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The Role of Rights-based Social Work in Contemporary Latin American Diasporas: The Case of Venezuelan Migrant Children --Manuscript Draft--

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Abstract:	<p>The scenario of international migration within Latin America has witnessed a turning point since the outbreak of the Venezuelan crisis in 2013, with children occupying an important percentage of these human displacements. On this account, this research focuses on the potentialities of rights-based social work in promoting the human rights of Venezuelan migrant children, exploring how social workers may help them overcome positions of rightlessness and increased vulnerability. This article provides a children's rights-based approach to social workers who are directly involved in social work with migrant children. Even though our scope of analysis was directed to the experience of Venezuelan migrant children, we believe that this research might serve as an important source to guide social workers involved in general work with child migrants in different social and geographical backgrounds.</p>
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Additional Information:	
Question	Response

Introduction

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The contemporary images in the Global South, of people fleeing their lands by boat, or loaded into a truck, squeezing themselves towards border gates in the Global North, has been fully explored by the media and politicians who contribute to the incitation of a ‘moral panic’, as stated by Bauman (2017). The notion that ours is a time of the triumph of borders contributes vehemently to the understanding of such issues (Khosravi, 2010). The never-ending battle between globalization and the frontiers of the national-state serves only to explicit the contradictions of the new post-Cold War liberal era and the failing of its promises to plant “little seedbeds of character and competence, together with the rule of law, political freedoms, social security, and international cooperation” (Glendon, 2001, p. 233).

With that said, even in South-South international migration flows, the securitization of migration and the policing of foreigners seem to be in *l'ordre du jour* of so many countries. Globally, one can talk about a convergence in migration policies in a way that as “never before has hostility towards immigrants been quite so widespread, and quite so nasty” (Dauvergne, 2016, p. 1). The creation of figures such as the “illegal” (Dauvergne, 2008) and the “undocumented” immigrant (Ettinger, 2009), alongside the proliferation of Border Agencies and Officers, have contributed to criminalization of migration, in sense that states have made fierce use of criminal law to deal with immigration issues, whereby criminalizing non-authorized immigration, these states through the use of criminal law put a ban on certain persons, instead of their actions or omissions (Spena, 2013).

In Latin America, the reasons for international border “transgressions” may include issues of climate change (Kaenzig & Piguet, 2014), employment situation (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) & International Labour Organization (ILO), 2017) as well as people fleeing their countries from hunger, war, political persecution amongst other reasons: as the number of asylum applications made in the Latin American and Caribbean region is piling up, around 100,000 people are currently awaiting for a decision regarding their asylum claim (Grandi, 2017). Nonetheless, this scenario of growing internal migration in Latin America has witnessed a turning point since the outbreak of the Venezuelan crisis, the estimation is that around 2.3 million people have fled the country since the year of 2014 (“Venezuela Migrant Crisis”, 2018).

Border countries to Venezuela as well as other countries in Latin America receiving Venezuelan immigrants are increasingly adopting measures to difficult the entrance and the stay of these people. Peru and Ecuador have passed administrative regulations to tighten the entry requirements and have been reluctant to accept new asylum requests (“How Venezuela's crisis...”, 2018). In Brazil, violence has characterized the treatment of Venezuelan citizens, where groups of residents marched the town of Pacaraima, in the state of Roraima, throwing rocks at the immigrants and setting fire to their belongings (Andreoni, 2018). In this sense, these refugees and immigrants in general are constantly racialized and portrayed as threats to national security and are subjected to all sorts of violence (Provine & Doty, 2011), that result - amongst other things - from the fantasies of impermeability of late modern subjects (Brown, 2010), which translate themselves into the nation imaginary and policy-making.

