youth migrants can directly access certain services during the different stages of migration. For example, the Internet has opened up opportunities for online learning, and digital birth registration allows children to legalize their identity, a crucial means of protection whether they migrate or not. Mobile phones have been used to provide sexual reproductive health information as well, and ICTs are helping families trace one another in the

case of separation during forced movement or in the case of children who go missing.

In South Africa, migrant children find it difficult to enter the formal education system. Most child migrants do not carry their school report cards with them and are thus refused entry into school, even though officially anyone 15 or younger is entitled to education by South African law. At the same time, the national government does not recognize the need for alternative or nonformal education. Save the Children plans to run a pilot project, together with a private sector IT partner, in which they would load tablets with age-appropriate content based on the official South African curriculum together with curriculum from children's home countries. The initiative would advocate for the official recognition of this combined curriculum and standardized tests. The mobility of the tablet would allow children and youth to study when they are not working, and the standardized testing would enable them to access the senior certificate exam online, or at least gain official recognition of having completed nonformal education.<sup>93</sup>

Identity documents can help to track children who are lost at some point during migration or if they are pulled into the worst kinds of situations such as hazardous child labor, sexual exploitation, or trafficking. Birth registration can also help children prove their age in cases of legal action, and access to such identity information can help ensure a more comprehensive database so that officials who find children and youth in hazardous situations can identify them and grant them any legal rights and sanctions to which their age entitles them and safely return them home. These data systems can also be useful in reconnecting children and youth with family members. A number of organizations are piloting digital birth registration efforts. Plan International's

<sup>xvii</sup> There are too many "ICT for Development (ICT4D)" initiatives to cover in this report.

Identity at Birth Project aims to make it possible to register a child locally via a mobile phone.<sup>94</sup> Other digital birth registration efforts have supported municipal governments to digitize birth records for easier management and quicker processing, and they have used SMS to inform parents when documents are available, saving them time and money on unnecessary travel.<sup>95</sup>

In the Ukraine, UNICEF supported social workers to take advantage of the prevalence of mobiles to conduct outreach with adolescent female sex workers. In Nicolaev, where the project took place and where 90 percent of adolescent female sex workers have mobile phones, outreach workers recruited the girls to a drop-in center that offered a variety of services, and the girls gave social workers their mobile phone numbers. The staff used these to keep track of the girls' movements; to invite them to events; to agree on and remind girls of appointments; to enable emergency calls in case of detention, abuse, or conflicts; and to provide basic telephone counseling. The project evaluation was highly positive: The girls' satisfaction rates were high and uptake of support services increased.<sup>96</sup>

### **Public engagement and advocacy**

In addition to their use in research and programmatic efforts, ICTs are core elements of public engagement and advocacy for many CSOs. They are being used to a) educate the general public and to create more positive attitudes toward child and youth migrants and migration in general and b) to serve as youth-led media platforms for young people to have their say and to influence the dialogue. ICTs, especially social media, are being used as tools for engaging and organizing people to support causes related to migration and migrants.

a) **Education, engagement, and advocacy.** The AMWCY uses a variety of ICT tools such as mobile phones, computers, photocopiers and scanners, cameras, digital devices, as well as the Internet for their website to create blogs, access email, and connect through Skype. These ICTs all help to mobilize networks for public activities, child-led debates on child rights, and mobilization for door-to-door campaigns.<sup>97</sup> In the United States, social media was used to educate the public and engage youth in a campaign around the DREAM Act, which would enable undocumented youth who arrived in the United States by age 15 to be eligible for temporary residency for six years after meeting educational or military conditions. Undocumented youth around the United States were mobilized through the Dream Act Portal to advocate and spread the word about the need for this legislation. The portal claims to be the largest community of undocumented youth in the United States.<sup>98</sup>

