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## Briefing

# Education, migration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

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### Key messages

- 31 million school-aged children are international migrants, and this number is set to grow. Their education is therefore a long-term strategic priority and investment.
- Educating migrant children is essential to meet SDG 4, and more broadly to achieve economic and social benefits such as improved livelihoods, better health outcomes, reductions in gender inequities and enhanced political participation.
- Large and unexpected migration flows can disrupt education systems, disadvantage migrant and refugee children and create tensions in host communities. To combat this, a combination of forward-planning and contingency funding is needed.
- Education plays an important role in social integration, economic mobility and learning outcomes. Migrant children should not be placed in segregated classes or schools, nor solely taught in their native language.
- There is limited data on the education of migrant and refugee children. Government and international institutions need to collaborate to collect such data, and use it to support vulnerable groups.

## Migration and the Sustainable Development Goals: a briefing series

People migrate to overcome poverty, escape conflict, or cope with economic and environmental shocks. In the words of the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, migration is ‘an expression of the human aspiration for dignity, safety and a better future. It is part of the social fabric, part of our very make-up as a human family’.

Migration is one of the defining features of the 21st century and can contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For this to happen, we need a better understanding of the relationships between migration and key development issues – such as health, education, gender, labour and urbanisation. This series of briefs, commissioned by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), explores these relationships across the 2030 Agenda and the impact of migration on key development outcomes.

### 1 Introduction

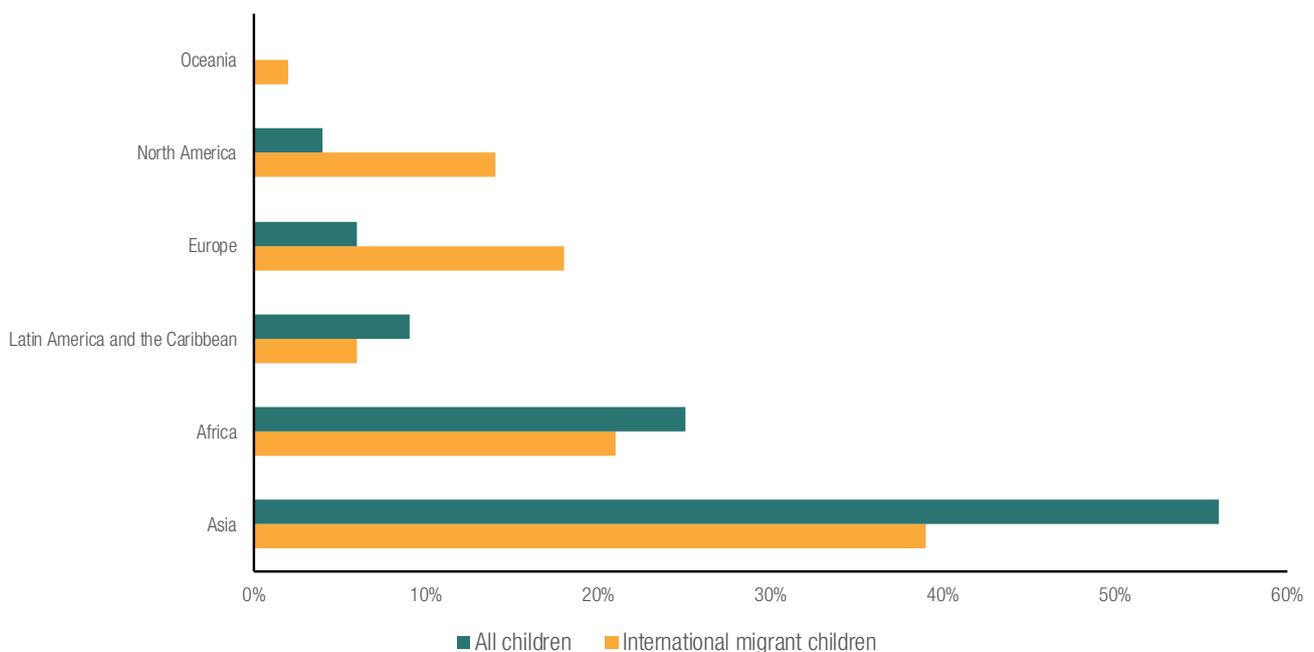
This briefing explores the challenges and opportunities related to primary-school education for migrants – especially in host countries – and the implications for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It focuses mainly on international migrants, but also includes a brief discussion of education for refugees.

In 2015, around 244 million people were international migrants<sup>1</sup> (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2016), including 31 million children below the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2016). This means that roughly one in 70 children worldwide live in a country different to that of their birth. Asia and Africa host the largest numbers of migrant children. Migrant populations in Africa are notably younger – one in three migrants is under the age of 18, a figure twice the global average.

While migrant populations tend to be younger in low-income countries and older in high-income countries, it is striking that Europe, North America and Oceania host a disproportionate number of migrant children compared to their share of all children globally (see Figure 1) (UNICEF, 2016). These patterns demonstrate that the challenge of meeting migrant education needs is a matter of importance for both high- and low-income countries.

