

**Children on the Move:**  
**A Systematic Review of Qualitative Research on**  
**How Children Migrate and Their Situation at**  
**Destination**

Prepared for: The Inter-Agency Group on Children on the Move  
(IAG-COM)

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## **Executive Summary**

The term children on the move can be used to describe “children (under the age of 18) moving for a variety of reasons, voluntarily or involuntarily, within or between countries, with or without their parents or other primary caregivers (IOM, 2013).” Children on the move, also referred to as child migrants, are most vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation while in transit and when they first arrive at their destinations, especially migrant children in child labor (Reale, 2013). Despite clear and prevalent dangers, little research focuses on how children migrate, and the situation at destination for child migrants in child labor. This lack of research results in a glaring dearth of important information which only exacerbates the unique challenges associated with planning programming to support and protect child migrants in transit and child migrants in child labor at destination.

This paper presents the results of a systematic review of qualitative research on how children migrate and the situation at destination for child migrants in child labor. Based on the review, the report offers best practices and recommendations to guide future qualitative research on child migrants. The recommendations are valuable in that they provide delineated standards for how qualitative researchers should approach research on child migrants. Since I was unable to identify any other guidelines, these recommendations mark the first of their kind.

### **Data and Methods (Page 3)**

I identified and included 15 articles in the review. Two articles address children in transit, five articles address migrant children in child labor, and eight articles address both topics. These articles were identified using inclusionary and exclusionary criteria. I conducted a systematic review of all identified articles to analyze the qualitative methods used and information gathered

in qualitative research studies. For the purposes of this project, a systematic review refers to the analysis of results and methods reported in previously published articles.

After collecting information from each article, I analyzed the results using evaluation criteria, which were also utilized to frame the results and identify trends for future research. The evaluation criteria include: 1) Use of research ethics; 2) Profile of the researcher; 3) Whether the researchers distinguished between migrant children and trafficked children in their sample; 4) Location and of research; 5) Timing of research; 6) Children as active participants; 7) Inclusion of intermediaries, and 8) Comparison of migrant children versus local children in child labor.

## **Results (Page 8)**

The results of this systematic review reveal a paucity of research on how children migrate and the situation at destination for child migrants in child labor. Additionally, the existing literature is plagued by serious limitations. Below is a summary of the main findings.

- Research ethics are not being fully incorporated into research on child migrants. In particular, developing policies to remove children from abuse appears to be lacking in the literature. Surprisingly, informed consent is also missing, or at least not discussed, in most of the articles.
- The majority of research on child migrants is conducted by small research teams who are mostly comprised of female researchers, and who are not of the same ethnicity as the study population. Larger research teams had a more diverse profile, yet no studies addressed age of the research team and most did not discuss its gender composition. Finally, training and background in child research techniques is severely lacking.

- Researchers are not identifying trafficking victims or distinguishing between trafficked children and migrant children in their samples. One factor hindering identification is the lack of conceptual clarity between definitions of trafficked children and migrant children, and the level of exploitation that indicates trafficking. Clearly, researchers need more nuanced criteria in order to effectively identify victims of trafficking.
- This review offers little evidence that conducting research in both sending and destination communities elicits more comprehensive information. However, it does allow researchers to validate experiences of participants at destination and participants in sending communities, which may ultimately lead to more robust data. The review also indicates that focused research at destination may offer more instructive information on children in the worst conditions and may also better identify victims of trafficking. Research in border regions or high transit regions may produce more comprehensive data on children in transit..
- The majority of research studies in this sample (10 out of 15) did not discuss timing of interviews. Only three out of the seven studies that included migrants in agriculture discussed seasonal migration, which may be explained due to the time limitations of research.
- While most studies employ some child-friendly methods, very few are engaging children as active participants in their research.
- All the available research on child migrants in transit address intermediaries to some degree, but only some studies develop a more comprehensive view of the role of intermediaries. A number of strategies were identified that may help researchers gain more information about intermediaries such as interviewing employers or pimps (who may work closely with

intermediaries). The MAT tool may also help researchers generate more robust data on intermediaries.

- This review elucidates the relative dearth of research available on the comparison of child migrants and local children in child labor: only one article compared the two groups.

### **Recommendations and Best Practices (Page 36)**

Several notable trends emerged from the systematic literature review. I summarized and compiled these trends into a set of recommendations and suggestions for best practices for future qualitative research on child migrants. These recommendations highlight how researchers can best investigate 1) how children migrate, and 2) the situation at destination for migrant children in child labor. The recommendations are summarized as follows:

1. **Incorporate, define and clearly outline the use of ethics as pertains to child migrant investigations.** Future research on child migrants must clearly outline ethical procedures including developing a removal plan for children experiencing abuse, and ensuring the best interest of the child is at the forefront of the research.
2. **Aspire to locate, recruit and incorporate locals into research teams.** To reduce bias, future research on child migrants must incorporate locals into research teams. Working with local universities and/or training local community members can assist researchers to more effectively incorporate locals into their investigations.
3. **Develop more nuanced, and culturally appropriate approaches to distinguishing between child migrants and trafficking victims.** Researchers should develop a culturally relevant set of criteria to distinguish between child migrants and victims of trafficking in

their samples. Future researchers would be well served to review Camacho's (2006) efforts and should aspire to develop similar criteria in the effort to identify victims of trafficking.

- 4. Conduct research in border regions to investigate how children migrate and children in transit. Develop more focused research of migrant children in the worst conditions at destination.** Future investigations should be conducted in border regions to gain a more comprehensive depiction of children's in-transit experiences. Investigations conducted at destination should focus on migrant children living in the direst conditions.
- 5. Develop a set of guidelines to inform and assure that investigations and related interviews are timed such as to minimize impact on child migrants and maximize effectiveness of data collection.** Future investigations and interviews should be purposefully planned in order to accommodate children's work schedules as well as seasonal migration.
- 6. Engage children through age appropriate participatory research.** Future research should engage children through participatory research methods, including being trained as child researchers. For small studies with limited resources, children can be involved in the development of pilots, and/or by helping researchers recruit and build trust with participants.
- 7. Develop a system to assess and document all intermediaries who are involved in children's migration.** Researchers should assess and document all actors involved in the recruitment process, including who first approaches a child to migrate, who provides transportation, and who pays or receives payment for recruitment services.
- 8. Compare the labor outcomes of child migrants versus local children in child labor.** Future research should include a comparison of child labor outcomes among migrant children versus local children. Quota sampling of migrant and local children ensures that both groups of children are represented in the sample and allows for comparison of labor outcomes.

## **Introduction**

There are an estimated 214 million international migrants (UNDESA, 2010) and 763 million internal migrants worldwide (UNDESA, 2013), including millions of ‘children on the move’ (ILO, 2013). The term children on the move can be used to describe “children (under the age of 18) moving for a variety of reasons, voluntarily or involuntarily, within<sup>1</sup> or between countries, with or without their parents or other primary caregivers (IOM, 2013).”

Children on the move, also referred to as child migrants, are most vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation while in transit and when they first arrive at their destinations, especially migrant children in child labor (Reale, 2013). Despite clear and prevalent dangers, little research focuses on how children migrate, and the situation at destination for child migrants in child labor. Gaps in qualitative research are especially great. No models or guidelines exist for qualitative researchers to study child migrants or engage these children through research. This lack of research results in a glaring dearth of important information which only exacerbates the unique challenges associated with planning programming to support and protect child migrants in transit and child migrants in child labor at destination.

This paper presents the results of a systematic review of qualitative research on how children migrate and the situation at destination for child migrants in child labor. Based on the review, the report offers best practices and recommendations to guide future qualitative research on child migrants. The recommendations are valuable in that they provide delineated standards

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<sup>1</sup> Children moving within borders are considered “internal migrants.” According to the IOM, internal migration includes “A movement of people from one area of a country to another for the purpose or with the effect of establishing a new residence. This migration may be temporary or permanent. Internal migrants move but remain within their country of origin (e.g. rural to urban migration)”(IOM, 2004). The IOM does not distinguish how far you have to move to be considered an internal migrant.

for how qualitative researchers should approach research on child migrants. Since I was unable to identify any other guidelines, these recommendations mark the first of their kind.

The paper begins with several conceptual definitions and international frameworks which inform and influence the migration literature followed by a data and methods section describing how the systematic review was conducted. The third section provides the results of the systematic review, and the fourth and final section offers recommendations based on the results of the review.

## **Section 1: Conceptual Definitions**

### *Child Migrants in Child Labor*

Work is a major motivation for voluntary childhood migration. Consequently, child migration and child labor are inextricably linked. The ILO defines child labor as “all economically active children aged 5-14, except those aged 12-14 engaged in light work only (defined as less than 14 hours of work per week), and all children age 15-17 engaged in hazardous and other worst forms of child labor (ILO, 2002).” Child migrants in child labor may be particularly vulnerable to abuse because their migration status can inhibit their ability to access protection measures including social services and social networks.

