



Children and Youth on the Move (CYM) Program

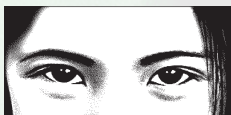
Theory of Change



A Comprehensive Approach to Supporting Migrant and Displaced Children and Youth



Terre des hommes
Helping children worldwide.



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Terre des hommes (Tdh) is the leading Swiss child rights organisation. Since 1960, Tdh has helped build a better future for vulnerable children and their communities, making an impact with innovative and sustainable solutions. Active in more than 30 countries, Tdh works with its own teams and/or local and international partners to improve the daily lives of millions of children and their relatives through programmes on health, access to justice, migration, protection, water and sanitation and emergency relief. Our work is financed by support from private individuals and institutions, with administrative costs kept to a minimum.



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Introduction



Around the world, millions of children and young people are on the move – fleeing conflict, disaster, violence, or poverty. They may be seeking safety, family reunification, or better opportunities. Too often, however, their journeys are marked by danger, uncertainty, and exclusion.

On their way, children and youth on the move face significant risks, including violence, exploitation, and limited access to education and healthcare. Understanding the complex challenges is crucial for developing effective interventions.

Acknowledging the vulnerabilities faced by young migrants, the Children and Youth on the Move (CYM) program aims to reduce risks, promote rights, and support sustainable development for these target groups. By collaborating with various stakeholders, the CYM program seeks to improve the living conditions and future opportunities for children and youth on the move.



**“I didn’t know I had the right to go to school
in the country where I arrived. I thought
I had to work immediately to help my family.”**

Ali, 15 years old, originally from Afghanistan

In this context, Terre des hommes developed a comprehensive Theory of Change (ToC) that outlines how we aim to support and empower these young people, protect their rights, and influence the systems around them.

This document offers a simplified and visual interpretation of the Theory of Change operationalised by the CYM program. It provides an overview of the context of intervention, a focus on target groups, and explains the strategy of intervention, the programmatic indicators, and its institutional alignment. It is designed for a general audience, including communities, partner organizations, and the young people themselves.



Context analysis

281 mio.
migrants



36 mio. children

Global Migration Trends

Migration is a defining feature of our century, with millions of people moving within and across borders annually. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), there were approximately 281 million international migrants in 2020, with 36 million being children. The factors driving migration are multifaceted and include economic disparities, political instability, conflict, and environmental degradation.

The profile of migrants is diverse, with a significant proportion being children and youth who may travel by themselves or with friends or families. These demographic trends highlight the need for tailored interventions that address the unique needs and vulnerabilities of migrant and displaced children and young people.

Socio-Political Environment

The socio-political environment plays a crucial role in shaping migration patterns and the experiences of migrant children and youth. Key factors include:

- **Conflict and Instability:** Armed conflicts and political instability in regions such as the Middle East, Africa, and more recently Europe are major drivers of displacement (national and international).
- **Social and Economic Disparities:** Significant economic disparities between countries and regions motivate individuals to seek better opportunities elsewhere. Gender-based violence is major factor of migration.
- **Policy and Legal Frameworks:** National and international policies and legal frameworks significantly impact the rights and protections afforded to migrant children and youth. Policies that prioritize border security over human rights can exacerbate vulnerabilities.
- **Environmental Factors:** Climate change is increasingly recognized as a driver of migration, in every region. Environmental degradation, extreme weather events, and resource scarcity force populations to move in search of safer and more sustainable living conditions. The impacts of climate change are particularly severe for vulnerable populations, including children and youth.

Key Challenges Faced by Migrant and Displaced Children and Youth

- **Violence and Exploitation:** Migrant and displaced children and youth are particularly vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and trafficking. They often face dangerous journeys and are at risk of abuse by smugglers.
- **Limited Access to Services:** Access to basic services such as education, healthcare, and legal protection is often restricted for migrant children and youth. This lack of access intensifies their vulnerabilities and limits their opportunities for development.
- **Legal and Administrative Barriers:** Migrant and displaced children and youth often face legal and administrative barriers that hinder their ability to integrate into host communities. These barriers can lead to administrative detention, deportation, or statelessness.
- **Psychosocial Issues:** The trauma of displacement and the challenges of integration can lead to significant psychosocial issues, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder hindering their capacity to benefit from opportunities and integration.