The right to education for migrant children is protected by several legal instruments, including the 1990 Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants and Members of Their Families, and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, the extent to which these commitments are implemented in practice varies considerably. Moreover, they are particularly valid for

**Figure 1: Distribution of international migrant children and all children by region, 2015 (%)**



Source: UNICEF (2016).

1. International migrants are defined as people living in a country than the one in which they were born. In countries where this precise data was lacking, it was proxied for by the number of people with foreign citizenship. However, different sources of data in the brief might use slightly different definitions of international migrants, for example excluding short-term migrants from the statistics concerning migrants. We have tried to clarify where this is the case.

primary education, with the right to secondary and tertiary education less protected by legal instruments.

Overcoming barriers to migrant education is key to achieving not only the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on education, but also a range of other Goals. There is a strong evidence base showing that education contributes to improved livelihoods, more rapid economic growth, better health outcomes, reductions in gender inequities, strengthened support for democracy, higher levels of tolerance, enhanced political participation and greater concern for the environment. Providing education to migrant children is therefore of utmost importance – increasingly so given the likelihood of future growth in migrant flows (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2016; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2014).

This briefing first highlights why education matters for migrants and their host countries. It then goes on to discuss trends in primary education for migrant groups, as education at this level has important repercussions for educational achievement at upper levels and for joining the workforce. It examines how migrant education contributes to SDG achievement, particularly SDG 4 on education and sub-goals on children in vulnerable situations. It explores some of the major challenges, particularly in terms of integration into education systems and the kind of education provided. The analysis examines how migrant education issues may differ between low-, middle- and high-income countries, and concludes by drawing out detailed recommendations.

### **Box 1: Data challenges in migrant education**

In countries where official data collection is limited, only key variables such as age and gender are captured, and migration status is rarely recorded. Even if migration status is added to existing surveys, the ‘rareness’ of migrants may restrict a Ministries’ ability to collect meaningful data (Bilsborrow, 2016). While international organisations might collect information concerning the education of refugees residing in camps, little is known about those residing in urban areas due to the challenges in reaching them.

Politics can also play a role in preventing the collection of migration data, for example if governments wish to downplay the figures of immigrants and asylum-seekers. Moreover, even countries with well-functioning data-collection systems may be unable to produce precise estimates of children of irregular migrants. Schools themselves might face difficulties in collecting information on their students, even if they can persuade parents in legally vulnerable situations that such data is aimed at supporting their children, rather than reporting them to security authorities (Bartlett et al., 2015).

## **1.1 Why does education matter?**

Education brings a range of benefits for both individuals and societies. It provides children with skills that enable them to be more productive later in life, which leads to higher incomes and the possibility of breaking out of cycles of chronic poverty. It also shapes the way that citizens understand their society and engage with each other. These benefits are particularly important for migrants. Education creates opportunities to understand and better integrate into their host country, particularly when considering areas such as language, laws and customs. Being able to speak the language of the host country is especially important; across a range of surveys, respondents in host countries see it as a primary concern for effective integration (Dempster and Hargrave, 2017). More educated populations also tend to be more supportive of democracy, more likely to participate in politics, and more tolerant of differences (UNESCO, 2016) – all of which will help the host country to better manage the opportunities and challenges that migration creates.

Research finds that investment in this sector also produces strong returns for countries (Pritchett, 2006 quoted in UNESCO, 2016; Schäferhoff et al., 2016). Estimates suggest that every US\$1 invested in an additional year of schooling for children in low- and middle-income countries generates benefits in earning and health gains of US\$10 in low-income countries, US\$4 in lower-middle-income countries and US\$2 in upper-middle-income countries (International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity (Education Commission), 2016). Education is also likely to generate remittances, which tend to strengthen education in countries of origin.

## **1.2 Trends in migrant education provision**

Globally, there have been significant gains in education – particularly primary – since the early 2000s. However, these have largely been in terms of access, which has become compulsory in most countries, with more limited progress made on quality and equity (Education Commission, 2016). A major challenge in mapping education trends for migrant children is the absence of internationally comparable data, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, partly due to the diversity of migration flows (see Box 1). Where data is available, it suggests that immigrant students face greater difficulties than their host-country peers in accessing education and achieving good learning outcomes (OECD, 2015).

Large immigration flows can also have an impact on education systems, particularly if the host country does not have the infrastructure and resources to include a significant number of new students quickly. Demographic changes and rising demand for education caused by migration flows may lead to overcrowding in schools and falling education quality, larger class sizes and the emergence of a more complex mix of student language, existing skills and social norms. For example, the rapid

increase in the number of refugees in Jordan and Lebanon led to the introduction of second shifts in the afternoon for Syrian students, with negative effects on both students and teachers (Dryden-Peterson and Adelman, 2016; Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2016; see Box 4).

However, if managed well, migrant influxes can have a positive impact, for example by revitalising depopulated schools or, as in London, being linked to improvements in school and student performance (Burgess, 2014). Important strategies to facilitate the rapid integration of new students include prompt availability of funding for language classes (Hickmann et al., 2008), as well as the availability of extra funds for local authorities to match a rise in local migrant numbers (IPPR, 2014).