### *Child Migration vs. Trafficking*

Despite the fact that the majority of children on the move are not trafficked, historically child migrants have been grouped together with child victims of trafficking. This grouping conflates the two populations and disregards any agency children have in the decision-making process to migrate. Within the last several years, migration research has expanded to include



children who migrate voluntarily and has focused on distinguishing between voluntary child migrants and trafficked children (Yaqub, 2009). The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000) (the Palermo Protocol) defines child trafficking as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation,” (United Nations, 2000) including forced labor, prostitution, pornography, debt bondage, and slavery. For the purpose of this project, I will focus on research related to voluntary child migrants. However, given the difficulty in distinguishing the difference between victims of trafficking and voluntary migrants, trafficked children cannot be completely excluded from my research.<sup>2</sup> In Section 3.3, I describe several of the difficulties of distinguishing between trafficking victims and voluntary migrants.

## **Section 2: Data and Methods**

This section reports on the data and methods used to conduct the systematic review. It includes a description of the data sources, the study selection criteria, and the analysis.

### *Data Sources*

I used several databases to identify appropriate existing qualitative research studies. The databases I used included: the Child Migration Research Network, the ILO database, UNICEF and Save the Children publications, and additional databases through the Duke Library system. I complemented this database search by using the works cited lists in identified articles to locate other sources.

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<sup>2</sup> In the case of a couple studies in my review, researchers discovered that some child migrants in their sample population were victims of trafficking. In other studies, researchers were unable to distinguish between trafficking victims and voluntary migrants.

## *Study Selection Criteria*

I selected studies based on inclusionary and exclusionary criteria. The inclusion criteria include: 1) qualitative design<sup>3</sup>; 2) participants who have experienced child migration (current or former child migrants<sup>4</sup>); 3) study participants can include migrant children's parents, peers, family members, employers, recruiters or service providers as long as current or former child migrants are also included in the study; 4) report findings on how children migrate<sup>5</sup> and/or the situation at destination for migrant children in child labor<sup>6</sup>, even if it's not the main research goal; 5) presence of verbal interaction between the researcher and participants; 6) no geographic or demographic restrictions placed on study setting or sample population; and 7) only English and Spanish language articles<sup>7</sup>.

The exclusion criteria include: 1) randomized controlled trials; 2) surveys (multiple choice answers or interviews without open-ended questions); 3) refugees or internally displaced children; 4) trafficked children as the sole sample population<sup>8</sup>; 5) participants who have not

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<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this project, qualitative methods includes: 1) focus groups, 2) open-ended or semi-structured interviews, 3) direct participant observation 4) ethnographies, 5) life histories, 6) visual, performance, arts-based methods and play (children to use age-appropriate non-verbal methods such as drawing pictures, role-playing, and games to engage in research); and 7) virtual or computer-aided methods (eg. using digital cameras, computers, or cell phones).

<sup>4</sup> A migrant is considered a child if s/he migrated between the age of 0-17 years old.

<sup>5</sup> The process of how children migrate includes: who children migrate with, what kinds of transportation they use, how they cross international borders, what kinds of supplies/money they carry with them, who 'helps' them throughout the migration process (eg. Intermediaries, employers, family members, friends, others), what risks /challenges they encounter throughout their journey, or any other pertinent information to migration en route.

<sup>6</sup> The situation at destination for child migrants in child labor includes: working conditions (such as hours, pay, exposure to hazardous conditions, and abuse), as well as living/housing conditions (such as type of dwelling, who they live with, and whether they receive basic food/shelter), especially in comparison to local children.

<sup>7</sup> I was only able to identify English language articles.

<sup>8</sup> Trafficked children only make up a very small subset of all migrant children. The two groups are intricately linked, because trafficked children are often taken from one region to another, and it can be difficult to determine whether a child has been trafficked or not. Migrant children, especially those travelling without adults, are also more vulnerable to being trafficked. However, for the purposes of this project, I am focusing on child migrants who have not been trafficked and/or who have not yet been identified as trafficked.

experienced child migration. However, if randomized control trials, surveys, or other quantitative research methods included a qualitative component, the article was eligible for inclusion.

Based on the research identified through the inclusionary and exclusionary criteria, the available qualitative research on how children migrate is sparse. Consequently, most of the qualitative studies I have found discuss how children migrate as a secondary finding, but not as a main research objective. Research on child labor is significantly more expansive. However, as with research on how children migrate, many of the qualitative studies focused on child labor discuss child migrants as a secondary finding. I identified and included 15 articles in the review. Two articles address children in transit, five articles address migrant children in child labor, and eight articles address both topics. Please see Appendix A for a list of identified articles.

### *Analysis*

I conducted a systematic review of all identified articles to analyze the qualitative methods used and information gathered in qualitative research studies. For the purposes of this project, a systematic review refers to the analysis of results and methods reported in previously published articles. To conduct the systematic review, I extracted the following data from each study: 1) article name; 2) author; 3) year; 4) location; 5) research objectives; 6) whether it's a report or research paper; 7) sample population of interest; 8) method of locating population; 9) who was excluded (hard to reach population); 10) sampling methods; 11) research methods (with emphasis on qualitative methods); 12) use of ethics in research; 13) age of child participants; 14) whether researchers distinguished between trafficked vs. migrant children; 15) where research was conducted (sending community, destination, or both), 16) types of questions were asked; 17) what information was collected regarding how children migrate (for studies focused on the ways

children migrate); 18) what information was collected regarding migrant children's situation at destination (for child labor studies); 19) which sector was targeted (for child labor studies); and 20) overall conclusions.

After collecting this information from each article, I analyzed the results using evaluation criteria, which were also utilized to frame the results and identify trends for future research. The analysis of the evaluation criteria (See Section 3: Results) helped me to form recommendations for future research.

The evaluation criteria include the following:

- **Use of research ethics.** I evaluated whether the researchers discussed ethics in their research including whether the authors mentioned the use of ethics in their study design, whether they received consent from children's guardians, and if they removed any children from the research due situations of extreme exploitation, abuse, or trafficking. The Inter-Agency Group on Children on the Move (IAG-COM)<sup>9</sup> is interested in research that always keeps the best interest of the child in mind.
- **Profile of the researcher.** I evaluated the age and gender composition of the research team. Did the researchers speak the native language? Are they from the same ethnic group as the child migrants? Are they trained in building rapport and child participation methods? Have they worked with children before? Understanding the composition of the research team, their assets, and their disadvantages will help inform future research.

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<sup>9</sup> The group includes the following agencies: International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Plan International, Save the Children, Terre des Hommes, the African Movement of Working Children and Youths (AMWCY/MAEJT), Environmental Development Action in the Third World (ENDA), World Vision, the Oak Foundation and individual experts and academics.

- **Whether the researchers distinguished between migrant children and trafficked children in their sample.** I evaluated how they were able to distinguish the two groups and whether they compared outcomes of trafficked children to child migrants.

Identifying victims of trafficking is very difficult. Understanding how some researchers distinguished between the two groups will help other researchers identify victims of trafficking in their studies.
- **Location and of research.** I evaluated whether researchers conducted their data collection at origin, at destination, or both. Specifically, I evaluated whether studies conducted in both sending and destination communities produced more comprehensive research.
- **Timing of research.** Similar to location of research, I evaluated the timing the research took place. In particular, I analyzed what time of day or year the research was conducted and whether the researchers factored in seasonal migration.
- **Children as active participants.** I evaluated whether children were involved in developing or implementing the research. The IAG-COM, one of the leading groups working on child migrant issues, is interested in engaging children throughout the research process. Examining how researchers engage child participants will help IAG-COM member agencies incorporate participatory research methods into their projects.
- **Inclusion of intermediaries.** I evaluated whether the researchers discussed intermediaries and/or who children migrate with. Research on intermediaries and the role they play in child migration is limited. Understanding how researchers collected data on intermediaries will inform future research.

- **Comparison of migrant children versus local children in child labor.** I evaluated whether the researchers compared the outcomes of migrant children and local children in child labor. Migrant children in child labor are often worse off than their local counterparts. If researchers are not comparing the outcomes of the two groups, there will continue to be large gaps in knowledge regarding migrant children in child labor.

### **Section 3: Results**

This section analyzes the fifteen articles in the systematic review, based on the evaluation criteria described in Section 2. It summarizes the findings of each evaluation criterion.

#### **3.1 Use of research ethics**

Agencies that work on child migrant issues, including the IAG-COM, place a particular emphasis on research ethics. IAG-COM's member organizations want to ensure that the best interest of the child is always the top research priority. While not dictated by international law, certain research ethics should, nevertheless, always be adhered to when conducting research with migrant children. The Regional Working Group on Child Labor in Asia, in association with ILO-IPEC, developed several ethical guidelines for researchers when working with children in the Worst Forms of Child Labor (WFCL). These ethical guidelines can also be applied to working with child migrants. The guidelines stress the importance of keeping the best interest of the child in mind at all times, including keeping children safe from harm, minimizing the power imbalance between children and researchers, and ensuring confidentiality (Regional Working Group on Child Labour in Asia, 2002).