Other efforts seek to "humanize" migrants in order to reduce discrimination against them. The film *Who is Dayani Cristal?* retraces the steps that a forensic team goes through to identify the body of a man found in the Arizona desert. The search leads the team to a small town in Honduras, where the audience meets the deceased man's wife and family in a humble home.<sup>99</sup> A transmedia campaign was designed for the film to engage audiences in actions to learn about and support migrants. Through layered storytelling, the system in which migrants live and move is being mapped and an advocacy campaign developed around US immigration policy and participation in the 2013 US immigration reform debate. The campaign uses migrants' own stories and solutions as a starting point and adds narrative from professionals and activists to show the push and pull factors that make migration the only viable choice for some. The goal of the campaign is to put a human face on the issues, inspire empathy, provide

an avenue for migrant stories to be told, and build a collaborative network to advance the goals of the campaign. Real stories are connected to concrete engagement and action steps that the involved constituencies have developed.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, the “Life without Papers” website documents stories of undocumented people living in the United Kingdom in order to highlight vulnerabilities as well as the strength and resilience of undocumented people and to generate positive public opinion and empathy toward irregular migrants.<sup>101</sup> Additionally, Amnesty International conducted an outreach campaign that included a short video that asked everyday people in Mexico what they would take with them if they migrated.<sup>102</sup>

**b) Youth-led media.** ICTs can be a means for children and youth to organize and exchange ideas and experiences around common goals and interests. Access to ICTs offers children and young people an empowering platform through which they can access greater participation in their communities and beyond.

War Child Holland works with children and youth affected by war to provide psychosocial support (and life skills), education (formal and informal), and child protection. War Child Holland and UNICEF have partnered to create youth-led centers located in Ugandan internally displaced people (IDP) camps

as well as home communities upon return. These centers have helped empower children through the use of ICTs via media such as video diaries for documenting programs. They have also trained youth with computer and other skills so that they can increase their employability and gain greater access to jobs. Children and youth are active participants as they lead radio shows where they can dictate discussions and voice their concerns. The centers also encourage child-rights advocacy by offering a medium for children who have been through conflict to share their experiences through video and photography. Innovative technologies such as GPS mapping are used to help engage young women in northern Uganda to map their communities postconflict.<sup>103</sup>

In the United Kingdom, the Refugee Support Network (RSN) provides emotional support to youth who are forcibly returned to Afghanistan when all legal alternatives are exhausted.<sup>104</sup> The organization is exploring the creation of a website through which youth can use ICTs to communicate anonymously. Youth will be able to share their stories via various media such as video and web stories to create a network of support through which youth experiencing similar situations of repatriation can connect, so that they feel less isolated.<sup>105</sup>



## 6/ Conclusions and considerations on ICTs and child and youth migration

Awareness of the risks that children and youth may face when using ICTs is a key aspect of the program design process.

Drawing by Alexis, YETAM Cameroon project.

Child and youth migrants and CSOs are using ICTs across a range of areas and for a variety of reasons, as seen in the previous sections of this report. However, integration of new technologies in work with children and youth on the move has not yet been optimized or fully institutionalized. Though we were able to identify some major trends, our review of the literature, desk research, and outreach to various CSOs working in this space found little focused research at the intersection of child and youth migrants and ICTs. There also was

little evidence related to the impact that ICTs or ICT-enabled programs and services are having on migrating children and youth, whether positive or negative.

During the elaboration of this report, most key informants interviewed said that they had little information about how other organizations or initiatives similar to their own were using ICTs in their work. It was also difficult to find guidance on

### Checklist for planning strategic use of ICTs

(Adapted from Plan International's ICT-Enabled Development Guide<sup>107</sup>)

1. Context analysis: What is happening with ICT (for development) in the country or region?
2. Defining the need: What problems can ICT help overcome? What opportunities can it create?
3. Choosing a strategy: What kind of ICT4D is needed? Direct? Internal? Strategic?
4. Undertaking a participatory communications assessment: Who will benefit from this use of ICT and how?
5. Choosing the technology: What ICTs/applications are available to meet this need or goal?
6. Adjusting the content: Can people understand and use the information provided for and by the ICTs?
7. Building and using capacity: What kind of support will people need to use and benefit from the ICT, and to innovate around it?
8. Monitoring progress: How do you know if the ICT is helping meet the development goal or need?
9. Keeping it going: How can you manage risks and keep up with changes?
10. Learning from one another: What has been done before, and what have you learned that others could use?

good practices in the use of ICTs in child-centered programming, in protection work (aside from protecting children from online risks), or with children and young people in various stages of migration. Most key informants showed a great deal of interest in learning more, sharing good practices, and improving their capacities to use ICTs in their work. It is our hope that this report can help to generate greater efforts in this area. As an initial step toward identifying some good practices in using ICTs in work with migrating children and youth, we offer some considerations.