However, in the business of reporting South-South migration flows, one of the difficulties one might find when analyzing these moves in Latin America is that, whether in terms of economic impact or contributions to development and so forth, intra-South migration is rarely subjected to scholarly work and theorization, mainly because “the bulk

1 of the contemporary research literature on migration and development focuses on South–
2 North movements” (Melde *et al.*, 2014, p. 2). Subsequently, there is a general lack of
3 attention to South–South migration in Migration Studies. Therefore, it is not lost on us to
4 say that, if contemporary migration flows in the Global South are often neglected, the
5 challenges arising from child migration might constitute a “ghetto within a ghetto”
6 (Mazower, 2004, p. 380) in transnational migration studies in the South. As children in
7 general have been silenced in the studies of Social Sciences, in the sense that one cannot
8 easily find any trace of children in both classical and contemporary sociological theory,
9 for an example (Turmel, 2008). It is not any different in Political Science and
10 International Relations (IR), despite the recent turns in the traditional state-centric
11 approach from these two areas (Watson, 2006), consequently, the role of children in
12 various national and international political backgrounds are often underexplored by
13 mainstream academia.

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16 As a result of that, although in practice child migration is not a new phenomenon,
17 it constitutes a relatively new debate in academia and policy-making. On that account, as
18 children have been marginalized in many areas of social studies, most of the literature on
19 migration has also focused on adults and the perceptions of migrant children have hardly
20 ever been heard (Punch, 2010), even though in 2015 thirty-one million children lived
21 outside their country of birth (UNICEF, 2015). Due to this lack of global knowledge
22 around the experiences and perspectives of displaced children (Boyden, 2001), some pre-
23 assumptions are often drawn and taken as a truism in Migration Studies and other
24 disciplines such as Political Science and IR. One of them is that children are always *forced*
25 to migrate, which is not the reality for many migrant children. In the edited volume *Child*
26 *and Youth Migration: Mobility-in-Migration in an Era of Globalization*, different authors
27 explore different perceptions on child and youth mobility from various social and
28 geographical backgrounds, showing that migration across multiple borders has indeed
29 become a feature of the lives of many children around the globe (Veale & Donà, 2014).
30 However, one must not neglect the fact that, some migrant children might find it more
31 difficult to cope with migration-related problems and might constitute a more vulnerable
32 group than others. And this is the case for most stateless (Bhabha, 2009) and trafficked
33 children (Howard, 2017) who face displacement.

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36 The latest report on World migration released by the International Organization
37 for Migration (IOM) showing the specific features of migration in Latin America revealed
38 that, approximately 70 per cent of all immigration in the region is intraregional, and most
39 of these movements were fueled by the growing scenario of social inequality and
40 economic disparities between Latin American countries, as well as by conflict and
41 violence (IOM, 2017). And according to recent data from the ECLAC, the proportion of
42 children aged 0-14 years amongst the migrant population of all Latin American countries
43 is considerable and varies in a range of 12% to 23%, especially in the cases of Brazil, the
44 Dominican Republic and Uruguay with more than 20% (Carrasco & Suárez, 2018). For
45 countries such as Chile and Uruguay, already further into demographic transition,
46 migratory flows with high proportions of children can be a challenge due to the
47 reappearance of social protection needs of the child migrant population (Carrasco &
48 Suárez, 2018).

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51 Therefore, taking into consideration the growing tendency of intraregional
52 migration in the region of Latin America, as well as the considerable participation of
53 children in human displacements in the area, efforts should be taken in trying to
54 understand how child migration in Latin American countries may constitute new
55 challenges to social policy and issues related to immigration management policies, since
56 those children fleeing their home countries might face situations of vulnerability different
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1 from adults, which requires an analysis that indeed considers their particular necessities.
2 In this task, rights-based social work may constitute an important tool in dealing with the
3 specific needs arising from child migration in Latin America. Nearly one million
4 Venezuelans have left their country over the past two years, and the year of 2017
5 witnessed an even greater emigration boom due to the country's economic downfall,
6 which reached extreme levels (Faiola, 2018). These Venezuelan migrant populations,
7 allocated in different countries in the Americas and even in Europe, have faced violence
8 (in its many forms) and are frequently denied of their most basic needs and rights.
9 Consequently, Venezuelan migrant children may face greater challenges coming from
10 experiences of displacement. On this account, this research focuses on the potentialities
11 of rights-based social work in promoting the human rights of Venezuelan migrant
12 children, exploring how social workers may help them overcome positions of
13 rightlessness and increased vulnerability.
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16 **The Growing Scenario of Child Migration and the Politics of Refuge in Latin** 17 **America** 18 19