**Table 1: Research Ethics**

Article	Acted in Best Interest of Child?*	Informed Consent?	Remove a child from abuse?	Other Comments
Punch, 2007	ND	X	Not discussed. No extreme cases of abuse were reported	Ethics were not discussed
Hashim, 2005	X (though not explicitly stated)	ND	X	Hashim ended two interviews in which children were recounting distressing situations, and worked with 16 others to relieve their situation
Heissler, 2009	ND	ND	Not discussed. No extreme cases of abuse were reported	Ethics were not discussed
Camacho, 2006	X	X	Not discussed - though received support from NGO	"In case the child had experienced abuse and her case taken in by [the community org] for counseling, the child's participation should have "clearance" from [the] social worker."
Van Blerk, 2008	ND	ND	Not discussed- though abuse was prevalent	Employed more child friendly research techniques including photo diaries
Thorsen, 2013	ND	ND	Not discussed. No extreme cases of abuse were reported	Author reduced power imbalance and gained trust by adopting a strategy of repeated visits
Stephenson, 2001	ND	ND	Not discussed. No extreme abuse, but extreme conditions (ex. prostitution)	Used participant observation in institutions or on the street to help children become familiar with the research team.
ILO IPEC, 2002	X	X	Not discussed though abuse was prevalent	Well-being and safety paramount. Interviews without the employer's knowledge took place in a quiet place to assure the privacy and comfort of the child.
van Blerk and Ansel, 2006	X	ND	Not discussed. No extreme abuse reported	Did not ask directly about AIDS because it's not considered ethical. Researchers tried to reduce the "power" difference between researchers and children. Used 'child-friendly' research methods
ILO IPEC, 2006	ND	ND	Not discussed- Extremely exploitative working conditions	Ethics were not discussed
Phlainoi, 2002	X (though not explicitly stated)	X	X (discussed though no case was found)	The willingness to participate could be expressed in both verbal and written forms. In the Thai context, the verbal form was more appropriate.
Pearson, 2006	ND	X	Not discussed though abuse was prevalent	Safety and confidentiality was paramount
Reale, 2013	X	ND	Not discussed. No extreme abuse reported	Ethics were not discussed, though full research report has not yet been published. Children were involved through consultation in the development and testing of the pilots.
de Lange, 2006	ND	ND	Not discussed. No extreme abuse reported	Ethics were not discussed
Caouette, 2001	X	X	Not discussed though abuse was prevalent	Huge emphasis on ethics including: confidentiality, safety/security and addressing sensitive issues . To keep participants and researchers safe, several project sites were closed temporarily and one permanently. Child friendly research techniques

ND= Not Discussed

One of the most important rules is to obtain informed consent from child participants, and if possible, from their parents or guardians. The ethical rules also stipulate that if a child

participant is experiencing abuse, researchers must refer that child to counseling or other support services. Researchers should be prepared to remove a child from their situation in extreme cases.

Despite these guidelines, many child migrant researchers do not reference, much less meaningfully address, ethical considerations in their studies (Regional Working Group on Child Labour in Asia, 2002).

Few researchers in this review emphasized the use of ethics in their research (See Table 1). Of the 15 articles reviewed for this paper, only 6 mentioned that they received informed consent for child participants. While others may have received informed consent, they did not explicitly mention it in their papers.

It's more difficult to determine if researchers kept the best interest of the child at the forefront of the research process. Five articles explicitly expressed that the best interest of the child was paramount. For example, Camacho (2006), who researched the child migration experiences of child domestic workers in the Philippines, emphasized a "child-centered" approach to her research. All participants who experienced past abuse, had to be cleared by a social worker before participating in research (Camacho, 2006). Van Blerk and Ansell (2006), who explored children's migration in southern Africa within the context of the HIV/AIDS, adopted a children-centered multi-method approach to the research, which included drawing, storyboards, and migration mapping. Their child-centered approach was based on the "premise that children are competent commentators on their own lives"(van Blerk & Ansell, 2006). Two other articles, Hashim (2005) and Phlainoi (2002), did not explicitly state the best interest of the child, but their research methods demonstrated their commitment to children. For instance,



Hashim ended two interviews with children who became extremely upset when they were recounting distressing situations (Hashim, 2005).

Only 2 articles discussed plans to remove children from their abusive situations, even though extreme abuse was prevalent in many cases. Hashim (2005), who was studying child migrants in Burkina Faso, encountered 16 children who complained of abuse or extreme overwork. The author worked with these children and their chief to relieve them from the situation (Hashim, 2005). Phlainoi (2002) also had a similar protocol: if a child in the sample of CDWs in Thailand was found to be violently abused by her employers, it was determined that an in-depth analysis would be conducted to see if she needed to be removed from her situation. Fortunately, no such case was found (Phlainoi, 2002).

While most of the articles reviewed did not meet all ethical standards, 10 articles did address ethical concerns. For example, while Stephenson (2001) did not address the best interests of the child or informed consent, she did employ some policies to build trust with children (Stephenson, 2001). Reale (2013) also employed child-friendly research methods including Participatory Action Research (Reale, 2013).

This review clearly demonstrates that research ethics are not being fully incorporated into research on child migrants. In particular, developing policies to remove children from abuse appears to be lacking in the literature. Surprisingly, informed consent is also missing, or at least not discussed, in most of the articles. Increasing the use of research ethics is a high priority when developing future research on children on the move.

### **3.2 Profile of the researcher**

Understanding the composition of a research team, their assets, and their disadvantages will help inform future research. The size of the team is important. Larger teams will likely be able to cover more ground or do research more quickly. They may also have the advantage of incorporating a more diverse team that includes local community members. However, smaller teams who take more time to do research, may be able to more easily integrate themselves into the community, and garner and build trust more easily than larger teams.

When building a team, researchers should consider how their team's composition will fit in with the community they are studying. For instance, the sex or gender profile of a research team is important because certain populations may feel more comfortable talking to men or to women. For example, research teams who are studying child sex workers should, at least in part, be comprised of women, because these children are often distrustful of men (Regional Working Group on Child Labour in Asia, 2002).

Other essential aspects of a research team include whether the researchers are from the same ethnic group as the sample population and whether they speak the same language. Children may be distrustful of foreigners or may feel like they need to tell the researchers what they want to hear, thereby biasing the data. Incorporating local researchers who speak the native language may increase trust and reduce bias. Previous training in child research techniques is also paramount. Issues to consider include whether the team is trained in building rapport, whether they are familiar with child participation methods, and most importantly, whether team members have previous experience working with children (Regional Working Group on Child Labour in Asia, 2002). All of these factors can help or hinder research with children.

The majority of the articles consisted of a small research team. Nine of the 15 articles only had one or two researchers plus translators (See Table 2), and in each case, the researchers were female. The other research teams were significantly larger and were engaged in bigger and more comprehensive research projects, often across several countries. The team sizes ranged from 10 to 50 or 60 people. For example, in the lower range, the ILO-IPEC rapid assessment in Vietnam, consisted of three teams: two teams in the North made up of two investigators and one supervisor, and one team in the South made up of four investigators and one supervisor (ILO IPEC, 2002b). However, Caouette's (2001) tri-country research was the largest and included a Regional Project Coordinator and country teams in China, Myanmar and Thailand who worked together to facilitate a cross-border and regional research. Each country team was comprised of a National Coordinator, one or two National Researchers, 6 to 8 Field Researchers, several Youth Researchers, and several translators (Caouette, 2001). Gender composition was not addressed when discussing the team profile in larger studies. Additionally, age of research team members was not mentioned in any study, large or small.

Evaluating the ethnic background of a research team is difficult, because it was not addressed in most of the publications. In at least 6 of the 10 smaller studies, the authors were not of the same ethnicity as the sample population and relied on translators throughout their research. One notable exception was Punch (2007), who despite being from the UK, is fluent in Spanish and did not use a translator while studying young migrants in Bolivia and Argentina (Punch, 2007). As expected, larger research projects did a relatively better job at employing local experts

**Table 2: Profile of the researcher**

Article	Profile of Research Team	Gender composition	Researchers spoke same language/ethnicity as study population?	Experience working with children in research setting?
Punch, 2007	One researcher from the UK	Female researcher	No, but fluent in Spanish	Yes
Hashim, 2005	One researcher and one translator	Female researcher Translator gender NS	Spoke some Kusasi. Ethnicity not discussed	At least one previous research project with children
Heissler, 2009	One researcher (translation not discussed)	Female researcher	Not discussed, but the researcher is not Bangladeshi	Unclear
Camacho, 2006	One researcher and one partner NGO	Female researcher	Yes (?)	Unclear
Van Blerk, 2008	One researcher and on translator	Female researcher Translator gender NS	Researcher- not Ethiopian and did not speak language	Yes
Thorsen, 2013	One researcher	Female researcher	Researcher- not from Burkina Faso	While published later, data from her first project with children (?)
Stephenson, 2001	One researcher (maybe more - unclear)	Female researcher	Researcher- Russian	Unclear
ILO IPEC, 2002	North: 2 teams with 2 investigators and 1 supervisor; South: 1 team with 4 investigators	Mixed group	Not discussed but many, if not most, team members were Vietnamese	Not discussed but team was trained using ILO-IPEC standards
van Blerk and Ansel, 2006	Two Researchers and at least one translator	Female researchers Translator gender NS	Not from either country and did not speak language	Yes - both researchers
ILO IPEC, 2006	Not discussed	Not discussed	Not discussed, but likely some members of the team were from Kazakhstan	Not discussed- but team was trained beforehand