Target groups and key stakeholders



Main target groups

The program targets children (0-17 years) and young people (18-24 years) affected by mobility, categorized into subgroups:

TARGET GROUPS OF THE CYM PROGRAM



**Refugees/
Asylum seeker/
Migrant children and
youth
from another country**



**Internally displaced
and internal migrant
children and youth**



**Returns/
Pre-departure children
and youth living
in contexts strongly
affected by migration
or displacement**



Refugees / Asylum seeker / Migrant children and youth from another country

This category includes all children and young people who have left their country of origin and crossed a border into a new country, whether as transit or destination. These people may have been forced to leave their country or may have left voluntarily. They may be recognised as statutory refugees (1951 Geneva Convention), asylum seekers or simply migrants (irregular or regular situation).

Ex: a young Syrian woman in Lebanon

Internally displaced and internal migrant children and youth

This category includes all children and young people who have left their place of origin to go to another place WHILE REMAINING IN THEIR COUNTRY. These people may have chosen to leave in search of new opportunities, or they may have fled or abandoned their usual place of residence, because of armed conflict, widespread violence or climate change, etc.

Ex: a young Guinean from Mamou now living in Conarky.



Returnees / Pre-departure children and youth living in contexts strongly affected by migration or displacement

This category includes all children and young people and their communities living in a context of mobility, i.e. children and young people who are potential candidates for migration or children and young people who have returned/been repatriated. At the time of the project, these people are in their locality but are affected by problems linked to mobility (risk prevention, reintegration, etc.).

Ex: a young person originally from Gao, who fled the locality or the country, then returned to Gao.

In all interventions, vulnerable children from the host community are also considered.

Children can be either unaccompanied, separated or still with their parents / Caregivers.

Unaccompanied:

This means the child is not in the care of a parent or legal guardian who is responsible for them, such as a guardian.

Separated:

This refers to the fact that the child is separated from their parents or legal guardians and is not in their care. The child can be accompanied by other adults or children/youth who can be supportive, but not legally responsible of their protection and wellbeing.

Through the CYM program, children and youth on the move are supported, regardless of their status; they can be recognized as refugees, still asylum seekers or migrants - in regular or irregular situation.

Stakeholder mapping

Key stakeholders include local and national partners, peers NGOs, community organizations, local authorities, government agencies, and international bodies. Each of them plays a critical role in implementing and supporting the CYM program. Collaboration with these stakeholders is essential for achieving the program's objectives. Learning strategies for strengthening the capacity of stakeholders include training programs, workshops, and initiatives aimed at enhancing skills and knowledge. Advocate with and toward them, support of youth-led movements ability to advocate and strengthen participation of CYM in national, regional and global advocacy are key.