### Considerations when using ICTs in child and youth migration work

A number of overall challenges present themselves when working with children and youth on the move, including the very mobility of this population and their need to remain hidden at times; the lack of reliable and shared data; and poor coordination among CSOs, agencies, and governments. If well-designed, it makes sense to think that ICTs could play a role in strengthening programmatic work and outreach with this population, and in facilitating agency and government operations, cross-agency data collection, sharing, and coordination.

The literature does not offer specific guidelines or identification of good practices while working with children, youth, migration, and ICTs, as the field is a relatively new one. In addition, every project or program that involves migrating children and youth and ICTs will have its own particular considerations, challenges, and benefits. Thus it is difficult to generalize or offer specific recommendations on any particular kind of ICT until a situational assessment is conducted that involves a good look at the goal of communication; the type of information to be shared; the nature and nuance of how the involved children and youth normally communicate; the surrounding environment in which information and communication are happening; and the capacities of CSO involved in the effort.

### Planning strategic use of ICTs

Plan International's ICT-Enabled Development Guide offers a list of 10 aspects to consider when planning a program or initiative that includes ICTs, whether at a programmatic level or in support of institutional operations.<sup>106</sup>

As illustrated above, a number of questions need to be considered in order to determine whether ICTs can play a strong role in terms of information

sharing and communication or service delivery. The answers to these questions will also inform program or project design and in the selection of digital and/or more traditional communication channels that will best suit the population, context, and type of information being shared. Understanding these



A number of aspects need careful thinking through when designing ICT-enabled programs with children and youth migrants to ensure that aspects like literacy, accessibility, capacity, and connectivity are considered.

Photo: Linda Raftree, Plan International.

aspects will help to ensure that the use of particular communication tools is not marginalizing certain groups and that it can help mitigate risks to privacy and protection in the program and technological design of the project.

### **Designing ICT-enabled initiatives with and for child and youth migrants**

Going deeper into the above checklist, the following series of areas and specific questions to consider can help practitioners think through the integration of ICTs into programs specifically aimed at supporting and protecting migrant children and youth. ICTs are not the solution in many cases and they can actually create additional risk for children and youth:

- **Access** — What direct access do children and youth have to ICTs? Do they own a device by which they can receive/share or connect to information? Do they share one? With whom? Can they easily borrow one? How often? Do some members of the family or community have more access than others? How can greater access be achieved? What about CSO staff? Do they have regular access to ICTs?
- **Age** — What age group is involved or targeted with the program? Is the content being provided relevant for them? Is the age group so broad that information needs to be adapted for certain age groups? Will children of certain age groups actually have access to ICTs? Which ICTs? Will they have resources to cover costs of accessing information or communicating via ICTs?
- **Capacity** — What skills are needed to access and use the ICT? Do children and youth have those skills? What about the adults or staff working with children and youth? How can this capacity be further developed?
- **Conflict and emergencies** — Will conditions of conflict or emergency affect access? Will they impact on people's willingness to share information? Will they put people at greater risk?
- **Connectivity** — Is there a network? Is it reliable? Is it steady or intermittent? Slow or fast? How will children and youth access or share information via the network? Dial up? Broadband? WAP? 3G? Through a flash drive? How does the connectivity speed and device affect how information is shared or communicated? How do the factors above impact the type of content that can be shared, uploaded, or accessed? How can connectivity issues be addressed?