Table 2: Profile of the Researcher

Article	Profile of Research Team	Gender composition	Researchers spoke same language/ethnicity as study population?	Experience working with children in research setting?
Phlainoi, 2002	25 members, including researchers themselves and M.A. and Ph.D. from Mahidol University.	Not discussed	Not discussed but likely	Yes for at least some of the team
Pearson, 2006	Each of the 4 sectors had a researcher, supervisor and approximately 10 interviewers	Not discussed	Ethnicity of Researchers/Supervisors not discussed; Interviewers: mix of Thai and migrant (or able to speak relevant migrant languages)	Not discussed but intensive training prior to data collection
Reale, 2013	Not discussed, though children were involved through consultation, and helped build trust in community	Not discussed	Not discussed; Children who helped researchers were from the study population	Not discussed
de Lange, 2006	One researcher assisted by several translators	Female researcher Translators' gender NS	No - relied on translators	Not discussed
Caouette, 2001	1 regional coordinator and 3 country teams. Each country team had National Co-ordinator, 1-2 National Researchers, 6-8 Field Researchers (FR), translators, and youth researchers	Not discussed	Coordinators and researchers: ethnicity NS; All the Field Researchers were selected from the communities and were fluent in both the local and national languages; youth researchers were also from selected communities	Not discussed but likely

NS = Not Specified

and researchers to conduct the fieldwork. At least 3 of the 5 larger studies employed some local researchers. In Pearson (2006), the interviewers consisted of both Thai nationals and migrants from nearby sending countries who could speak all relevant languages for the study. Caouette (2001) employed field and youth researchers who were selected from the study communities and were fluent in both the local and national languages (Caouette, 2001).

Unfortunately, most of the studies do not address whether or not the research team has a background working with children. In at least 5 studies, the entire or part the research team had experience working with children. For instance, Punch (2007) is a child and adolescent specialist (Punch, 2007). Three other reports emphasized rigorous training prior to conducting the research which may have included strategies for working with children. For example, in the ILO-IPEC Rapid Assessment in Vietnam (2002), the entire research team was trained in ILO-IPEC standards which includes approaches to working with children (ILO IPEC, 2002b).

This review indicates that the majority of research on child migrants is conducted by small research teams who are mostly comprised of female researchers, and who are not of the same ethnicity as the study population. Larger research teams had a more diverse profile, yet no studies addressed age of the research team and most did not discuss its gender composition. Finally, training and background in child research techniques is absent.

### **3.3 Distinguish between Trafficked and Migrant Children**

Conceptual clarity between trafficking victims and children migrating voluntarily for work is notably lacking. In part, the difficulty lies in the ambiguity between trafficking and voluntary labor migration particularly in relation to exploitation and the role of recruiters/intermediaries. De lange (2006) explains that, according to the Palermo Protocol, “only

those cases of migration in which the child (at any point during the migration process) is being recruited, transported, transferred, harboured or received for the purpose of exploitation, can be called trafficking” (de Lange, 2006). However, as she notes, the incidence of exploitation is not always easy to determine, and establishing at what stage and in what form child work is considered exploitative is especially problematic.

Several definitions of exploitation exist. The ILO-IPEC (2002), explains that exploitation may take the form of abusive conditions to which the child is subjected, including physical and mental abuse or confinement, inadequate or non-existent health care, poor accommodation and hazardous work. Forcing or misleading a child with false promises can also be considered exploitation (ILO IPEC, 2002a). Under the Palermo protocol, exploitation is defined as “at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs” (art. 3a) (de Lange, 2006). Under the ILO Convention 29, forced labor of children is clearly defined as “work performed by children under coercion applied by a third party (other than by his or her parents) either to the child or to the child’s parents, or work performed by a child as a direct consequence of their parent or parents being engaged in forced labour” (ILO IPEC, 2012). Coercion can take place during recruitment or once a child is working.

Yet, determining what constitutes slavery and servitude is difficult as well, because there are no clear well-defined laws addressing these issues. The definition of child servitude comes from the 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (OHCHR, 1956). Under this convention child “servile status” captures only those situations in which “children are delivered by their

parents to third persons for their labour and hence excludes situations in which arrangements are made directly with the child” (de Lange, 2006).

For adults, the definition of trafficking is clearer because trafficking must involve the “abusive means of control.” However, children can still be considered trafficked without the “abusive means of control” stipulation. The protocol explicitly states that if a child leaves home without being coerced or deceived, he/she can still be a victim of trafficking (art. 31) (de Lange, 2006).

The open-ended nature of these protocols and conventions was designed to allow for greater protection of children under international law. Yet, they also conflate important distinctions between voluntary child migrants and victims of trafficking and do not account for the many dimensions of child migration or the cultural context in which children live. These conventions lack nuance, which makes it difficult for researchers to identify and distinguish between child victims of trafficking and voluntary child migrants. Despite these difficulties, identifying trafficked children in research is important. Making this distinction will help to reveal how children become victims of trafficking and what contributes to their vulnerability. It will also help agencies assess the needs of both trafficking victims and voluntary child migrants, and develop appropriate interventions.

Articles in the systematic review were analyzed on whether researchers addressed the issue of trafficking in their sample, and whether and how they distinguished between migrant children and victims of trafficking. Ten of the articles reviewed did not address trafficking in their research. For some, this may be explained because their sample populations did not meet the trafficking criteria. For example, the Bolivian child migrants described in Punch (2002),



migrated voluntarily using safe and established networks, and most of them were above the legal working age. Their working and living conditions were poor but significantly better than participants in most of the other studies in this review, and importantly, many of the children described their migration as a positive experience (Punch, 2007). In this case, it is understandable why Punch did not address trafficking.

Other articles did not address trafficking despite clear indications that children in their sample had been trafficked. Van Blerk (2005) for example, researched girls engaged in sex work in Ethiopia. According to the Palermo Protocol, any child engaged in sex work is considered a victim of trafficking. Despite this definition, and despite data indicating girls were being tricked into prostitution, Van Blerk did not address trafficking.

Five articles in the review attempted to distinguish between trafficking victims and child migrants. Two of the five (Pearson, 2006 and de Lange, 2006) were unable to make a distinction. Pearson explained,

"It is difficult to ascertain trafficking cases based purely on interviews with migrants who are currently working, especially if respondents were interviewed on-site. Migrants might have been reluctant to reveal the truth about their working conditions due to fear of what could happen to them as a result and/or a mistrust of the researcher" (Pearson, 2006).

She continued by acknowledging that the employers and recruiters she interviewed were clearly not traffickers, because they were willing to be interviewed. To gain access to trafficking victims, Pearson suggests that action-oriented research with local migrant groups at destination is needed to identify more workers in hidden and exploitative workplaces who might be trafficked or in forced labour (Pearson, 2006).

Despite offering the most in-depth discussion of all the articles on the imprecise distinctions between trafficking, exploitation, and labor migration, de Lange (2006) did not identify victims of trafficking in her sample. In fact, she often used "labor migration" and "trafficking" interchangeably throughout the paper. She argued that labels were not as important as assessing the impact of migration on the child (its rights, needs, and well-being), and contended that, "Determining if intervention is needed, and the kind of protection that should be given, can hence be based on questions other than whether or not it concerns a trafficking case" (de Lange, 2006).

Three authors were able to distinguish between the two groups: Hashim (2005), Camacho (2006), and Caouette (2001). Of the three, only Camacho adequately explained how she made the distinction. Camacho, who studied child domestic workers in the Philippines, took a nuanced approach to trafficking in the context of child migration. She analyzed several factors including: deception when first accepting a position, relationship with an employer, access to education, long work hours, age of employment, and children's role in recruiting other children to work. She made this analysis in the context of children's lives, and realities. While she discovered that many children had been exploited, she did not think any child had been trafficked (Camacho, 2006). Nevertheless, under a stricter definition of trafficking, several children in her sample would have been identified as trafficking victims.

Camacho is the only author in the systematic review to clearly lay out her criteria for trafficking and attempt to make distinctions among her participants. In part, Camacho was able to make such distinctions, because she had a small sample size (N=5), and used the life history research method which allowed her to collect significant information from study participants

(Camacho, 2006). However, her criteria mark the most advanced method of identification and distinction between trafficking victims and child migrants and could act as a standard for future research.

This review demonstrates that researchers are not identifying trafficking victims or distinguishing between trafficked children and migrant children in their samples. One factor hindering identification is the lack of conceptual clarity between definitions of trafficked children and migrant children, and the level of exploitation that indicates trafficking. Clearly, researchers need more nuanced criteria in order to effectively identify victims of trafficking.