### 1.3 Trends in migrant education outcomes

Evidence from selected low- and middle-income countries also highlights challenges for migrant education (see Box 2). Immigrants and children in immigrant households in Côte d'Ivoire and the Dominican Republic are less likely to attend school than their host-country peers; this is also the case for children in Costa Rica who were born abroad. However, migrants are not always at a disadvantage: in Burkina Faso no significant differences in attendance were found (OECD, 2017).

Evidence from six OECD countries<sup>2</sup> found that immigrant students<sup>3</sup> tend to perform worse in standard assessments of reading, science and mathematics than their host-country counterparts and, in some countries, are more likely to repeat a grade, attend vocational schools or drop out of secondary education (see Box 3). They are more likely to attend schools in major urban centres with student populations who are from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds and, in some countries, are less likely to have attended early-childhood education (OECD, 2010; OECD, 2015).

This performance gap is largely explained by parents' occupations and educational background, and the language spoken at home. Other factors include better educational resources at home, early reading at home, early-childhood education activities, a more advantaged socio-economic composition of schools and communities, more hours for learning language at school, and school accountability measures (i.e. informing parents of student performance and the use of performance data) (ibid.).

Migrant children are also likely to face linguistic barriers that impact on their achievement. Many first- and second-generation migrants do not speak the testing language at home (see Figure 2) and Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) data suggests that this has a strong influence on their reading-comprehension

#### Box 2: Education and migration to low- and middle-income countries

The examples of South Africa and Thailand, middle-income countries with significant immigration, show that migrant inclusion in the primary-education system is an urgent issue and one that generates a variety of challenges and coping strategies.

In South Africa, research shows that children of Zimbabwean migrants face discrimination when trying to access school, which results in migrant children having lower enrolment rates than South African children. This is partly a function of schools being requested to undertake policing functions and report undocumented migrants to the Department of Home Affairs, which makes them an unwelcoming environment for migrant children (Crush and Tawodzera, 2014). Moreover, the country experiences a high number of unaccompanied children who migrate for work, for whom no education is provided outside of their working hours (Save the Children UK, 2007).

In Thailand, despite the legal right of all children to access education irrespective of their status, access to school for migrant children – particularly Burmese migrants – is very difficult due to fear of the authorities, the cost of books and uniforms, a lack of accreditation, and language barriers. In some areas, these challenges are overcome through co-operation between schools and civil society. For example, the Foundation for Rural Youth operates in a southern Bangkok district with a high number of migrant families and has successfully collected data on the whereabouts and profiles of many out-of-school children. This data allowed them to engage in awareness-raising activities with families about the right to education in Thailand (Save the Children, 2015).

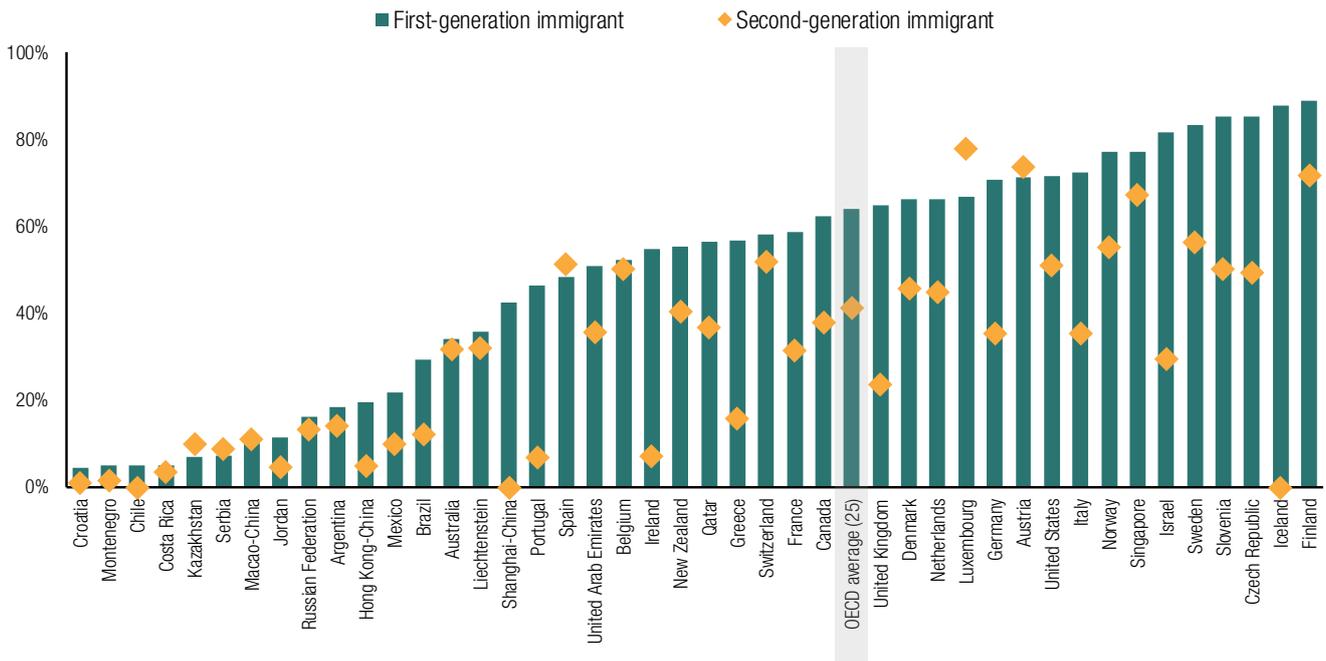
scores – in part explaining the performance deficit with host-country students (OECD, 2015a).