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21 As stated before, children constitute an important part of migration flows
22 worldwide: in 2015, 31 million children did not live in their country of birth and 11
23 million of them were child refugees or asylum-seekers (UNICEF, 2015). Nonetheless, the
24 scenario in the Americas was not different, one in ten migrants in the Americas was a
25 child and the region was home to around 6.3 million child migrants by that time
26 (UNICEF, 2015). What clearly evokes scholars to not turn a blind eye to the challenges
27 arising from child migration in the Americas and in Latin America more specifically,
28 challenges which shall be discussed further on.
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30 International migration is usually marked by diversity and complexity, and it
31 could not be different in terms of transnational migration flows involving children, that
32 is why most of the time we use the term "migrant" when talking about Venezuelan
33 children who live outside their birth country. According to the Glossary to be found in
34 the Information Kit of the United Nations Convention on Migrants' Rights, an
35 international migrant is a "person who lives temporarily or permanently in a country of
36 which they are not nationals. As the term 'migrant' refers to cases where the decision to
37 migrate has been taken freely by the individual concerned [...]" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 25).
38 Differing then from categories such as refugee, forced migrant or asylum-seeker.
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40 The reason for choosing the term migrant is intrinsically related to the
41 demystification of the idea that every child is *forced* to move. It does not mean that there
42 are not children who are displaced against their will, it means that broader categories
43 should be taken into consideration when analyzing child movements through international
44 borders, instead of drawing generalizations that might not represent the reality of child
45 migration in everyday life. The very lack of specific data related to the legal status of
46 Venezuelan migrant children in various countries in Latin America poses a challenge to
47 the determination of their migration status. In fact, as migration typologies differentiate
48 migrants and migrations according to several criteria, and although these definitions
49 might seem at first just a matter of semantics, these categories have intrinsic relation to
50 the protections that may apply or not to persons crossing international borders (Hugo,
51 Abbasi-Shavazi & Kraly, 2018). Rebecca Hamlin (2014) well explores the role of
52 Administrative Justice in the United States, Canada and Australia regarding what she calls
53 "Refugee Status Determination". Her research shows that most international migrants
54 today arriving at the borders of states all over the world cannot fit into one of the standard
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1 categories that states use to process immigrants, and thus end up in a situation of
2 “irregularity” (Hamlin, 2014).

3 In this sense, the proliferation of such legal and administrative categories might
4 constitute a process of immigration bureaucratization, where the accentuation of the
5 human/citizen dichotomy becomes brutally violent. If “the conflict between citizenship
6 and humanity is fundamental to the experience of the modern states-system” (Linklater,
7 2007, p. 16), the contemporary massive migration flows serve as greater challenges for
8 state authority and national identity, since these concepts are intimately linked to the idea
9 of national borders and their alleged impermeability (Buitrago, 2017; Brown, 2010).
10 Consequently, states entitle themselves with the right to exclude and therefore develop
11 bureaucratic measures which propagate structural violence in order to keep the
12 undesirables away (Wellman & Cole, 2011; Weinberg, 2017; Agier, 2011).

13 This victory of legal and administrative procedures over human dignity has raised
14 specific questions regarding the legal status of Venezuelan migrants in general. As the
15 scale of the outflows has led to significant debate about whether Venezuelans should be
16 considered economic migrants or refugees (Freier & Parent, 2018). We shall consider that
17 the term “refugee” is a very narrow category defined by the 1951 United Nations Refugee
18 Convention, applicable only to those persons who share a “well-founded fear of being
19 persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social
20 group or political opinion [...]” (United Nations, 1951, p. 14). Therefore, whilst many
21 Venezuelans may emigrate in order to survive, because of the lack of food and basic social
22 services (Freier & Parent, 2018), they might not be considered eligible for the protections
23 granted by the UN Refugee Convention.
24