### **3.4 Location of research**

The location of the investigation is integrally linked to the research outcome. Outcomes may vary depending on whether the research is conducted in a sending community or in a destination community. In his own systematic review of research on child migrants, Yaqub (2009) identified that the most instructive and informative investigations conducted fieldwork at both origin and destination sites for child migrants. According to Yaqub, conducting research in both locations enables researchers to “open up information, analytical cross-checks and opportunities for conceptual grounding that are not possible with research in one place alone.” He suggests that this kind of research can reliably answer difficult questions, such as the interactions between trafficking and migration (Yaqub, 2009). In this review, I contend that Yacub’s assertions are inaccurate and that focused research at destination and in border regions may provide the most comprehensive data.

Conducting research at both origin and destination can certainly increase the clarity of data in a given region, but I do not believe there is sufficient evidence to suggest, as Yaqub

asserts, that it offers the “most instructive and informative” outcomes. Seven of the 15 articles in this review conducted research in both origin and destination communities. While many of these studies were very informative, I see no indication that they are more informative than the other studies. In fact, focused research at destination often proved more comprehensive than research in both locations especially for children living in the worst conditions. For instance, the ILO-IPEC Rapid Assessment in Vietnam conducted research in four provinces and covered 74 establishments and 13 locations where children were engaged in prostitution. The broad array of destination locations provided vital information on children living in particularly difficult circumstances, but did not entail research at origin. Additional investigations are required to determine whether or not research in both origin and destination provides the most informative outcomes.

However, research at origin and destination does allow researchers to confirm the experiences of study participants in each location which may ultimately lead to more robust data. For example, Punch (2007) found that returned child migrants at origin often described their experiences through a “rose-tinted lens,” whereas interviews with children at destination offered a more realistic view of their migration experiences (Punch, 2007). Hashim (2005), who originally conducted research in one village in the Upper East Region of Ghana, had a similar experience. Through the process of her research she discovered that children frequently reported positive perceptions of their migratory experiences. To investigate further, Hashim conducted another study (reported in this systematic review) that included migrant children at destination. Her results indicated that although many children in destination areas had positive views of migration, several others were living in extremely exploitative conditions. Therefore, Hashim was able to corroborate and find differences between the experiences of participants in each

location that she could not have found had she only collected data in one location (Hashim, 2005).

I also found no evidence that conducting research in both communities elucidated the interactions between trafficking and migration any better than conducting research in one location. In fact, focused research at destination may prove more successful in identifying trafficking victims. Of the five articles that addressed trafficking, three conducted research in both origin and destination, and two conducted research in only one location. Camacho, who arguably developed the best method to identify victims of trafficking, only conducted research at destination. Her research, while small in size, was extremely focused, which proved invaluable to understanding the complex experiences of migrant children in domestic work and distinguishing between trafficking victims and migrant children (Camacho, 2006). De Lange, on the other hand, who discussed the interaction between trafficking and migration at length but did not attempt to identify victims of trafficking, conducted research in both sending and destination communities (de Lange, 2006). Research conducted at both origin and destination does not appear to increase the likelihood of identifying trafficking victims. However, focused research at destination may prove more successful in illuminating the interaction between trafficking and migration.

Finally, conducting research in border areas may prove the most comprehensive approach. Caouette (2001) was the only study to conduct research in sending communities, destination communities, and in transit. Much of the research was conducted in towns along the borders of China, Myanmar, and Thailand, which offered an in-depth view of children's in transit experiences and the lives of those who live and work in these regions (Caouette, 2001).

Caouette's research collected some of the most comprehensive data on migrant children in transit including: who children migrate with, what kinds of transportation they use, how they cross international borders, what supplies they carry, and the risks and challenges they face. While it's impossible to draw any conclusions based on one article, research conducted in border towns and/or in three locations may provide more in-depth information on the transit experiences of child migrants.

This review offers little evidence that conducting research in both sending and destination communities elicits more comprehensive information. However, it does allow researchers to validate the experiences of participants at destination and participants in sending communities, which may ultimately lead to more robust data. I suggest that while research in both locations is valuable, this factor alone does not produce more instructive research than research conducted in only one location. In fact, focused research at destination may offer more instructive information on children in the worst conditions and may also better identify victims of trafficking. On the other hand, research in border regions or high transit regions, and research in three locations (sending, destination, and in-transit communities) may produce more comprehensive data on children's in-transit experiences. Additional investigation is required in order to develop and examine this hypothesis.

### **3.5 Timing of Research**

Related to location of research, the timing of research is also important to the study outcomes. Working children often have little free time to talk to researchers and may even be punished if they take time off during the day (Caouette, 2001; Pearson, 2006). Therefore, the time of day that interviews are conducted may affect who can participate in the research. If

researchers only interview children during inconvenient times, many children will not participate. Time of day is also important for other qualitative techniques such as direct observation. Children may engage in different activities throughout the day (Regional Working Group on Child Labour in Asia, 2002). Alternating times of direct observation will allow researchers to gain a more robust understanding of children's daily routines. Finally, seasonal migration will affect research on children who migrate (particularly those who work in agriculture). Research on child labor in agriculture must take into account the high and low seasons for a specific crop.

In this systematic review, only five articles addressed the timing of interviews and direct observations. Pearson (2006) and Caouette (2001) made a point of conducting interviews and research during times most convenient to children. Pearson and her team met with children during their breaks and rest periods from work (Pearson, 2006), while Caouette discovered that 9-11 p.m. proved to be the best times to conduct research in the community. In the Rapid Assessment in Kazakhstan by ILO-IPEC (2006), the researchers conducted direct observations three times in each location and at different times of the day to gain the most information possible. Observation sites were selected based on the availability of children, but the rapid assessment did not address the specific times the observations took place (ILO IPEC, 2006).

Seven studies included children working in agriculture in their sample, but only three of the studies addressed seasonal migration, and often struggled to find the best time to conduct their research. The ILO-IPEC Rapid Assessment in Kazakhstan was particularly thorough in discussing the limitations of their study in relation to seasonal migration. Rapid assessments are typically three months long, which makes it impossible for researchers to observe seasonal

migration throughout the year. During this particular Rapid Assessment, research was conducted during the end of the tobacco season and was therefore unable to observe children in the fields picking, though they had partial access to children working in the leaf processing stations. In the cotton fields, research coincided with the third cotton crop. However, the majority of the labor migrants had already left for the season, making it difficult to recruit migrant children (ILO IPEC, 2006). De Lange (2006) conducted her research during the end of the dry season for cotton picking. She explained that the advantage of her timing was that laborers had time to talk to her. However, the disadvantage was that she could not make observations about the working conditions of children, because no one was working the fields (de Lange, 2006).

This review illustrates that the majority of research studies in this sample (10 out of 15) did not discuss timing of interviews. Only three out of the seven studies that included migrants in agriculture discussed seasonal migration, which may be explained due to the time limitations of research. For example, Rapid Assessments usually take place over 3 months, which does not account for all seasonal migration. Future research should prioritize timing and seasonal migration issues.

### **3.6 Children as active participants**

The IAG-COM is interested in engaging children throughout the research process through participatory research and child-friendly research methods. The principle of participatory research is that the research process is collective and inclusive. The people whose lives are being studied should be involved in defining the research questions and in collecting and analyzing the data. This process takes time, and forces researchers to take a “facilitator” role



and work directly with stakeholders (including children) to turn the research process into a joint project (Regional Working Group on Child Labour in Asia, 2002).

Many child friendly methods exist to help researchers work with children and gain more insightful information. Child friendly research methods should enable children to express their views and experiences. Verbal methods, which work well for adults, such as one-on-one interviews or discussions may not work for children, particularly younger children. Visual methods such as drawing, mapping, and photography may be better for children and may elicit more information. Roleplaying, recall, and ranking systems, as well as focus group discussions may also be helpful (Regional Working Group on Child Labour in Asia, 2002). Life histories, which inherently are more in-depth and require significant trust between the researcher and participant, have also been shown to work well for children (Camacho, 2006).

Nine out of the fifteen studies used child-friendly methods (methods other than interviews, questionnaires, or direct observation) (See Table 3). Two of the most common methods were focus groups and life histories, which were also referred to as “biographies” and “life story interviews.” Only two studies used visual techniques: van Blerk (2008) and van Blerk and Ansell (2006). Van Blerk (2008) used mapping and photo diaries as a supplement to semi-structured interviews. She also used the visual methods, which required very little presence by the researcher, as a way to reduce bias due to her position as a foreigner (van Blerk, 2008). Van Blerk and Ansell (2006) also used visual methods including migration storyboards, and migration mapping, which allowed the children to take some control of the research and to express freely detailed opinions. Similar to van Blerk (2008), children worked independently

from the researchers and later discussed their storyboards and maps in detail through a translator, which allowed children to independently express their ideas (van Blerk & Ansell, 2006).