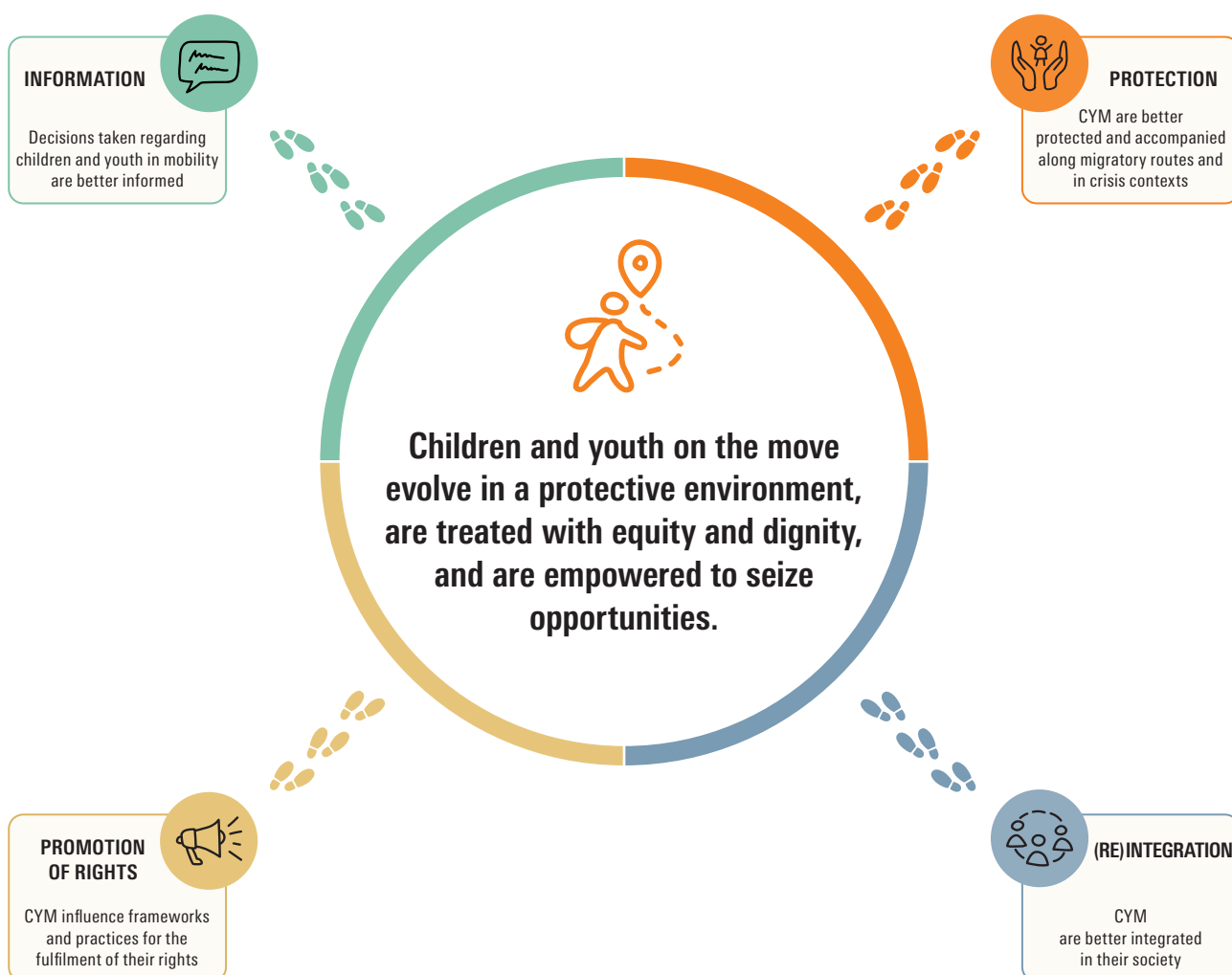
Thus, the CYM program is fully committed in the successful implementation of Tdh Localization policy.

Objectives and pathways of change



Objective

Tdh contributes to promote the rights of children and young people on the move and enhance their development through education, empowerment, and integration.



Pathways of change

To reach this global change, the CYM program uses 4 interlinked pathways of change.



Inform and Mitigate Risks:

Reduce risks associated with forced and unsafe migration by informing stakeholders and empowering CYM.



Strengthen Protection:

Enhance protection and welfare along migration routes through quality services.



Promote Integration and Empowerment:

Increase economic and social inclusion, translating into access to sustainable solutions.



Respect and promote Rights:

Ensure fair treatment and access to rights regardless of status, aligning with global compacts on migration and refugees.



Information and Prevention

Outcome: Ensure informed decision-making about migration.

Why it matters?

Children and youth on the move often lack clear, trustworthy information. This puts them at greater risk of taking unsafe routes, falling into the hands of traffickers, missing out on their rights and available support;

Tdh addresses this by providing accurate, age-friendly, and culturally relevant information – both digitally and in person.