25 In face of these new challenges arising from the diversity of contemporary
26 migration flows, authors such as Shacknove (1985) and Islam & Bhuiyan (2013) have
27 argued about the partial obsolescence of the Refugee Convention in offering the
28 protection for other reasons despite persecution that might constitute the basis for
29 refugeehood. Professor Shacknove sustains that “an overly narrow conception of
30 ‘refugee’ will contribute to the denial of international protection to countless people in
31 dire circumstances whose claim to assistance is impeccable” (Shacknove, 1985, p. 276).
32 Therefore, he states that persecution and alienage alone cannot capture what - according
33 to him – is the fulcrum of refugeehood:
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35 Persecution is a sufficient, but not a necessary, condition for the severing of the
36 normal social bond. It accounts for the absence of state protection under
37 tyrannical conditions where a government is predatory but says nothing about
38 the opposite, chaotic, extreme where a government (or society) has, for all
39 practical purposes, ceased to exist. *Persecution is but one manifestation of a
40 broader phenomenon: the absence of state protection of the citizen's basic needs.*
41 It is this absence of state protection which constitutes the full and complete
42 negation of society and the basis of refugeehood. The same reasoning which
43 justifies the persecutee's claim to refugeehood justifies the claims of persons
44 deprived of all other basic needs as well (Shacknove, 1985, p. 277, our italics).
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54 In this sense, if we were to analyze the current situation for Venezuelan migrants
55 crossing international borders in Latin America through the conceptualization offered by
56 professor Shacknove (1985), they would indeed be considered refugees in sense that most
57 of these people left and are leaving Venezuela due to the state’s failure to provide for the
58 most basic needs of its population. However, states rarely have showed the willingness
59 to expand the meanings of “refugee” as it was proposed by different scholars. The reality
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1 is that, in most of the cases, the so-called “unauthorized” international migrants - i.e. those
2 who cross a border without previous administrative procedures of legal status
3 determination - might fall in the scope of illegality. And on this account “they remain
4 non-citizens of their states of refuge, which retain full discretion in the admission of
5 refugees and extent of protection. As a result, refugees are unable to claim their status
6 recognized and access to protection as a matter of right” (Islam & Bhuiyan, 2013, p. 1).

7 Although there is not any official data regarding the exact number or legal status
8 of Venezuelan migrants in Latin America, neighboring countries such as Colombia and
9 Brazil are the clearest examples of how strict refugee policies have pushed Venezuelans
10 to illegality. As passports in Venezuela are difficult to obtain, many Venezuelans have to
11 take those illicit trails as they seek refuge in Colombia or other parts of Latin America
12 (Wyss, 2018). And in Brazil, the then-president Michel Temer had passed an emergency
13 decree sending military troops to the country’s northern border to reinforce a military
14 contingent there, making sure that Venezuelans migrants would not enter the country
15 without previous authorization (Faiola & Lopes, 2018).

16 On that account, even though the consequences deriving from state’s protection
17 and citizenship loss were previously explored by a variety of authors (Arendt, 2012;
18 Agamben, 2008; Rancière, 2004), as well as the lack of “legal” status for migrants
19 (Dauvergne, 2008; Khosravi, 2010), it was not until very recently that these categories
20 were thought from the perspectives of migrant children. When migrant children are
21 pushed to the margins of illegality, once they fail the requisites that grant them the
22 possibility to regularize their staying on the host countries, they frequently face situations
23 that increase their vulnerability and therefore are subjected to violence and human rights
24 violations which affect directly their psychosocial development, being that a familiar
25 scenario for many Venezuelan children seeking refuge in Latin American countries. A
26 large number of children and adolescents are known to migrate every year in the hope of
27 reuniting with their parents or escaping violence, exploitation, as well as the lack of
28 opportunities in their own countries (Feuk, Perrault & Delamónica, 2010), however,
29 many Latin American countries have adopted restrictive refugee policies, consequently,
30 child migrants have found it difficult to establish themselves “legally” in host countries
31 (Kartzow, Castillo-Durán & Lera, 2015). And in relation to the Venezuelan exodus
32 towards the countries of Latin America, this scenario is not different. There are several
33 Venezuelan migrant children living in food insecurity in Peru (“Prevalece la
34 inseguridad...”, 2018), just as many Venezuelan children in Colombia have not yet been
35 registered with the Government and are in an irregular situation, often being victims of
36 forced labor, sexual abuse and other forms of violence, while other countries receiving
37 the Venezuelan population in the region such as Panama and Chile have made it more
38 difficult for them to enter and stay in their territories (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

39 Being that so, in the face of this increasingly hostile and restrictive character of
40 migration policies undertaken by Latin American countries that are the destination of the
41 Venezuelan diaspora, what we intend further on is to explore how the practice of rights-
42 based social work with Venezuelan migrant children can contribute not only to meeting
43 their basic needs, of which they are often deprived, but also how the practice of social
44 workers can function as a tool to overcome the deprivation of rights these children may
45 face in Latin American countries.