While the majority of articles used child-friendly research techniques, only three of the reviewed articles engaged children in participatory research. These three articles used participatory research differently. Van Blerk and Ansell (2006) involved children in drafting the original, exploratory questionnaire, but did not utilize other participatory techniques throughout the research (van Blerk & Ansell, 2006). Reale (2013) also involved children in the early stages of research through consultation in the development and testing of the pilots. “Children’s inputs were crucial in clarifying issues arising from the key informant interviews and in providing important contextual insight both on the methodology and on the mapping of the child migration dynamics in the areas” (Reale, 2013). Ultimately, the research team decided not to train children as researchers. This decision was made due to the expense and time of training children as interviewers, and because of the sensitive nature of some of the issues disclosed during the research. Even though they weren’t acting as researchers, children continued to play a vital role in the research process. Children raised awareness at the community level to help build trust between participants and researchers; they were also key to helping other children feel comfortable to participate in interviews (Reale, 2013).

Caouette (2001) not only trained children as researchers but also used a more extensive participatory research method to engage children called Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR activities were implemented by both researchers and children in each of the project sites and were developed according to the situation and interests of the children and youth. A wide-range of activities were established in an effort to explore what the children and youth perceived

**Table 3: Children as Active Participants**

Article	Include Children as Active Participants?	Child friendly methods?	What Methods?
Punch, 2007	No	No	N/A
Hashim, 2005	No	No	N/A
Heissler, 2009	No	Yes	Focus groups and life histories
Camacho, 2006	No	Yes	Life histories (Life story interviews)
Van Blerk, 2008	No	Yes	Mapping and photo diaries
Thorsen, 2013	No	Yes	Weekly diaries, and life histories (called biographies)
Stephenson, 2001	No	Yes	Focus groups
ILO IPEC, 2002	No	No	N/A
van Blerk and Ansell, 2006	Yes	Yes	Drawing, writing, focus-groups, migration storyboards, and migration mapping; Participatory Research
ILO IPEC, 2006	No	No	N/A
Phlainoi, 2002	No	Yes	Collected essays from school children, focus groups?
Pearson, 2006	No	No	N/A
Reale, 2013	Yes	Yes	Participatory Research
de Lange, 2006	No	No	N/A
Caouette, 2001	Yes	Yes	Participatory Action Research

as their needs, how they wanted to respond to them and to document the lessons they learned in the process.<sup>10</sup> Children were involved in all aspects of the PAR activities (Caouette, 2001).

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<sup>10</sup> In a follow-up report, Save the Children UK describes the PAR interventions, which included: strengthening social structures, awareness raising, capacity building, life skills development, outreach services and networking. Each intervention was undertaken differently in each research site. For instance, in one village many participants were

While the PAR activities were very successful in engaging children, they required significant resources. Many of the activities lasted several months, and would not be easily accomplished in a smaller research study.

This review demonstrates that while most studies employ some child-friendly methods, very few are engaging children as active participants in their research. Caouette's study arguably did the best job at engaging children through participatory action research. However, PAR requires significant resources which may deter smaller investigations from adopting similar techniques. Nevertheless, as demonstrated in the review, smaller steps can be taken to engage children. For example, Reale (2013) consulted children throughout the development process, but children were not trained as researchers. Ideally, children should be involved in all research stages. However, when that is not possible due to time and resource constraints, involving children in some stages of research will increase the value of the data, and allow researchers to engage children in participatory research.

### **3.7 Inclusion of intermediaries**

The limited research available on how children migrate demonstrates that children are often assisted by intermediaries. The role of intermediaries has been critically examined because of their active influence in trafficking of children. The term intermediary, however, is simply a blanket descriptor that covers a broad range of operators that help to recruit and connect children with employment, which may include friends or relatives. Research in Guinea, Senegal and Togo

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returnees from Thailand who felt strongly that their traditions were being lost, so they organized a cultural dance competition as a means of strengthening their cultural traditions. In another village, youth identified the most immediate need in their village as repairing an old bridge. The youth came together and organized the plans, materials, and construction of the new bridge (Save the Children UK, 2001).

show that children may encounter several types of intermediaries in the process of migrating, including: agents living in local communities who find and negotiate jobs in destination areas on a child's behalf; truck drivers who transport children to destination areas; recruiters and employers who represent the demand for child labor; and people at the destination site who organize initial accommodation and connect children with relatives in the area (Sambo & Terenzio, 2013). Providing for children in transit has become a top priority of organizations that serve child migrants. Despite clear and prevalent in transit dangers, little research focuses on who children migrate with, and the role of intermediaries. This results in a glaring dearth of important information which only exacerbates the unique challenges associated with planning programming to support and protect child migrants in transit.

In this review, all eleven articles that investigated aspects of how children migrate addressed who children migrate with. Based on this sample of articles, children migrate with a range of actors and intermediaries including families, relatives, friends, taxi drivers, recruiters, employers, and pimps. Four articles only collected basic information regarding who children migrate with. For instance, van Blerk and Ansell (2006) found that children's AIDS-related migration is more likely to be unaccompanied, but did not identify any intermediaries who assisted children on their journeys (van Blerk & Ansell, 2006).

The other seven articles collected more information on the agents and intermediaries that assisted children throughout their migration process, although the degree of detail varied significantly. One study was notable for the detailed nature of its data collection: the ILO IPEC rapid assessment in Vietnam (2002). This ILO IPEC rapid assessment not only identified all the intermediaries involved, but outlined the process of recruitment into sex work. The authors documented and identified four systems by which children were recruited into sex work and all

of the actors and intermediaries involved in each system. This kind of in-depth documentation could have positive implications for conducting future research. The comprehensive approach of this rapid assessment may also be explained by the number of stakeholders the researchers engaged. In addition to interviewing and observing children in prostitution, the research team also interviewed employers and pimps, and made direct observation of locations and establishments (ILO IPEC, 2002b).

Reale's (2013) report also offered comprehensive data on intermediaries. In this investigation researchers utilized a new research strategy called the Mobility Assessment Tool (MAT) which expands research on children in transit including the role of intermediaries. MAT, which was designed by Columbia University in collaboration with Save the Children UK, helps to gather information about children's migration experiences including: reasons for migrating, travel plans, migration routes, and modes of travel, as well as children's travel companions, the services these children have access to in transit locations, and what services they recommend to help them during their journeys. The goal of MAT is to fill in gaps in children's journeys to better identify key points of intervention that would be most effective. For instance, the first pilot report in South Africa revealed that some children travelled with taxi drivers hired by adult family members who asked them to transport the child across the border (Reale, 2013).

Reale recently published the findings of the two pilot studies that tested MAT (Reale, 2013). However, limited information is available on immediate plans to use MAT in other investigations, and to my knowledge, the MAT tool itself has not been published. According to a 2011 Save the Children newsletter, Save the Children is evaluating the MAT pilot studies and developing a plan for next steps (Blagbrough & Dalla-favera, 2011).

This review demonstrates that some studies develop a more comprehensive view of the role of intermediaries than others. Several strategies may help researchers gain more information on intermediaries. As demonstrated in the ILO-IPEC Rapid Assessment in Vietnam (2002) researchers should clearly document the recruitment process as well as all other actors involved in children's migration. Interviewing employers or pimps (who may work closely with intermediaries) may also help researchers to better identify the role of intermediaries. Finally, the MAT tool may also help researchers generate more robust data on intermediaries. While the potential contributions of the MAT tool are promising, it is not yet available to outside researchers.

### **3.8 Comparison of migrant children versus local children in child labor**

Child migrants in child labor may face higher rates of exploitation than local children because they lack the social networks that act as a protection measure. Children are often unconnected to their destination community and do not know anyone upon arrival. Their inability to speak a local language, lack of documentation, or perceived discrimination may mean they avoid contact with others. In many situations, the only people children know are from their workplace. Their isolation makes migrant children particularly vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and violence (Reale, 2013).

This review elucidates the relative dearth of research available on the comparison of child migrants and local children in child labor: only one article compared the two groups. The ILO-IPEC Rapid Assessment in Kazakhstan (2006) compared outcomes of child migrants and local children working in cotton and tobacco. The assessment reported that migrant children in the tobacco industry worked twice as long as local children. Unlike local children who went to

school during the day and worked in the mornings and evenings, migrant children did not attend school. Based on visual assessment, the health status of migrant children was worse than that of local children working in tobacco. The outcomes of migrant children working in cotton compared to local children were not as stark. However, migrants' earnings were less than those of local residents because employers covered costs of migrants' meals by deducting money from their earnings (ILO IPEC, 2006). Clearly, more research is necessary to better understand the vulnerabilities of child migrants in child labor compared to local children in child labor.

### **3.9 Summary of Results**

The results of this systematic review reveal a paucity of research on how children migrate and the situation at destination for child migrants in child labor. Additionally, the existing literature is plagued by serious limitations. Below is a summary of the main findings.

1. Research ethics are not fully incorporated into research on child migrants. In particular, developing policies to remove children from abuse appears to be lacking in the literature. Surprisingly, informed consent is also missing, or at least not discussed, in most of the articles.
2. The majority of research on child migrants is conducted by small research teams who are mostly comprised of female researchers, and who are not of the same ethnicity as the study population. Larger research teams had a more diverse profile, yet no studies addressed age of the research team and most did not discuss its gender composition. Finally, training and background in child research techniques is severely lacking.