The characteristics of education systems and schools also play an important role in migrant children's school results. Migrant students from the same countries of origin and similar socio-economic backgrounds have been found to perform very differently depending on the schools that they attend. For example, the performance of Arabic-speaking migrants in the Netherlands is higher than the achievement of students from the same countries who emigrated to Qatar, after accounting for socio-economic status (OECD, 2015).

2. Austria, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

3. The definition of immigrant children varies based on different countries' definitions. These could be both foreign-born children or children who are born in the host country, but who are considered foreign nationals per host-country law.

**Figure 2: Percentage of immigrant students who do not speak the language of assessment at home**



Source: OECD (2015a). Note data sourced from high-income countries; comparable data is not available for low- or middle-income countries.

## 2 Education, migration and the SDGs

Overall, improving education provision for migrants will impact the achievement of a range of SDGs. SDG 4 calls for inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning for all. It specifically references an aspiration to meet the needs of children in ‘vulnerable situations’ – a group that includes migrant children, refugees and other displaced populations. Migrant children are often excluded from education due to language or socio-economic barriers (SDGs 4.1 and 4.5). Moreover, SDG 4.2 calls for their inclusion in quality early-childhood education, essential to prepare migrant children for primary school. Content focusing on socio-emotional learning, human rights and citizenship education in school curricula (SDG 4.7) can foster the inclusion of migrant children and enhance intercultural understanding among host-country children.

Other SDGs address migrant children’s inclusion in the education system; foster gender equality (SDG 5.1); and target the wider integration of migrant children and their families within host communities (SDG 10.2). Inclusive and high-quality education can protect children from harmful practices such as early marriage, child labour and human trafficking (SDGs 5.3, 8.7 and 16.2) and has a positive effect on the health of migrants (SDG 3). These Targets are not specific to migrants, but as migrant populations are subject to socio-economic and legal vulnerabilities, they are at risk of harmful practices and lack of access to healthcare. Finally, greater education is linked to a lower incidence of poverty and boosts income growth (SDG 1.1 and 10.1). These dynamics and other links are outlined below in Table 1.

### Box 3: Education and migration to high-income countries

With access to primary school less of an issue in high-income countries, the main debates about inclusion of migrant children relate to the balance between their native language and culture and that of the host country. The OECD describes countries as using three different models: the ethnic-identity model, which values mother language and culture; the language-assimilation model, which focuses on the acquisition of the host country’s language; and the language-integration model, which values both languages equally (Taguma et al., 2010).

Choices about integration stem from the countries’ histories of immigration. Different integration models, such as fostering multiculturalism or assimilation, also influence the way in which the education system has responded to the challenge of migrant students. For example, Sweden belongs to the language-integration model, having policies that promote supporting migrant children in their learning through their native language. On the contrary, in France it is illegal to collect information about the migration background of students, which shows the importance that the country gives to the assimilation of children in the French culture through French language (Esafré-Dublet, 2014).

**Table 1: Education, migration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Relevant SDGs and Targets	Link to migration
<p>4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.</p> <p>4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.</p> <p>4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and preprimary education so that they are ready for primary education.</p> <p>4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.</p> <p>4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reducing the barriers to migrant children accessing education is vital to meeting this Goal, as is improving the quality of the education they receive. This holds true for SDG 4 sub-goals of ensuring free access to education, improving education equity, raising levels of access to quality early-education programmes, and increasing the proportion that achieve certain benchmarks in literacy and numeracy – all areas of challenge for migrant children.</li> <li>– It is important to develop more inclusive, intercultural school curricula, with a focus on socio-emotional learning, and to train teachers in these skills. It is also important to enhance the social and intercultural skills of host-country children.</li> <li>– Achieving quality education for all (including in source countries) may lead to increases in migration, as there is a positive link between education levels and propensity to migrate. However, this varies across contexts, depending on opportunities available. In contexts where overall education levels are low, the link between migration and education levels is weaker, possibly due to a preponderance of low-skilled migration (OECD, 2017).</li> </ul>
<p>1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.</p> <p>8.1: Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries.</p> <p>10.1 By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Improving the education of migrant populations both in the developed and developing world is pertinent to these economic-related targets, as education can lead to rising incomes and reduced poverty for migrants, and boost growth rates and government revenues in their host countries.</li> <li>– Migrant education may also indirectly contribute to these goals if their rising incomes translate into higher levels of remittances, and if remittances are partially invested in better education for family members at home. This impact is likely to be increased if SDG 10.C – on reducing the costs of sending remittances – is achieved.</li> </ul>
Relevant SDGs and Targets	Link to migration
<p>3 Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.</p> <p>10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.</p> <p>5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.</p> <p>8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.</p> <p>16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Education has a strong impact on the future health outcomes of the student and their families, particularly in the case of female education. There may also be indirect impacts if migrant children can access and navigate the health services of their host country better because of improved knowledge of the country and its majority language.</li> <li>– The integration of migrant children into education systems is closely linked to their broader integration into their host country and community, as well as that of their parents and immediate family. Education can improve their social, economic and political inclusion, particularly if they are better educated regarding their host country and able to speak the majority language.</li> <li>– The enrolment of migrant children in education systems provides them with more protection and access to resources to resist these practices, and allows host-country governments to monitor and intervene more easily where needed.</li> <li>– Attempts to eliminate child labour, exploitation and trafficking through financial support to families are all likely to boost education for migrant children by freeing them to receive an education that they would not otherwise be able to have.</li> </ul>