46 **Overcoming the Rightlessness of Venezuelan Migrant Children through Rights- 47 Based Social Work**

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1 According to Moloney (2018), migrant children fleeing Venezuela may have a
2 greater chance of being subjected to sexual exploitation and trafficking on their journeys
3 seeking refuge across South America. This scenario becomes even worse for those
4 undocumented Venezuelan children, often portrayed as “illegal”. Consequently, as they
5 remain in an irregular situation in the receiving countries, “[...] *this makes them*
6 *particularly vulnerable to exploitation, extortion, exactions, violence, trafficking, sexual*
7 *abuse, recruitment, and discrimination and xenophobia, especially in insecure border*
8 *areas where criminal and armed groups operate*” (UNHCR, 2018, p. 6, our italics).
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10 In fact, there are recent accounts of Venezuelan child migrants being trafficked
11 into forced begging in Colombia, and alongside that, Colombia’s Child Protection
12 Agency (ICBF) has identified 350 Venezuelan children who were victims of forced labor
13 in Colombia so far (Moloney, 2018). However, whilst it is known that around 27 percent
14 of the 870.000 Venezuelan migrants in Colombia are children or adolescents (Freier &
15 Parent, 2018), there is no accredited data whatsoever enunciating the total number of
16 Venezuelan migrant children in many other receiving countries in the Americas. Those
17 migrant children in situations of increased vulnerability, as past explored, may be the ones
18 who are in greater need of a fast yet effective response to their situation. We recognize
19 indeed that the state is the primary duty-holder, in sense that there is a growing consensus
20 over the state responsibility regarding the adequate treatment of aliens, *i.e.* the idea that
21 non-national persons should also be able “[...] to enjoy the same rights and guarantees as
22 enjoyed by nationals, which should not in any case be less than the fundamental human
23 rights recognised and defined in international instruments” (Shaw, 2008, p. 825).
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25 However, in practice, states often abstain from their responsibilities to protect
26 non-citizens, especially those who hold an “illegal” status, as it was explored in the first
27 section. Migrant children, in special those unaccompanied and the ones forcibly moved
28 by traffickers, often compose a group in which the absence of state protection may reach
29 its most wicked levels. In addition, even if it is understood that states ought to ensure that
30 the rights of their citizens and non-citizens within their territories are respected by both
31 abstaining from abuse and preventing abuses from happening (Englehart, 2009), the
32 claims for human rights in general and children’s rights more specifically often appear
33 only in a post-violation context, in sense that the duty of the state to prevent human rights
34 abuses from happening is often taken for granted and it is not a subject of great concern
35 for rights-practitioners.
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37 Therefore, it is in face of these theoretical and practical dead-ends - which pose
38 great barriers to the realization of migrant children’s rights – that social work may serve
39 as a catalyst to faster meeting these children most basic necessities while at the same time
40 providing them with the tools necessary to social and political participation in the
41 societies they are seeking refuge. In this sense, as postulated by Kosher, Ben-Arieh &
42 Hendelsman (2016), a human rights-oriented social work practice is able to help realizing
43 the political, social and collective rights of children.
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45 Therefore, two things should come across very clear before we initiate any inquiry
46 on social work with migrant children, those should be: 1) what is understood to be a
47 “human rights approach” to social work; 2) how social work practice is intrinsically
48 oriented by theory and concrete sets of beliefs. We advert here that it is not our aim to
49 dive into the history of social work as a profession, however, we shall draw some aspects
50 of social work as both discipline and practice in order to explicit how it can work in favor
51 of those pushed to the margins of our societies.
52

53 First of all, we would like to put an emphasis on how important it is to think of
54 human rights on a theoretical basis so it can be the spirit to guide the actions of social
55 workers. On that account, it is a complete fallacy to say that theory and practice are two
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1 separate spheres that do not interact with each other, as if individuals on a daily basis did
 2 not care for theories, ideologies or ideas in their practical life, as well stated by Walt
 3 (1998, p. 29): “everyone uses theories—whether he or she knows it or not—and
 4 disagreements about policy usually rest on more fundamental disagreements about the
 5 basic forces that shape [...] [social and political] outcomes”. That is, whether the
 6 individual is aware or not, there is indeed a set of beliefs that profoundly influence his
 7 actions. In social work, this image becomes even clearer, once the social work profession
 8 is guided by a set of values which define the core principles of the profession (Kosher,
 9 Ben-Arieh & Hendelsman, 2016).

