

Why leave home?

The refugee and migrant crises track the stress lines of today's world. Societies and countries face fractures caused by conflict and violence, poverty, climate change and demographic change, not to mention technology which downloads images of affluence into just about every home.

Children in conflicts: Fifteen new conflicts have broken out or reignited in the past five years, and the numbers of protracted emergencies – conflicts that have lasted for over five years – are also growing.

Today 1.5 billion people are living in a state of near permanent conflict or in zones of economic and social breakdown – the tide of refugees pouring into Europe from the Middle East is but one manifestation of this crisis. They flee the brutalities of civil war and gang-related violence, assault, rape, recruitment, disappearance and murder.



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A young girl walks along a drainage channel in the Protection of Civilians camp in Bentiu, South Sudan, in October 2016, during a period when intensified fighting between rebel and government soldiers spurred thousands of people to flee from Leer to Bentiu.

Not every child is born equal: Nearly half of the 700 million people living in extreme poverty are children and most live in rural areas. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for half of the global poor. Poverty is declining in all regions but it is becoming deeper and more entrenched in countries that are either conflict ridden or overly dependent on commodity exports. The number of young children from poor households is particularly pronounced in the lowest-income countries, where more than half of children under age 12 live in extreme poverty.

Children and demographic change: The demographic bulge in the developing world is another major driver of migration, both legal and illegal. A billion children will be living in Africa by 2050.

UNICEF research from West and Central Africa and the Horn of Africa identifies poverty and a lack of employment opportunities as the main reason that young people move. More than 75 percent of the migration is within Africa. Less than 20% of migrants journey outside the regions.

The forecast for children: The current El Niño demonstrates how climate change will create new migration dynamics. To date, it has put at risk 11 million children in East and Southern Africa, 3.5 million in Central and South America and 2.4 million in the Pacific. Added to this is a body of evidence which forecasts that climate change will increase the intensity and frequency of natural disasters and create even more imperatives to move.

In the coming decade, climate-change related events are projected to impact on 200 million children — a tripling of current numbers. More children will be denied their most basic rights and made even more vulnerable.

Most are concentrated in those countries that can least handle these challenges — and faced by those citizens and communities least able to survive them: the poorest, the most marginalized, and, everywhere, the children. Potentially each and every one of them could then be forced to move.

Put these outlines together and it means that up to half a billion children will bear an even heavier burden and become even more vulnerable as the clearest indicator of the interwoven, cross-border and multi-dimensional crises confronting us - creating the stress lines of today's world.

East Asia and the Pacific is the most disaster-stricken region in the world. In 2016, disasters affected more than 86 million people in the region, compared with 40 million people in 2015. Population growth, rapid urbanization, environmental degradation and other factors continue to accelerate and exacerbate hazard trends. Hazards associated with climate change are increasing in frequency and severity and leading to extreme weather events, drought and frequent floods/landslides. The recurrent typhoons in the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea**, the **Philippines**, **Viet Nam** and the Pacific sub-region continue to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, pose new health risks and challenge the establishment and delivery of quality infrastructure and basic services. In 2017, internal armed conflicts and ethnic strife, particularly in **Myanmar** and the **Philippines**, led to the internal and cross-border displacement and mass migration of more than 1 million people, more than 55 per cent of whom are children and adolescents.³ In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the tense political situation and recent United Nations sanctions have negatively impacted the well-being of children, who were already experiencing an acute nutritional crisis.

Circle one of the following from each section.

I am from....

Philippines

Viet Nam

Myanmar

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

We are leaving our home because of....

Typhoons

Lack of employment

Crop failure

Drought

Ethnic strife

Floods

Violence

Food Shortages

Climate Change / extreme weather

War

Disease – Polio, Cholera

Political Instability

Persecution

We are trying to get to...

A city

safe place in our country

Bangladesh



Figure 1© UNICEF Philippines/2017/Bobby LagsaChildren displaced by the conflict in Marawi in a UNICEF-supported child-friendly space.



This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or area or the delimitation of any frontiers.

Scenario

1. Describe your family in a short paragraph. Think of the following: How many people are in your family? What are their ages? What is the level of wealth or education?

2. Describe in a short paragraph, what you imagine the situation is like for your family. Think of the following: Is there violence around you? Are you in fear of your life? Is food or water easily available? Are people sick, injured, disabled or missing? Do you have money saved?

3. Describe what happened that lead you to decide it was time to go?
