

# Harmonizing Protection and Care for Children on the Move

Olivier Geissler - ISS Switzerland **GFMD-CMW Side Event on Migrants, ILO, Geneva**19<sup>th</sup> of May 2016

# International Social Service (ISS)

- Since 1924
- Part of a global network (120 countries)
- Supports children and families separated by borders facing social and/or legal issues -> extensive work on children on the move
- Ca. 30'000 treated annually
- Based on UN norms (CRC) and standards and The Hague Conventions

#### Introduction

- Children on the move (CoM): not a new but a phenomenon of increasing global importance
- 2010: Global Movement for Children (Barcelona)
- 2012:
  - GFMD Mauritius: Civil Society Days put child migration on the agenda
  - CRC's Day of General Discussion Report has set out principles on "The Rights of All Children in the Context of International Migration" → widely recognized but poorly implemented
- 2016: the migration management crisis gives new visibility to CoM and need & opportunity to reaffirm principles and strengthen a rights-based implementation of protection of CoM

#### The needs of Children on the Move

#### Protection

Guardianship and support in every day life

Stable protection/ residence status

Access to rights, services and child friendly accommodation

# Integration

Stable social relations

Education and vocational training

Integration measures

# Durable Solution

Support measures beyond the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday

Employment opportunities

Long-term life project



#### ... are universal

# Issue: How can rights of CoM be safeguarded across countries?

#### Today's shortfalls of protection and care of CoM

- Int. protection is emergency relief focused, short-term and centred on 1 country
- National protection systems are fragmented in implementation of child protection and care principles
- Protection measures do not sufficiently consider the individual child's long term development and prospects
- The evolving nature of the CoM's migration experience is neglected: absence of transnational cooperation in case management and monitoring
- → Need for harmonized protection standards and transnational case management for implementing and monitoring durable quality solutions for CoM

# A transnational mechanism for protection: The West Africa Network for the protection of children (WAN):

- Since 2005: First mechanism of cooperation between countries enabling
  protection and quality reintegration of vulnerable children across borders
  (mostly unaccompanied and separated children: young stranded migrants, child
  workers, street children, exploited children, trafficked children etc.)
- Links up the 15 countries of ECOWAS + Mauritania
- Transnational cooperation of CSOs and national, subregional and regional authorities
- 6'000 children have been reintegrated in a families or community setting



# WAN Approach



### Multilevel Approach:

- 1) Direct support to migrant children
- 2) Capacity building of stakeholders
- 3) Advocacy at national, subregional and regional levels

### **Common standards for harmonized procedure**

#### 8 steps to harmonized quality care for children on the move

 Identification of the child Emergency care of the child • Study of the child's personal situation • Tracing & assessment of the family and environment of the child Alternatives for placement of children outside their families Social and professional reintegration (individual plan & support) Monitoring of the child after his return (2 year standard) Support to build-up parental capacities

#### **Main achievements**

✓ ECOWAS recognized WAN as a viable mechanism for transnational protection and care of children in West Africa



✓ Harmonization of practices and establishment of regional minimum standards for protection and reintegration of vulnerable children



- ✓ The standards developed by WAN have been validated by Member States and will be integrated in early 2016 in the ECOWAS Child Protection M&E framework and in its Guidelines for implementation
- Externally evaluated by EU & SDC and identified as a good practice

# **Concluding remarks**

- CoM are children first and foremost— regardless of their migration status
- Harmonized protection standards respecting the CRC principles are necessary to guarantee quality care and equal treatment of CoM across countries
- Transnational cooperation among countries is key in finding durable solutions for the transnational phenomenon of children on the move → transnational case management
- Each child has the **right to a durable solution** centred on his or her best interest and capacities beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- States should work towards strengthening COM's resilience through recognizing and enhancing their potential as actors of development – both of their personal development and for the communities (gain and transfer of skills, knowledge, experiences, innovation etc.)

# Thank you for your attention

www.ssiss.ch

www.resao.org

www.destination-unknown.org