- **Cost** — How much does it cost to own a device? To borrow one? To use one? To access information on one? How does cost impact access? Does cost marginalize certain children and youth from accessing information? What alternative information and communication channels might supplement ICTs? How can cost be reduced?
- **Disability** — Do ICTs hinder or facilitate children or youth with a disability from participating or accessing information? Can ICTs help make information more accessible to those with a disability?
- **Economic status** — Will those with greater economic capacity derive disproportional benefits from the information or will they have more of an opportunity to communicate their points of view?
- **Electricity** — Is there electricity so that children and youth can charge and use devices? If not, how will they go about using and charging radios, mobiles, or other ICT equipment? How about staff? How does the design of the initiative take electricity access into consideration?
- **Existing information ecosystems** — How do people currently communicate? Using which tools? What are the trusted information sources and does it make sense to use ICTs? How can existing information ecosystems be enhanced by ICTs, or how can the most trusted sources be incorporated into the work?
- **Gender** — Will men and boys have greater access than girls and women? Has a gender analysis been done to consider differential impact and benefit for girls and women vs. men and boys? What about special risks of protection or privacy according to gender?
- **Information literacy** — Do children and youth know how to sort through rumors and misinformation that they may hear or find via new ICTs? Do they know how to find reliable sources of information and differentiate fact from fiction when using the Internet or receiving messages on their phones? How can these skills be developed in children, youth, parents, community leaders, and CSO staff?
- **Language** — Is information available in the right language(s)? Does information and communication exchange need to happen in multiple languages in order to reach the target population? Is anyone being left out by using a particular language? What is being done or could be done in the future to avoid marginalizing certain children and youth who do not speak a major language?
- **Literacy** — What are the levels of literacy of the children and youth in the target population? Do they vary? Is there available support in case of illiterate children and youth? Does this need for support put children and youth at any risk? If literacy is low, what other alternatives have been considered? Voice? Radio?
- **Power** — Will the more powerful community members be more privileged because of access, literacy, or the language of the information shared? Who is being left out by a particular choice of ICT tool? How will this be balanced out by the program design and who will keep an eye on this during implementation?
- **Protection** — Does access to a device or information put children or others at risk in any way, whether because of the value of the device, the information they may access via the device, the fact that others can reach them

through the device, perceptions about them with a device, or access to particular information or communication channels? Do children and youth know what information to share or not share? Do they know how to identify scams? If ICTs are used to report violations or share other sensitive information, is there risk of being traced? Of retaliation? If mapping or GPS is being used, does it allow children and youth to be pinpointed and does this bring additional risk? Is staff aware of these risks and how to manage them?

- **Privacy** — If children are going to upload or share their own personal data or information, how secure will the data be? If data are being collected by others, how secure will the data be kept? Who will see the data and have access to it? Has informed consent been obtained? Do children and youth know what will be done with their information if they share it? Has someone explained in plain language what the risks are and discussed them so that children can make informed choices? Do children and youth understand the nature of how, where, and for how long information is available after it is shared via certain devices or channels? Have organizational protocols been adjusted to take into consideration new ways of communicating or collecting data?

- **Sustainability** — How will the initiative be sustained over time? What is the total cost of ownership for devices that are used for ICT-enabled projects, above and beyond the initial purchase or start-up? What will happen to the information once the project ends? For the children and youth who have depended on the project for information, has thought been given to what they will do after?

- **Users** — How will those designing the program or project include the end users? How will end users be consulted and involved in testing the ICT solution or ICT-enabled information system?

Thinking through the above questions, and additional considerations, during program design and implementation can help organizations and institutions to do a better job of integrating ICTs into their work with children and young people, meeting goals of expanding their reach and service provision to children and youth on the move, and ensuring that ethics, participation, power analysis, privacy, and protection are considered in the process. UNICEF's recently released Child Friendly Technology Guide offers detailed orientation on how to design ICT-enabled programs with and for children.<sup>108</sup>





## 7/ Recommendations

Going forward, CSOs should develop greater awareness and capacity around the potential uses and risks of ICTs in work with children and youth on the move. Drawing by Gabrielle, YETAM Cameroon project

This report offers an overview of ICTs and child and youth migration as related to ways that children and youth are accessing and using ICTs and ways that CSOs are harnessing ICTs in their work with this population. It offers some general recommendations for integrating ICTs into a CSO's work and for designing programmatic initiatives that include children and youth and ICTs. Because the field is very new, there is little cohesive and conclusive research and evidence.

The core recommendation for furthering the field is:

- **Develop greater awareness and capacity among CSOs in this space regarding the potential uses and risks of ICTs in work with children and youth on the move.**

This could be done through:

1. Establishing an active community of practice on ICTs and children and youth on the move.
2. Mapping and sharing current projects and programs.
3. Creating a guide or toolbox on good practices for ICTs in work with children and youth on the move.
4. Further providing guidance on how ICTs can help “normal” programs to reach out to and include children and youth on the move.
5. Further documenting and developing of an evidence base.
6. Sharing and distributing this report for discussion and action.

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