Relevant SDGs and Targets	Link to migration
11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.	– Achieving these housing and infrastructure targets would improve the basic ability of migrant children and refugees to access education services and to ensure that their home life was more conducive to achieving strong learning outcomes successfully.
11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.	
10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.	– Removing legal barriers to accessing education – particularly for the children of irregular migrants and refugee children – would boost enrolment rates, as would ensuring that all people have a legal identity and the necessary paperwork to allow them to enrol in school.
16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration.	

### 3 Integration of migrant children in education systems

This section explores a range of efforts to support the full integration of migrant children into education systems, and the barriers to achieving integration, specifically legal, socio-economic and technical aspects.

#### 3.1 Educational integration of migrants

The integration of children in schools plays an important role in the social integration of their families within the host community, which in turn has a positive bearing on educational experiences (Moskal, 2010; Sacramento, 2015). This is challenging in practice, however, particularly for irregular migrants who may be wary of interacting with staff at their child's school due to concerns about revealing their legal status (Bartlett et al., 2015).

Educational integration of migrants can also have powerful generational effects. For example, a comparative study of Turkish migrants in several European countries showed social systems that support migrants are associated with greater economic mobility for second-generation migrants (Schnell, 2014). PISA data on the performance of second-generation migrant students finds that their scores correlate strongly to their parents' educational background. This suggests that integrating first-generation migrants into the education system successfully can lead to a virtuous circle of integration in the host society across generations (Dustmann et al., 2011).

#### 3.2 Barriers to access

##### Legal barriers

While many countries grant access to basic education for children of irregular migrants (UNESCO, 2017), the type of migration strongly influences the legal barriers migrant students might face; irregular migrants, unaccompanied children, stateless children, children without identity documents, and seasonal migrants face more barriers (see Box 2). Countries take different approaches to this. In some countries, such as Malaysia, irregular migrants are

legally barred from government schools, while in other contexts the children of undocumented migrants may find themselves unable to enrol, despite having a legal entitlement (Lumayag, 2016; Insan Association, 2015).

Within Europe, irregular migrant children attend school in 23 out of 28 countries. In 10 of these<sup>4</sup>, the legislative framework has a specific reference to the entitlement of children with irregular status to attend schools (Spencer and Hughes, 2015). When law prevents access, civil society can step in to provide non-formal education to excluded children, as in the case of Malaysia (Lumayag, 2016). However, accreditation of non-formal education remains a problem and can prevent children from proceeding to the next education level.

Meeting enrolment requirements can also be an issue for unaccompanied and stateless children. In the US, unaccompanied children face challenges with proof of residency or guardianship, as they live with other families who are not their legal guardians (American Immigration Council, 2016). In addition, changes in citizenship laws in the Dominican Republic denationalised many citizens of Haitian descent, which prevented their children from enrolling in primary education (Georgetown Law Human Rights Institute Fact-finding Project, 2014).

Strict rules on age limits for enrolment can also prove a challenge for migrant children who lack formal education and the knowledge necessary to enter the level of schooling appropriate for their age, but are too old to enrol in the level of schooling appropriate for their existing knowledge (American Immigration Council, 2016).

##### Socio-economic barriers

Socio-economic barriers can impact upon migrant inclusion in education systems in two main ways. The first is that the children in question may be engaged in labour of some type – either to meet their own needs or those of their family, or due to trafficking or forced labour. Under these circumstances, migrant children are unlikely to attend school (Child Protection Working Group (CPWG), 2015). Children engaged in seasonal migration for work or in

4. Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Spain, Sweden and Slovenia for primary education.

#### Box 4: Education for refugees

In 2015, there were 11 million children under 18 who were refugees or asylum seekers<sup>5</sup>, representing just over half the total global refugee population (The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 2015). Estimates suggest that 1.75 million primary-school aged refugee children – or half of that population – are out of school. The proportion of those out of school varies from 80% in Egypt and Yemen to 40% at refugee sites in Pakistan<sup>6</sup> (UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), 2016). This has a compounding effect on secondary education, contributing to the 80% of refugee adolescents (1.95 million) not enrolled in secondary education (UNESCO, 2016b; UNESCO, 2016). These percentages contrast with a secondary-school enrolment rate of around 75% worldwide and 40% in low-income countries (UIS, 2016).

