



UN Guidelines for Displaced Children

For Prelims: International Organisation for Migration (IOM), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), Climate Change, Children's Climate Risk Index, Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index

For Mains: Impact of Climate Change on Migrant Children

Why in News?

Recently, the [United Nations](#)-backed agencies have issued guidelines to provide the **first-ever global policy framework** to protect children displaced due to climate change.

What Impact is Climate Change having on Children?

- **Climate change** is intersecting with existing environmental, social, political, economic and demographic conditions that are **contributing to people's decisions to move**.
 - Millions more children could be forced to move in the coming years.
- Nearly **10 million children were displaced following weather-related shocks in 2020 alone**.
- Additionally, **nearly half of the world's 2.2 billion children, or roughly one billion boys and girls, live in 33 countries at high risk of the impacts of climate change**.
- Further, **extreme climates like rising sea levels, hurricanes, wildfires, and failing crops** are pushing more and more children and families away from their homes.
 - Around the world, migrant children are facing **alarming levels of xenophobia**, the **socioeconomic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic**, and limited access to essential services.
 - Displaced children are at **greater risk of abuse, trafficking, and exploitation**.
 - They are **more likely to lose access to education and healthcare**. And they are frequently forced into early marriage and child labour.

What are the UN Guidelines for Displaced Children?

- These guidelines are a joint initiative of the [International Organisation for Migration \(IOM\)](#), [UN Children's Fund \(UNICEF\)](#), [Georgetown University](#), and the [United Nations University](#).
 - The guidelines cover both internal as well as cross-border migrations.
- It contains a set of **nine principles** that address the unique vulnerabilities of children who have been uprooted.
 - The principles are based on the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and are informed by existing operational guidelines and frameworks.
- These nine principles are as follows:
 - Rights-based approach
 - Best interests of the child
 - Accountability
 - Awareness and participation in decision-making
 - Family unity

- Protection, safety, and security
- Access to education, health care, and social services.
- Non-discrimination
- Nationality

What is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child?

- It is a treaty **adopted** by the United Nations General Assembly in **1989**.
- It recognises a child as every human being under 18 years old.
- It sets out the **civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child**, regardless of their race, religion or abilities.
 - It includes rights such as Right to Education, Right to Rest and Leisure, Right to Protection from Mental or Physical Abuse including Rape and Sexual Exploitation.
- It is the **world's most widely ratified human rights treaty**.

Why was There a Need for These Guidelines?

- There is currently **no global policy framework for addressing the needs and rights of children** moving in the context of climate change.
 - Where child-related migration policies do exist, they **do not consider climate and environmental factors**, and where climate change policies exist, they usually overlook children's needs.
- The **climate emergency has and will continue to have profound implications** for human mobility.
 - Its impact will be most severe with particular segments of our communities such as children.
 - These would serve as a **framework for national and local governments, international organizations, and civil society groups** to develop policies that protect children's rights.

What other Assessments are there for Children vis-a-vis Climate Change?

- **Children's Climate Risk Index:**
 - It **ranks countries based on children's exposure to climate and environmental shocks**, such as **Cyclones** and **Heatwaves**, as well as their vulnerability to those shocks, based on their access to essential services.
 - **It is the first comprehensive analysis of climate risk from a child's perspective.**
- **Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index:**
 - The index shows that children bear the brunt of climate change as it affects their fundamental rights of survival, protection, development and participation.
 - Other potential effects of climate change on children are orphanhood, trafficking, child labour, loss of education and development opportunities, separation from family, homelessness, begging, trauma, emotional disruption, illnesses, etc.

Way Forward

- While the new framework does not include new legal obligations, they distill and leverage key principles that have already been affirmed in international law and adopted by governments around the world,
- Further, governments around the world need to review their policies in light of the guiding principles and take measures now that will ensure children on the move in the face of climate change are protected today and in the future.
 - Working together, through coordinated action informed by these principles, governments,

civil society, and international organizations can better protect the rights and well-being of children on the move.

UPSC Civil Services Exam Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. With reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, consider the following: (2010)

1. The Right to Development
2. The Right to Expression
3. The Right to Recreation

Which of the above is/are the Rights of the child?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 3 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (d)

Exp:

- The United Nations (UN) took its first step towards declaring the importance of child rights by establishing the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 1946. In 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, making it the first UN document to recognise children's need for protection.
- The first UN document specially focused on child rights was the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, but instead of being a legally binding document it was more like a moral guide of conduct for governments. It was not until 1989 that the global community adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, making it the first international legally binding document concerning child rights.
- The convention, which came into force on the 2nd September 1990, consists of 54 articles covering various categories of child rights including right to life, right to development, right to engage in play and recreational activities, right to protection, right to participation, expression, etc. Hence, 1, 2 and 3 are correct. Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.

Source: DTE

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