10 It quite clear then that social work is intrinsically guided by values and concepts
 11 affirmed in social theory as well as in other disciplines and forms of knowledge. However,
 12 one might ask, why social workers should care about children, human rights or
 13 immigrants? How social workers have anything to do with that? Rosicky and Northcott
 14 (2016, p. 101, our italics) argue that: “[...] *strong social work practices and the use of*
 15 *social workers is paramount to ensuring that children are safe and protected as they leave*
 16 *or return to their country of origin*”. In addition, it is known that social work as a
 17 profession has for a long time been concerned with children welfare, that is, despite the
 18 profession’s expansion into other areas of social life, the imaginary around the social
 19 work profession has been constructed by its connection to ensuring the well-being of
 20 children (Whitaker, 2012).

21 Human rights have also been incorporated in ethical codes and professional
 22 standards of social work developed by different governmental and non-governmental
 23 organizations (NGOs), which came to understand that the practice of social work should
 24 not only respect these rights but also incorporate them in the practice of the profession.
 25 The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) - an International
 26 NGO in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council – has
 27 stated that “the global profession of social work is committed to advancing human rights
 28 for all people [...] Furthermore, the profession’s Global Agenda for action urges universal
 29 implementation of the core human rights treaties of the United Nations” (IASSW, 2018,
 30 para. 1). Furthermore, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) has also
 31 incorporated human rights as a guiding principle of the profession, as it has also added
 32 the matter on the definition of social work *per se*, as it can be seen:

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 40 Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that
 41 promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the
 42 empowerment and liberation of people. *Principles of social justice, human*
 43 *rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social*
 44 *work*. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and
 45 indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life
 46 challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at
 47 national and/or regional levels (IFSW, 2014, para. 1, our italics).
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 51 Human rights are therefore central to social work practice, consequently, so
 52 should be children’s rights, especially in social work with those children subjected to
 53 conditions of marginalization and vulnerability, which is the case for many Venezuelan
 54 migrant children seeking refuge in Latin and South America, as argued in the previous
 55 section. However, as well pointed out by Ife (2008, p. 151), “[...] social workers cannot
 56 work as human rights workers without a clear idea of what the human rights are on which
 57 their practice should be based, and so there is a need to refer to, or construct, some
 58 formulation of what human rights are to count”. Thus, what should social workers
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1 consider as a human-rights, or children's rights approach to their practice with migrant
2 children? Before we try to look for the answers to that, we must elucidate that it is totally
3 counter-productive as well as mistaken to try to enumerate specific legislation or doctrine
4 regarding human rights in which social workers should take into consideration, for the
5 potentialities of human rights to provide a life with dignity or to work as a shield from
6 suffering and social injustices cannot simply fit in one definition let alone in one or more
7 international documents.

8 Nonetheless, this "indeterminateness" does not appear to us as a loose end, but as
9 a forte. As professor Hoffmann defended, human rights are also a discursive practice, *i.e.*
10 they are "marked by a permanent and ultimately chaotic movement of the discourses of
11 which they are constituted" (Hoffmann, 2012, p. 94). Therefore, any attempt on trying to
12 fully define human rights is nothing but one single failing discourse over what they are
13 or what they should be. Thus, these rights emerge exactly from the "continuously failing
14 signification attempts by each paradigm" (Hoffmann, 2012, p. 95). In agreement with
15 professor Carballido, we understand that one should not think of such rights as an
16 accomplished fact, a finished doctrine or a homogeneously accepted concept (Carballido,
17 2014). In this sense, the human rights and children's rights approaches to social work we
18 shall develop here are far from being the only notions of rights and nor should social
19 workers be limited by them. They are simply a modest *kickoff* to elucidate how social
20 workers can indeed be human rights practitioners and incorporate these rights into their
21 daily activities with the profession.

