



## DUC ADVOCACY STATEMENT TO THE ACERWC

Professor Benyam, Chair of the esteemed ACERWC, thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation on the crucial and timely topic of children on the move.

### INTRODUCTION

The Destination Unknown Campaign is an initiative of the International Federation of Terre des Hommes. In East Africa, Terre des Hommes Netherlands works in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia implementing programmes to protect children and in Southern Africa Terre des hommes Germany are working with its partners in Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe on this campaign. The purpose of the campaign is to promote the best interest of the child whenever she or he moves away from home. The campaign was launched in 2012 and is open also for non- TDHIF members. Currently it is made up of 40 organizations around the world.

### SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

There is a dearth of data on children on the move for both eastern and southern African regions. There is however evidence to prove that the numbers of children travelling independently of adult family members is on the increase.<sup>1</sup> For both East and Southern Africa, it is difficult to tell the number of children who cross borders unaccompanied, but between 2010 and 2011, a total of 985 Unaccompanied Minor Children were assisted at the IOM Reception and Support Centres at the South Africa-Zimbabwe Border, after being returned by the authorities of South Africa and Botswana.<sup>2</sup> The average age at which children migrate is 14.5 years, with the youngest child being 10 years and 5 months old at first arrival in the country.<sup>3</sup> There is evidence suggesting that unaccompanied minors from East Africa are undertaking the journey to Southern Africa.<sup>4</sup> This can be exemplified by the case of 15 unaccompanied Ethiopian children (together with 24 adults) who were intercepted and detained by Zambian authorities for illegal entry in June 2016.

Various pull and push factors contribute to child migration. The push factors include situations of conflict and insecurity, poverty, natural disasters, gender inequality and environmental degradation. Children who migrate alone (whether domestically or cross-border to neighbouring countries) often leave their home due to neglect, abuse or violence. The protection risks faced by children and youth on the move are multiple and include: violence and exploitation by smugglers, traffickers, authorities, other migrants; Sexual and gender-based violence against girls on the move by smugglers, officials, and other travelling companions; detention within migration control systems and even death.

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<sup>1</sup> Young and on the Move: Children and youth in mixed migration flows within and from the Horn of Africa RMMS and Save the Children, September 2016

<sup>2</sup>IOM (2013) Children on the Move

<sup>3</sup> Realer D (2011) Protecting and supporting children on the move: Translating principles into practice

<sup>4</sup> IOM (2013). Health Vulnerabilities Study of Mixed Migration Flows from the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region to Southern Africa



## OUR ASKS

In view of this rising scourge that is threatening children in the region, we propose the following:

1. That the issue of child migration be on the Committee's agenda continuously using the following propositions:
  - i. Having it as the theme of the Day of the African Child
  - ii. Looking out for issues around children on the move in the state party reports and including the subject in concluding observations
  - iii. Introduce a day of general discussion on children on the move
2. Lobby SADC to come up with a Children's Protocol that will be encapsulating issues of children on the move as well as recommend Regional Standard Operational Procedures.
3. Conduct a continental research on the scope of children on the move phenomenon

We want to pledge our support to your Committee in efforts meant to address the issue of children on the move. We wish you fruitful deliberations on the occasion of the 29<sup>th</sup> Session of your esteemed Committee.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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