Among 65 million forced migrants in the world, nearly half are children under 18 years old. Many originate from countries in conflict, especially from Syria, Myanmar, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Somalia.

**FACT:** 28 million youth have been forcibly displaced from their home countries due to violence and conflict. Many are on the move, across the globe.

Many youth were born into or have spent most of their lives in transit. They occupy a precarious space defined by both vulnerability and resilience, where statelessness, societal exclusion, and cultural disconnection necessitate a reimagining of what identity and belonging mean.

The **Youth Migration Project** asks youth living as forced migrants in Thailand and Malaysia about their identity and goals. Youth want the world to understand they are typical young people who want what most young people want: to get an education, have a stable place to live, make friends, be creative, have fun, get health care when ill, help others, and contribute to society. Yet, many countries deny forced migrants these normative entitlements.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrine the right to a name and identity documentation, to live in a family, to play, get an education, and be protected from life-threatening harms.

The Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim for all people to have access to basic resources to survive and thrive, quality education, dignity, equity, justice and peace. Forced migrants are not included in most countries’ programs to achieve these goals.

Forced migrant children and youth are at high risk of permanent unemployment due to low/no education or job skills, physical and mental health problems including suicide, assault, and being trafficked.

Youth Migration Project participants describe forced migration as a trauma that uprooted their families and life course. They describe “dealing with it” as a kind of project: changing their assumptions, plans, choices, and goals, and learning new skills to adapt and find moments of hope and joy.

Forced migrants can contribute to achieving the SDGs and enriching societies.

A majority of forced migrant youth in Malaysia want to be given a chance to resettle in Canada. But most are not even on a prospective resettlement list with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Getting on the list is the ultimate immediate goal.

Many people mistakenly think all forced migrants are refugees and all refugees are resettled in a new country. Most forced migrants never get refugee status and are forced to return to their country of origin or live forever on the margins and on the move.

**Project leader:** Dr. Jessica Ball, Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria, Canada: jball@uvic.ca

**Team members:**

Rashin Lamouchi, Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria, Canada: rashinlamouchi@uvic.ca

Debra Torok, Psychology, University of Victoria, Canada: debratorok@uvic.ca

M. Htang Dim @ Angela: Independent Consultant, Chaing Mai, Thailand.

Paradee Thoresen: Independent Consultant, Perth, Australia.

Christopher Tse, School of Social Work, University of Victoria, Canada.

www.youthmigrationproject.com