22 With that said, according to the Finnish Committee for UNICEF, a human rights
23 approach is focused on systematic enhancement of human rights in all aspects of projects
24 and programs development and implementation (UNICEF Finland, 2015, p. 8). In social
25 work more specifically, when it comes to a children's rights approach to the profession,
26 social workers battle to guarantee the realization of the rights of children, considering
27 their special needs and vulnerabilities. Therefore, "*using a children's rights-based*
28 *approach means using human rights principles and standards in work with children, their*
29 *families, carers and communities"* (Kosher, Ben-Arieh & Hendelsman, 2016, p. 30, our
30 italics). However, one has to bear in mind that social work is a profession profoundly
31 imbedded in practice. As Ife (2008) intensively analyzed, for social workers, human rights
32 cannot simply be a case of an academic, metatheoretical discussion, but instead, they
33 should be grounded in practice, and it is the relationship between the discursive
34 construction of human rights and the practice of social work that construct this rights-
35 based approach to the profession (Ife, 2008). According to him, there are two methods by
36 which social workers can incorporate human rights in their practice, adverting however
37 that they are not by any chance an exclusory dichotomy (Ife, 2008) (see Table 1).
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Table 1. Ife's (2008) methodologies to a human-rights approach by social workers.

<i>Deductive Approach</i>	<i>Inductive Approach</i>
The social worker starts with a general agreement over a certain type of rights, such as the ones formalized by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, along with its Optional Protocols. And from that, he or she will deduce certain core principles or norms that are going to orient their practice.	Here, the social worker will start from a practical situation, such as the conditions in which a child is subjected at that time and place, and subsequently he or she will ask what human rights norms or principles are at stake - at that given situation - and what could be done about it.

Note. Table elaborated by the authors of this paper.

In practice, both methodologies can intersect each other, and nowhere Ife (2008) said they could not. And to provide a more in-depth account of children's rights for social work practice, we are going to present two different yet complementary guidelines that social workers can use as foundations to their work with Venezuelan migrant children in Latin American countries. Those are: the 1) UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (2010); and the 2) Save the Children rights-based approach methodology (2007). We advert however that, as earlier stated, these categories of principles and practices which we shall enunciate here do not exhaust the possibilities for the rights of the child and the safeguard of their well-being, instead they merely hold the potentialities for social workers to become aware of a rights-based approach when working with migrant children in Latin American countries.

With the intention to formulate adequate orientations for policy and practice regarding the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution 64/142, in 2010, entitled "Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (GACC)". And through one of its declared purposes, it becomes crystal clear how the Guidelines may serve for social workers involved in practice with migrant children, as the GACC intend "(d) to guide policies, decisions and activities of *all concerned with social protection and child welfare* in both the public and the private sectors, including civil society" (United Nations, 2010, p. 2, our italics). Therefore, we have put together a table containing the general principles in the GACC, which should be taken into consideration by social workers (see Table 2).

Table 2. The UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children outlined and adapted to social workers¹.

- | |
|---|
| 1) The social worker should direct efforts in trying to enable the child migrant to return to the care of his/her family, when possible, appropriate and always regarding the child's best interest. |
| 2) when the family is unavailable or cannot provide the child with the necessary support, it is the duty of the social worker to request the state to ensure appropriate alternative care for that child; |
| 3) every child should have their interests and concerns taken into consideration, the social worker should therefore consult with the child according to his/her capacities and provide them with all the information necessary, especially regarding their rights; |
| 4) children must be treated with dignity and respect at all times and they also should be provided with non-discriminatory measures and must benefit from effective protection from abuse, neglect and all forms of exploitation; |
| 5) social workers should pay attention on whether the state is promoting or not the rights of the child, including, but not limited to, access to education, health and other basic services, the right to identity, freedom of religion or belief, language and protection of property and inheritance rights. |

Note. Table elaborated by the authors based on the information displayed in the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (United Nations, 2010).