What we do concretely:

- Collect, analyse and share data on migration routes, CYM profiles, risks faced and specific needs, engage stakeholders and empower CYM with information on rights and protection strategies.
- Provide information in adequate spaces (Child-friendly spaces, hope points, “guichets uniques”, etc.) at community centers and border crossings.
- Develop mobile apps and websites with migration info.
- Train local professionals to support youth with up-to-date guidance.



Protection and Accompaniment

Outcome: Provide quality protection services along migration routes.

Why it matters?

Children and youth on the move are often at high risk of violence, abuse, trafficking, or neglect. Many lack legal identity documents or access to support services. They may be detained, exploited, or forced into unsafe living conditions.

Protection means ensuring that every child is safe, heard, and supported – regardless of their migration status.

What we do concretely:

- Provide safe shelters and transit centers and basic needs.
- Offer emergency aid, psychosocial support and legal aid.
- Strengthen access and quality standards of protection services.
- Train professionals (e.g., social workers, police, legal guardians) and strengthen coordination systems.



Empowerment and Integration

Outcome: Support sustainable solutions through education and socio-economic integration.

Why it matters?

Children and youth on the move are not just victims or beneficiaries – they are agents of change. Empowerment and integration mean giving young people the tools, support, and space they need to thrive, contribute, and feel a sense of belonging. Education and employability are the key strategies that support social inclusion and sustainable (re) integration of children and youth.

What we do concretely:

- Offer non-formal education, vocational training, and language courses.
- Provide learning spaces (especially Resilience Innovative Facilities).
- Support youth leadership, peer mentoring, and participation in decision-making.
- Facilitate cultural, sport, recreational, and civic engagement activities.



Influencing Systems

Outcome: Promote recognition and inclusion of CYM in legal frameworks.

Why it matters?

Children and youth on the move often go unheard in decisions that affect them. Laws, policies, and systems can exclude or harm them – sometimes unintentionally. Without strong advocacy and systemic change, protection and support remain temporary or incomplete.

Promoting rights means not only defending them in crisis but helping build long-term solutions rooted in justice, equity, and youth participation.

What we do concretely:

- Advocate for national and international policy reform.
- Support youth-led campaigns and participation in global forums and sharing children's voices.
- Strengthen civil society and child protection networks.
- Collaborate with universities, researchers, and experts to advance child rights.

Intervention Strategies



Risks and assumptions



Key risks and mitigation strategies

Risks	Mitigation strategies
Physical and Psychological Risks: Migrant children and youth face risks such as violence, exploitation, and trauma.	Protection Services: Provide access to quality protection services, including legal aid and psychosocial support.
Economic Risks: Lack of access to education and employment opportunities can lead to poverty and marginalization.	Education and Training: Offer educational and vocational training opportunities to enhance employability.
Legal Risks: Inadequate legal protection can result in detention, deportation, or statelessness.	Advocacy: Advocate for policies that protect migrant rights and promote inclusion.
Environmental Risks: Climate change impacts can exacerbate migration challenges.	Climate Adaptation: Support communities in adapting to climate change through resilience-building initiatives.

Key assumptions

The CYM program's strategies and expected outcomes are based on key assumptions:

- 1. Informed Mobility:**
More informed mobility empowers populations, including children and youth, to find alternatives to migration or reduce associated risks.
- 2. Localized Protection:**
Strengthening local protection mechanisms along migration routes reduces vulnerabilities and provides adequate responses to CYM basic needs.
- 3. Economic Empowerment:**
Building economic resilience for populations affected by mobility is essential for reducing vulnerability and implementing sustainable solutions.
- 4. Recognition of Rights:**
Integrating the specific needs of CYM into legal frameworks is crucial for improving their living conditions and strengthening migration management systems.
- 5. Digital Inclusion:**
Innovative digital solutions enhance access to information, services, and opportunities for CYM.
- 6. Localisation and partnership:**
Effective collaboration between formal and non-formal actors strengthens protection systems and ensures better understanding and coverage of CYM needs.