Countries have adopted a range of strategies to integrate refugee children into their education system, shaped by the local context and type of emergency. The main differences are whether they integrate refugees into the national school system, and what curriculum they use.

Some countries integrate refugees in schools with native children, others set up separate schools in refugee camps. While integrating refugees avoids segregation, refugee children might face bullying and teaching might not be tailored to their language or psycho-social needs (Shuayb et al., 2014). If there are no schools within refugee camps, or refugees are in remote locations, transportation to school can be a major barrier to enrolment. When schools are set up in refugee camps, they often suffer from a scarcity of qualified teachers and the resources to pay for teachers' salaries. Many teachers therefore work on a voluntary basis, which could have negative consequences for the quality of the education provided (UNHCR, 2016).

The choice of whether to use the host-country curriculum or that of the refugees' country of origin is an issue in refugee settings. While the curriculum of the country of origin helps to maintain ties with the home culture and facilitates later repatriation, it isolates refugees from the host community and makes it difficult for them to access higher levels of education or employment due to a lack of accreditation. Examples include Congolese refugees in Tanzania and students at two refugee camps in Djibouti, who have faced problems with accreditation of school certificates in the host countries and so been unable to continue their education (UNHCR, 2016). Conversely, the host country's curriculum facilitates integration, but can present knowledge barriers and the challenge of translating the curriculum into another language. Overall, UNHCR favours use of the host country's curriculum in the context of protracted emergencies and displacement (UNHCR, 2015a).

Innovative and flexible financing mechanisms are being developed to respond better to the needs of refugee children. These are often based on cooperation between multiple donors, as in the case of the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis and the Jordan Compact, a partnership between the Jordanian government and the international community (European Commission (EC), 2016; Reliefweb, 2016).

nomadic and pastoralist movements may be migrating to work during the school term. Seasonally sensitive education policies have been introduced in countries such as Brazil, Colombia and the Gambia to reduce the impact of this phenomenon (Hadley, 2010).

The second way is the de facto segregation of migrant and host-country children that may occur because of socio-economic differences. First-generation immigrants tend to be poorer and are likely to be concentrated in urban areas. Thus, they are more likely to attend schools in cities with student populations who are, on average, from less-advantaged socio-economic backgrounds and more likely to be first- or second-generation migrants. This can reinforce disadvantage for both groups.

Evidence from some high-income countries shows that the enrolment of a significant number of migrant children in schools can cause host-country children to move to other – often private – schools (Bloem and Diaz, 2007; Fairlie and Resch, 2002). To reduce this tendency towards

segregation, the Danish municipality of Aarhus created a quota approach that sets a cap of 20% of students eligible for linguistic support for each school. If the number of students in need for linguistic support is higher, some of these students are moved to another school (Jørgensen, 2014).

#### Linguistic and technical barriers

The language of instruction can act as a major barrier to migrant students' integration, even if they are enrolled and attending school. In the US, there are concerns at the number of English-language learners amongst second-generation migrant students with at least one parent born in the US. It suggests that their parents, despite having been born and educated in the US, have not learnt English fully nor passed on the language – a potentially significant barrier to the broader integration of both parents and children (Fix and McHugh, 2009).

5. Per UNHCR, a refugee is 'someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence' while asylum seekers are those who 'apply for asylum – the right to be recognized as a refugee and receive legal protection and material assistance' (UNHCR, 2017)

6. This is in contrast to gross enrolment rates of native populations in host countries at above 97% in Egypt and Yemen and above 92% in Pakistan.

Early-childhood education plays a particularly important role in primary school readiness for children who do not speak the majority language at home, as their interaction with majority-language staff and students allows them to reach primary school with better language skills. Training pre-school staff to interact better with families of different backgrounds can help foster bilingualism amongst students by encouraging the family to use the majority language with the children alongside their native language (UNICEF, 2009).

However, migrant families tend to have less physical access to high-quality early-childhood education (Leseman, 2007). Programmes such as the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Program (MSHS) in the US can help by providing transportation to early-childhood education centres, mitigating the difficulties faced by migrant workers due to their working hours and limited access to transport.

Another aspect of education systems that affects their level of inclusivity is how selective they are and how early the selection is made. Evidence from some high-income countries shows that migrant children are often streamed into educational paths that lead to vocational training instead of higher education. This has been observed in Germany which has a highly selective education system where only 23% of foreign-born students attend a grammar school (gymnasium) compared to 46% of German-origin students, and 1.8% German-origin students leave school before graduation compared to 14.2% of foreign-born students (Bendel, 2014).

## 4 Quality education and life skills

This section looks at the challenges of ensuring quality education and securing life skills for migrant students. It will examine some of the major barriers affecting provision and the strategies that have been adopted to overcome them.