3. Researchers are not identifying trafficking victims or distinguishing between trafficked children and migrant children in their samples. One factor hindering identification is the lack of conceptual clarity between definitions of trafficked children and migrant children, and the level of exploitation that indicates trafficking. Clearly, researchers need more nuanced criteria in order to effectively identify victims of trafficking.
4. This review offers little evidence that conducting research in both sending and destination communities elicits more comprehensive information. However, it does allow researchers to validate experiences of participants at destination and participants in sending communities, which may ultimately lead to more robust data. The review also indicates that focused research at destination may offer more instructive information on children in the worst conditions and may also better identify victims of trafficking. Research in border regions and/or research in three locations (sending, destination, and in-transit communities) may produce more comprehensive data on children's in-transit experiences. Further investigation is needed in order to develop this hypothesis.
5. The majority of research studies in this sample (10 out of 15) did not discuss timing of interviews. Only three out of the seven studies that included migrants in agriculture discussed seasonal migration, which may be explained due to the time limitations of research.
6. While most studies employ some child-friendly methods, very few are engaging children as active participants in their research.

7. All the available research on child migrants in transit address intermediaries to some degree, but only some studies develop a more comprehensive view of the role of intermediaries. A number of strategies were identified that may help researchers gain more information about intermediaries such as interviewing employers or pimps (who may work closely with intermediaries). The MAT tool may also help researchers generate more robust data on intermediaries.
8. This review elucidates the relative dearth of research available on the comparison of child migrants and local children in child labor: only one article compared the two groups.

#### **Section 4: Recommendations and Best Practices**

Several notable trends emerged from the systematic literature review. I summarized and compiled these trends into a set of recommendations and suggestions for best practices for future qualitative research on child migrants. To my knowledge these recommendations and suggestions represent the first set of best practice guidelines for qualitative researchers investigating child migrants. In particular, these recommendations highlight how researchers can best investigate 1) how children migrate, and 2) the situation at destination for migrant children in child labor.

A total of eight recommendations are offered in this section. They are as follows

1. Incorporate, define and clearly outline the use of ethics as pertains to child migrant investigations.
2. Aspire to locate, recruit and incorporate locals into research teams.

3. Develop more nuanced, and culturally appropriate approaches to distinguishing between child migrants and trafficking victims.
4. Conduct research in border regions to investigate how children migrate and children in transit, and develop more focused research of migrant children in the worst conditions at destination.
5. Develop a set of guidelines to inform and assure that investigations and related interviews are timed such as to minimize impact on child migrants and maximize effectiveness of data collection.
6. Engage children through age appropriate participatory research
7. Develop a system to assess and document all intermediaries who are involved in children's migration
8. Compare the child labor outcomes of child migrants versus local children engaged in work.

**Recommendation 1: Incorporate and clearly outline ethics in research on children on the move.**

**Future research on child migrants must clearly outline ethical procedures.** As suggested earlier in this document, when conducting research with children from vulnerable populations, ethics is extremely important. Following clear and established ethical procedures ensures that the best interest of the child is kept at the forefront of the research process. My investigation reveals that many authors do not list or explain how they assure the appropriate application of ethical practices. Even the most basic ethical considerations, such as informed consent, were not addressed in the studies I reviewed for this research. Of the 15 articles

reviewed for this paper, only 6 stated that they received informed consent for child participants. If the other authors received informed consent, they did not outline it as part of their publications. This illustrates a fundamental problem: either ethical considerations are not brought to bear or are not perceived to be sufficiently important enough to discuss. Without clearly outlining ethical procedures, policy makers and consumers of research cannot distinguish between research that meets acceptable ethical standards and those effort that fall short of these essential standards.

An important ethical guideline typically omitted from the studies considered in this review is a contingency plan to remove children from severely abusive situations. Only 2 articles discussed plans to remove children from their abusive situations, even though extreme abuse was prevalent in many cases. Future research must make explicit ethical protocols demanding remedial action if children are experiencing abuse, and research placing children at risk must be halted. As outlined by the ILO-IPEC, “Counselling or other support mechanisms should be part of the research plan, as well as access to advice and support if researchers feel they must remove a child from a situation for his or her own safety” (Regional Working Group on Child Labour in Asia, 2002). Researchers themselves should not be engaged in counseling or the removal of children but should have access to such services. Clear ethical protocols on remedial action are paramount to keeping the best interest of the child at the forefront of the research. Highlighting ethics and outlining ethical procedures must be a top priority for future research.

### **Recommendation 2: Incorporate locals into research teams.**

**To reduce bias, future research on child migrants must incorporate locals into research teams.** Studies conducted by researchers of the same ethnic background and who speak

the same language as child participants are likely to produce less biased results. This is particularly important for qualitative research, which requires more trust and time with participants than quantitative techniques such as household surveys. However, this review indicates that the majority of research on child migrants is conducted by small research teams who are mostly comprised of female researchers, and who are not of the same ethnicity as the study population. These small teams relied heavily on translators in order to communicate with participants, but the foreign researchers themselves were asking the questions and conducting the research. Despite the best efforts of researchers to build trust in the community and gain access to children through community leaders and organizations, the potential contributions of local researchers cannot be overstated.

Future research on child migrants can be informed by several of the larger studies in this review which were better able to incorporate locals into their research. Pearson (2006) partnered with a local university to engage and recruit local researchers. By working with this university, Pearson ensured that all members of the interview team were local, and spoke at least one of the relevant languages for the study populations (Pearson, 2006). Caouette (2001) engaged a different approach to ensure locals were members of the research team. She trained and employed field and youth researchers who were selected from the study communities and were fluent in both the local and national languages (Caouette, 2001). These two studies provide excellent examples of methods to incorporate locals into the research process and can help inform future research. Clearly, working with local universities and/or training local community members can assist researchers to more effectively incorporate locals into their investigations.

**Recommendation 3: Develop more nuanced, and culturally appropriate approaches to distinguishing between child migrants and trafficking victims.**

**Researchers should develop a culturally relevant set of criteria to distinguish between child migrants and victims of trafficking in their samples.** As discussed at length above, the literature review reveals a glaring lack of conceptual clarity between trafficking victims, and children migrating voluntarily for work is notably lacking. This lack of clarity may contribute to researchers not distinguishing between trafficking victims and voluntary child migrants in their samples. The existing protocols and conventions on child trafficking and exploitation were designed to be broad in order to allow for greater protection of children under international law. However, these open-ended definitions were designed before the concept of voluntary child migrants emerged in the literature, and they conflate important distinctions between voluntary migration and victims of trafficking. They simply do not account for the many dimensions of child migration or the cultural context in which children live.

I recommend developing a more nuanced approach to identifying victims of trafficking based on the cultural context of children in the study area. De Lange's (2006) suggestion that formal labels are not as important as assessing the impact of migration on the child and then determining if and what kind of intervention is needed is well founded and entirely appropriate. However, unlike de Lange, my interpretation of the literature suggests that labels do have their merits and I contend that identifying and labeling victims of trafficking is critical to protecting children.

In order to most effectively identify victims of trafficking, criteria to evaluate whether a child has been trafficked should be culturally relevant. Camacho's investigation, which took a

nuanced approach to trafficking in the context of child migration, offers a number of important lessons. Camacho is the only author in the systematic review to clearly lay out criteria for trafficking and attempt to make distinctions among her participants. She analyzed several factors including: deception when first accepting a position, relationship with an employer, access to education, long work hours, age of employment, and children's role in recruiting other children to work. She made this analysis in the context of children's lives, and realities. Her criteria mark the most advanced method of identification and distinction between trafficking victims and child migrants and should act as a standard for future research (Camacho, 2006). Future researchers would be well served to review Camacho's efforts and should aspire to develop similar criteria in the effort to identify victims of trafficking in their own samples.

**Recommendation 4: Conduct research in border regions to investigate how children migrate and children in transit. Develop more focused research of migrant children in the worst conditions at destination.**

**Future investigations should be conducted in border regions to gain a more comprehensive depiction of children's in-transit experiences.** This systematic review indicates that conducting research in border regions offers more robust data on how children migrate and their situation in transit. Caouette (2001) marks the only study in this systematic review to conduct research in border areas. Her research in towns along the Thai, Chinese, and Burmese borders, offered an in-depth view of children's in transit experiences and the lives of those who live and work in these regions. Caouette's research collected some of the most comprehensive data on children in transit including very descriptive examples of how children crossed international borders and the risks they incurred during their journey. While the results

of one research study cannot comprehensively conclude that border towns provide the best data on children in transit, conducting research in border towns may provide an excellent approach for researchers to investigate how children migrate.

**Future investigations at destination should focus on children living in the most dire conditions.** In particular, researchers need to improve their ability to identify and reach out to those in the worst conditions for more targeted future interventions. As discussed above, focused research at destination may provide more in-depth knowledge about the lives of child migrants. The ILO-IPEC Rapid Assessment in Vietnam conducted fieldwork in four different regions in order to collect detailed information on children working in prostitution, one of the worst forms of child labor. Within these four regions, the research teams conducted interviews and observations at 74 establishments. The rapid assessment was targeted at children living and working in the worst conditions, and the wide-array of research sites offered a focused approach to investigate these children. This rapid assessment can inform future research. Future investigations at destination should focus on children living and working in the worst conditions.