Programmatic indicators framework



2025–2028 Programmatic indicators are aligned with the Theory of change presented here.

Pathway 1	Pathway 2	Pathway 3	Pathway 4
<p>% of surveyed key stakeholders that have gained understanding of migration context, local realities and CYM rights and needs</p>	<p>% of protection services supported by Tdh demonstrating improvement in quality standards</p>	<p>% of C&Y affected by migration and displacement (disaggregated by status, age, and gender) and family members (by gender) reached by Tdh interventions that improved their livelihoods and/or employability</p>	<p># of standards, policies, or procedures adopted, modified, or repealed, on the rights of migrant and displaced children and youth, thanks to Tdh interventions along with key stakeholders</p>
<p># of CYM, families and community members who understand the risks and opportunities associated to migration</p>	<p># of children and youth benefitting from quality case management service (delivered by Tdh or partners).</p>	<p># of CYM (disaggregated by age and gender) who accessed formal or non-formal education (thanks to Tdh project), including in emergency contexts.</p>	<p># of global, regional, national, and local public advocacy actions on right to mobility and social inclusion that engage CYM along with key actors (gov, cities, civil society, private sector)</p>
<p># and type of (academic and non-academic) publications, guidance, and learning modules in which Tdh is in a leadership or active contribution position</p>	<p># of children and youth (disaggregated by age, gender) benefiting from MHPSS intervention (disaggregated by type of MHPSS interventions).</p>	<p># of innovative solutions, including digital solutions to improve livelihood (physical, financial, social, and human capital) and/or employability that are being tested and developed</p>	<p># of national and local actors committed in advocacy actions on child rights in context of mobility</p>
		<p># of learning spaces supported to improve learning opportunities for children and youth</p>	<p># of networks engaged in advocacy on child rights in a context of migration in which Tdh participated</p>

Alignment with institutional priorities



Triple Nexus

The Triple Nexus approach integrates humanitarian aid, development aid, and peacebuilding to address migration challenges. It is essential for managing humanitarian crises and forced displacement, focusing on fragile states and protracted crises. This approach emphasizes collaboration with local actors for sustainable interventions. A model of action “*Migration responses in the Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding Nexus*” is available to support the programming.



Climate Change

Climate change exacerbates migration by causing environmental disasters and conflicts. The CYM program prioritizes supporting communities in adapting to climate impacts. It aligns with global efforts like the Paris Agreement and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration. A model of Action “*Climate change and Migration*” is available to support the programming.

Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion

Gender and diversity (including disability) play a significant role in migration, impacting all stages of the process, from the decision to move, to the risks faced during migration, to integration or return. It shapes access to information, travel routes, labour market participation, and relationships with the origin country. The migration journey can be traumatic, with limited access to essential resources, making CYM more vulnerable to GBV from various perpetrators, including traffickers, officials, and even family members. Tdh recognizes the importance of addressing GBV as a critical component of the ToC for CYM. This involves advocating for the rights of migrant, refugee, and internally displaced children and ensuring they have access to comprehensive child protection and GBV prevention and response services. Tdh aims to include the participation of girls, boys, women, and men to create a more inclusive and effective response.



Conclusion



The CYM program aims to create a positive impact by ensuring that **children and youth affected by migration and displacement and their families evolve in a protective environment, are treated with equity and dignity and are empowered to seize opportunities**. The program targets children and youth (0- to 24-year-old) who are on pre-mobility, who are migrant, refugees or asylum seekers or internally displaced or who have returned to their home. The program provides 4 pathways of change: informed decisions regarding mobility, strengthened protection, sustainable solutions, and the recognition of CYM rights. By focusing on participation, innovation and collaborating with various actors and empowering CYM, the program seeks to improve their living conditions and prospects.

To go further, additional resources are available on Knowledge centre Children and Youth on the Move.

You can also enroll the CYM E-learning course in Tdh Academy!

Impressum

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**Every child in the world
has the right to a childhood.
It's that simple.**



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