Despite the challenges that migrant children face compared to host-country students, migrant students and their families often show higher educational aspirations than their counterparts (UNICEF, 2009; UNESCO, 2017). They therefore have the potential to thrive if education systems offer the necessary support. To improve educational opportunities, systems should focus on the presence of institutional and teacher discrimination, choice of languages of instruction, content of the curriculum, and teacher training, including attention to social and emotional learning, and teaching of the majority language.

### Discrimination

Feeling discriminated against affects the psychological wellbeing of children, as well as their social relations and academic outcomes (Spears Brown, 2015). Discrimination of migrant students has been observed across very diverse school contexts. For example, it has been reported by Haitian students in the Dominican Republic and by Colombian students in Ecuador, in both cases with

### Box 5: Education and the role of remittances

Remittances that migrants send home to their families are widely acknowledged to have a positive impact on education (Gindling and Poggio, 2012). Remittances lead to improved financial security – this means migrant families can spend more on education, and free children from income-earning opportunities (Amakom and Iheoma, 2014). This impact may be particularly important for girls (Elbadawi and Roushdy, 2010). Potential earning power abroad may also lead families to prioritise improving the human capital of their children (Gyimah-Brempong, 2014).

There is considerable evidence that the remittances migrants send back to their families are used to increase investments in education. Studies show that children whose families receive remittances are more likely to attend school, to reach higher levels of education and to attend private schools, when these are perceived to be of better quality (OECD, 2017; Elbadawi and Roushdy, 2010). A randomised experiment in El Salvador found that for every US\$1 received by beneficiaries, education expenditures rose to US\$3.72 (Ambler et al., 2015).

Still, the positive influence of remittances on education cannot be assumed. Firstly, the gender of the household head can have a bearing on how remittances are allocated; a study in Ghana found that remittances to female-headed households increase education investments more than those to male-headed households (Gyimah-Brempong, 2014). Secondly, remittances might have no effect, or even a negative effect, on education. For example, when there are low-skilled jobs that can help sustain migrants' families at home without additional investments in education, remittances may discourage reaching higher levels of education. For example, the availability of low-skilled jobs in the US may act as a disincentive to further education for Mexican citizens who plan to migrate (Latapí and Martin, 2008).

detrimental effects for the students (Bartlett et al., 2015). The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) also found that lower expectations from teachers towards migrant students have a negative impact on students' education. Moreover, discrimination based on cultural practices, such as the prohibition of wearing a headscarf in France, might also lead to exclusion or segregation in schools allowing such practices (EUMC, 2004).

### Learning support in native language

It is estimated that around 40% of the global population does not have access to education in a language that they speak or understand, an issue that mainly concerns countries with a high diversity of languages, which often

also deal with many migrant children. Some of these countries are taking steps to recognise the importance of instruction in children's native language, and their best practices could be used as examples for the primary education of migrant children as well (UNESCO, 2016a). For example, in 1977 Sweden introduced programmes of teaching in the native language of migrant children, encouraged by diversity policies already in place towards the Sami and Finnish minority groups (Jacobs, 2013).

The choice of language in education affects the ability of children to acquire better learning skills. Indeed, some examples show that the use of migrant students' native languages in support of their learning can boost their self-esteem and increase their school achievements (Taguma et al., 2010). Countries differ in the way they approach heritage-language teaching, with some of them centralising it through national directives and others leaving it to private initiatives (EC, 2009).

### Curriculum and teacher training

Including elements related to the child's native culture in the school curriculum is helpful for development, as it allows migrant children to feel valued (Heckmann, 2008). Diaspora schools, and collaborations between countries of origin and destination of migrants, can play an important role in fostering teaching of native languages and culture. For example, many European countries have bilateral agreements with migrants' countries of origin that sponsor teaching on specific subjects through embassies, consulates and cultural associations (Jacobs, 2013). A downside of this approach is the risk that they highlight differences that can hinder integration of the students within the host community.

Stressing diversity and social and emotional learning within the curriculum can also help, especially when the migration process has been traumatic (International Rescue Committee (IRC), 2014). Similarly, including peacebuilding activities in the curriculum, and ensuring teachers have the skills to carry out such activities, not only fosters learning related to peace and sustainable development in situations of conflict, but also promotes social cohesion in non-conflict contexts (UNICEF, 2014).

Teachers therefore play a central role. The ability of school staff to manage diversity touches different levels.

- At the individual student level, teachers should be trained and able to adapt their style to individual learning needs;
- At the classroom level, teachers should be able to deal with the interaction between different cultural backgrounds, showing students the strengths that derive from multicultural contexts; and
- At the 'school life' level, teachers should include parents and communities, which requires sensitivity to different cultural practices and intercultural communication skills. This also enhances the role of schools in effective integration (OECD, 2010a).