**Recommendation 5: Develop a set of guidelines to inform and assure that investigations and related interviews are timed such as to minimize impact on child migrants and maximize effectiveness of data collection.**

**Future investigations should be purposefully planned in order to accommodate children's work schedules as well as seasonal migration.** As discussed earlier, the timing of research is important to the study outcomes. In particular, the time of day for interviews and observations is important, because working children often have little free time to talk to researchers and may engage in different activities throughout the day (Caouette, 2001; Pearson,



2006). Seasonal migration will also affect research on children who migrate, particularly those who work in agriculture. Research on child labor in agriculture must take into account the high and low seasons for a specific crop and how that relates to seasonal migration. Despite the importance of these timing concerns, only five articles addressed the timing of interviews and direct observations, and only three studies addressed seasonal migration. Future researchers should develop a set of guidelines to assure that interviews are timed such as to minimize impact on child migrants, which is paramount to protecting and ensuring the best interest of the child. These guidelines should also maximize the effectiveness of data collection by considering seasonal migration before beginning an investigation to better incorporate migrants as part of the study population.

**Recommendation 6: Engage children through age appropriate participatory research.**

**Future research should engage children through participatory research methods.**

Participatory research is generally considered one of the most effective strategies to incorporate children into the research process and keep the best interests of the child at the forefront of the investigation. Participatory research methodology contends that the people whose lives are being studied should be involved in defining the research questions and in collecting and analyzing the data. However, while the majority of articles used child-friendly research techniques, only three of the reviewed articles engaged children in participatory research. This discrepancy may be explained because participatory research requires significant time and resources. To fully engage children in the research process children have to be trained as researchers, as seen in Coquette (2001)'s research, which requires a significant time commitment. Coquette also engaged children

in developing solutions to community problems through Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Caouette, 2001).

However, other, less time consuming, participatory research strategies may be utilized. Both Reale (2013) and Van Blerk and Ansell (2006) engaged children to participate in certain aspects of the research process. Reale ultimately decided not to train children as interviewers due to the expense and the time of training children, and because of the sensitive nature of some of the research. However, children were involved in the development of the pilots and provided important contextual insight on child migration in the area. Even after the pilots were complete, children helped researchers by raising awareness at the community level and building trust with other child participants. While children were not actively engaged in the research as interviewers or researchers, they were still able to help design the research questions and remained involved throughout much of the research process. Ideally, children should be involved in all aspects of research including collecting and analyzing data. Nevertheless, investigations that are small, and resource or time-limited, can be informed by less expansive forms of participatory methods.

**Recommendation 7: Develop a system to assess and document all intermediaries who are involved in children's migration.**

**Future investigations should document and assess all the actors involved in recruiting or assisting children to migrate.** The interaction between children and the intermediaries who help them migrate is important to understanding children's in-transit experiences. However, clearly identifying all actors involved in children's migration has proved difficult. This systematic review demonstrates that many investigations do not collect robust data

on the role of intermediaries in child migration. Even studies that collected better information have large gaps in the data on intermediaries.

The ILO IPEC Rapid Assessment in Vietnam (2002) collected the most comprehensive data on the role of intermediaries by clearly documenting all of the actors who recruited and/or helped children migrate. One of the key objectives of the rapid assessment was to document the recruitment process for children engaged in sex work. Since most children in the sample were recruited in their origin community, documenting the recruitment process became a proxy for documenting the role of intermediaries. The researchers assessed all actors involved in the recruitment process, including who first approached a child, who provided transportation, and who paid or received payment for recruitment services. This assessment allowed researchers to track the myriad of roles different actors played in the migration process (ILO IPEC, 2002). Future research can be informed by this process, and can use similar guidelines to document and assess all the actors involved in recruiting or assisting children to migrate.

**Recommendation 8: Compare the labor outcomes of child migrants versus local children in child labor.**

**Future research should include a comparison of child labor outcomes among migrant children versus local children.** Child migrants in child labor may face higher rates of exploitation than local children because they lack the social networks that act as a protection measure. However, comparing the labor outcomes of child migrants and local children in child labor is noticeably missing in the literature. In this systematic review, only the ILO IPEC Rapid Assessment in Kazakhstan (2006) compared the two groups. To collect data from the two groups, the research team employed quota sampling of children based on sex, age and migration

status in each village. Interviews with both sets of children focused on child labor outcomes including how many hours children worked, how much they were paid, and whether they attended school.<sup>11</sup> Quota sampling enabled the researchers to ensure that migrant children were included in the sample of participants and allowed researchers to compare the outcomes of migrant children and local children (ILO IPEC, 2006). Future research should follow similar procedures in order to compare the labor outcomes of child migrants versus local children.

### **Section 5: Conclusions**

This review clearly demonstrates that additional research is needed to better understand how children migrate and their situation at destination. Increased research efforts will enable policy makers to better address the needs of migrant children and ensure that their basic rights are protected. The recommendations and best practices offered here reflect trends that emerged throughout the research process, and provide strategies for collecting research on how children migrate and the situation at destination for migrant children in child labor. They offer the first set of best practice guidelines for research on children on the move and are valuable in that they provide delineated standards for how qualitative researchers should approach research on child migrants. It is my hope that researchers can use the results of this systematic review to guide future investigations.

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<sup>11</sup> ILO-IPEC has published several guidelines on questions to ask children engaged in child labor, including the “National child labour survey Interviewer’s manual” which can be accessed on the ILO website: [file:///C:/Users/Senor%20Shamwow/Downloads/SIMPOC\\_Interviewers\\_Manual\\_Final.pdf](file:///C:/Users/Senor%20Shamwow/Downloads/SIMPOC_Interviewers_Manual_Final.pdf)

## Appendix A: Research Studies from Systematic Review

Study	Topics addressed (child migrants in transit, child migrants in child labor, or both)	Geographic Region
Camacho, A. Z. V. (2006). <i>Children and Migration: Understanding the Migration Experiences of Child Domestic Workers in the Philippines</i> (pp. 1–62).	Both	Phillipines
Caouette, T. (1999). <i>Small Dreams Beyond Reach: The Lives of Migrant Children and Youth Along the Borders of China, Myanmar and Thailand</i> (pp. 1–145).	Both	Borders of China, Myanmar, and Thailand
De Lange, A. (2006). "GOING TO KOMPIENGA" <i>A Study on Child Labour Migration and Trafficking in Burkina Faso's South-Eastern Cotton Sector</i> .	Both	Burkina Faso
Hashim, I. (2005). Research Report on Children's Independent Migration from Northeastern to Central Ghana, (June).	Both	Ghana
Heissler, K. (2009). "No one comes on their own": <i>The system of child labour migration in Bangladesh</i> Karin Heissler.	Child migrants in transit	Bangladesh
ILO IPEC. (2002b). VIET NAM CHILDREN IN PROSTITUTION IN HANOI, HAI PHONG, HO CHI MINH CITY AND CAN THO: A RAPID ASSESSMENT.	Both	Vietnam
ILO IPEC. (2006). Child labour in tobacco and cotton growing in Kazakhstan.	Child migrants in child labor	Kazakhstan
Pearson, E. (2006). <i>The Mekong Challenge Underpaid, Overworked and Overlooked: The realities of young migrant workers in Thailand</i> by ILO-IPEC.	Both	Thailand
Phlainoi, N. (2002). Investigating the Worst Forms of Child Labour No. 23 Thailand Child Domestic Workers: A Rapid Assessment.	Both	Thailand
Punch, S. (2007). Negotiating Migrant Identities: Young People in Bolivia and Argentina. <i>Children's Geographies</i> , 5(1-2), 95–112. doi:10.1080/14733280601108213	Both	Argentina and Bolivia
Reale, D. (2013). Protecting and supporting children on the move: Translating principles into practice. In <i>Children on the Move</i> (Vol. 20). doi:10.7748/nm2013.11.20.7.6.s2	Child migrants in transit	Thailand and South Africa
Stephenson, S. (2001). Street children in Moscow: using and creating social capital. <i>The Sociological Review</i> , 49(4), 530–547. doi:10.1111/1467-954X.00346	Child migrants in child labor	Moscow, Russia
Thorsen, D. (2013). Weaving in and out of employment and self-employment: young rural migrants in the informal economy of Ouagadougou. <i>International Development Planning Review</i> , 35(2).	Child migrants in child labor	Burkina Faso
Van Blerk, L., & Ansell, N. (2006). Children's experiences of migration: moving in the wake of AIDS in southern Africa. <i>Environment and Planning D: Society and Space</i> , 24(3), 449–471. doi:10.1068/d65j	Child migrants in child labor	Malawi and Lesotho
Van Blerk, L. V. (2008). Poverty, migration and sex work: youth transitions in Ethiopia, 40(2), 245–253.	Child migrants in child labor	Ethiopia

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