### Inclusion in mainstream classes

Research broadly agrees that migrant children are better facilitated by support-oriented education systems than by those focused on selectivity. However, there is a strong debate as to whether migrant children should be included in mainstream classes immediately, or separated initially in special classes. In 2015, the OECD concluded that migrant students who are immediately immersed in normal classes tend to score higher in PISA data at 15 years old (OECD, 2015). However, other evidence points to benefits arising from migrant students attending accelerated language-learning classes before being streamed into normal classes. One caveat with this approach is the need to distinguish between language-support classes and classes for students with learning disabilities. Migrant children are often included in the latter by default, even when they do not present any learning difficulty, thus fostering their exclusion from the mainstream education system (UNICEF, 2009; Waslin, 2016).

## 5 Conclusions and policy recommendations

Globally, there are tens of millions of school-age children that migrate each year. Their experience varies tremendously, depending partly on where they are coming from and where they move to, but also on other socio-economic factors such as the employment and educational background of their parents. Regardless, education is a crucial determinant shaping their and their families' lives.

There is limited data on the extent to which migrant children can access education, the teaching-learning experiences available to them, and their learning outcomes. It is clear, though, that certain challenges cut across contexts and complicate education opportunities. This includes legal, socio-economic and linguistic barriers to access, alongside poor learning outcomes and limited focus on life skills as part of the curriculum. These issues are present in low-, middle- and high-income countries. Moreover, the challenges for refugee children are often acute, whether education provision is through host communities or in separate camp schools.

### Conclusion 1: Educating migrant children is essential to meet SDG 4 and plays an important role in achieving other Goals.

#### Recommendations:

- Children should be able to access school irrespective of their migration status. Eliminate legal barriers that prevent the children of irregular migrants from enrolling in schools. Adopt a flexible approach to documentation requirements for unaccompanied minors to maximise enrolment levels (Lumayag, 2016). Flexible education programmes should be in place for working children,

and for children belonging to pastoralists and nomadic groups (Save the Children UK, 2007).

- Introduce a combination of forward-planning and contingency funding to account for surges in migration rates, both at national level and through multi-donor funds. These are essential to minimise disruption to the education system, maximise the extent of access and achievement amongst migrant students, and prevent the emergence of tensions between host and migrant communities (Hickmann et al., 2008). This should involve early investment in developing suitable curricula and teacher-training modules for engaging with new arrivals, and the flexibility to channel resources to schools that see a rapid rise in the number of migrant students.
- Do not view migrant education in isolation, but pursue a range of coordinated strategies to maximise its overall impact (Schäferhoff et al., 2016) and impact across other areas of the in the 2030 Agenda. These should include a focus on employment, health, family and social-protection policies and programmes so that gains in education are translated into the labour market; close links between schools and other social services to ensure protection; and lowering the costs associated with transferring remittances back to migrants' home countries to allow investment into the education of children staying behind.

### Relevant SDG Targets

4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes.

4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and preprimary education so that they are ready for primary education.

4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

### Relevant SDG Targets continued

4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

## Conclusion 2: Education is strengthened by policies that prioritise integration.

### Recommendations:

- School segregation hinders both social cohesion and migrants' rapid improvement in the majority language. Put in place measures to avoid segregation, for example by attracting native students to schools with migrants through the offer of special programmes. Include local communities as beneficiaries when additional resources are spent in schools with a high number of migrants to avoid making native residents feel neglected.
- Improve access to quality early-childhood care and education for migrant groups and foster bilingualism amongst children that do not speak the majority language of the host country at home. This will enable children from migrant families to integrate more easily (UNICEF, 2009).
- Develop and invest in remedial education programmes for migrant students, focusing as quickly as possible on majority-language skills, as well as gaps between their skills and knowledge and those anticipated in the national curriculum for their age group. This should be paired with ongoing learning support in their native language (Taguma et al., 2010). Children should not stay in special classes with accelerated learning programmes for longer than needed, to avoid segregation.
- Teachers should be trained and supported in managing diversity, both before they start to teach and through in-service training. Develop resources and networks giving teachers and schools access to learning materials and modules that will allow them to integrate references to migrants' national home culture into lessons (Heckmann, 2008).
- Both the curriculum and school staff should provide psychosocial support to foster children's wellbeing (IRC, 2014). This may involve a specific curriculum on intercultural issues or peace education. School staff should emphasise children's potential, for example by not lowering expectations towards migrant children.

## Relevant SDG Targets

4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes.

4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and preprimary education so that they are ready for primary education.

4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states.

10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

**Conclusion 3: There is limited data available on the education of refugee and migrant children, making it more difficult to design policies and programmes to support this group.**

## Recommendations:

- Data pertaining to migration background and education level should be collected together, as further analysis on the link between education and migration status is necessary to improve service provision. To do this, more coordination is needed among the institutions collecting the data, including Ministries of Education, central statistics offices and international organisations collecting data in refugee camps and elsewhere.
- The international community should provide more data-collection resources, especially where national governments are having to deal with other urgent priorities.
- Data collection on the migration backgrounds of students should be used to support vulnerable groups, and not for reporting to security-related institutions. A lack of trust in how personal information will be used can jeopardise not only the collection of valuable data, but also families' trust in schools, which can negatively impact their children's enrolment and learning (Bartlett et al., 2015).

## Relevant SDG Targets

17.18 By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

17.19 By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries.

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