These guidelines might serve then as a compass to guide social workers in their daily practices with migrant children and children in general. Nonetheless, the International Save the Children Alliance, as an international non-governmental organization that promotes children's rights, provides relief and helps support children in developing countries, has also developed standards and principles by which its practice is guided. The organization has put together a child rights programming approach in its development and humanitarian work, which follows, in special, the principles underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. According to them, for children to be considered rights-holders as well as duty-bearers, every person or institution involved with children's rights should pay attention to what they consider the

¹This Table does not exhaust the duties and responsibilities of social workers involved in work with migrant children, nor the actions that they can and should develop in order to promote the child's dignity and best interest. These Guidelines are likely to be expanded from considering other situations of Venezuelan migrant children where their rights have been violated.

1 four most important principles in the Convention: participation, non-discrimination, best
2 interests and survival and development (International Save the Children Alliance, 2007).

3 In the case of Venezuelan migrant children, these guidelines - both from the UN
4 and Save the Children - appear to be essential to overcome the challenges arising from
5 the forced displacement of those children and their families, as well as the situations of
6 vulnerability they are subjected to. In 2015, the Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro
7 ordered the deportation of around one thousand Colombians that used to live in the
8 country, which resulted in the separation of over 300 children who were left behind in
9 Venezuela at the time (Donner, 2015). Whilst more recently "*children [were found]
10 sleeping on the streets, suffering from hunger and untreated infections, and sometimes
11 being lured into sex work*" (Armario, 2018, para. 7). Therefore, this scenario shows how
12 much it is imperative for social workers to base their actions on human rights principles,
13 since these children are being frequently denied of them.

14 We should not, however, develop a quasi-romanticized vision of social work.
15 Social workers as lone wolves cannot fulfill the gap of rightlessness of Venezuelan
16 migrant children. We should instead think of the rights-based approach to social work
17 practice as *one* dimension in a *multi-level* scenario that involves many different actors
18 and stakeholders. As affirmed by Rosicky and Northcott (2016, p. 116), to ensure the best
19 interest of the child, there must be a cooperation "[...] between the fields of social work
20 and law; with the many levels of government and nongovernmental organizations
21 involved in child protection and it must occur across borders". Thus, social workers
22 operate in a wide range of both possibilities and limitations regarding the realization of
23 migrant children's rights. And while they navigate amongst other social actors and
24 institutions, they have much to add to the practice of human rights. As they intervene
25 direct in social reality, they do not only behold these rights but rather they are able to
26 incorporate the rights-discourse into their practice.

27 From helping a migrant child to obtain access to the most basic services such as
28 healthcare or adequate food, as well as working to inform children of their rights and
29 reclaiming effective and responsible state provisions, they may be more effective in
30 providing the services to those people which the state has put a ban on. We insist that, we
31 are not suggesting here, by any means, an outsourcing of the state obligations regarding
32 the people inside its jurisdiction, however, it is acknowledged that more than ever
33 societies propagate hostility towards refugees and international nonauthorized migrants.
34 This evil spirit became banal and has been incorporated in the state policies towards
35 refugees and international migrants, represented by measures of securitization and
36 dehumanization. On that account, social workers guided by human rights principles may
37 help these people create a sense of hope, once all the other institutions have failed to meet
38 their demands.

47 **Conclusions**

48 Every single day more and more people are taking perilous journeys whether
49 throughout deserts or oceans just to find out later on that there is no such thing as the
50 Promised Land. Migration policies are tighter and tighter and the racialization and
51 depoliticization of migrant bodies have turned people into criminals and have pushed
52 even children to the margins of illegality.

53 These images that once have haunted only the rich "developed" countries in the
54 Global North are now approaching the frontiers of states in the Global South. Thousands
55 of people flee Venezuela every day, a result of the lack of access to basic services and the
56 failure of the state to provide for its population, denying them the minimum necessary to
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1 a life with dignity. They have fled to countries all around Latin America and Europe,
2 however, Colombia - a border country – is the one that has received most of these
3 displaced population so far.

4 Among the Venezuelans who are fleeing their country from hunger and violence,
5 there are many children whose voices are often not heard. Venezuelan migrant children
6 may be forced to migrate to other countries with their families or separated, once there
7 are many of them who were left behind by their Colombian deported parents. During their
8 journey in seek of refuge in Latin and South American countries, these children are
9 frequently exposed to situations which increase their potential vulnerability.

10 Most of these children fall in the scope of “illegality”, since they often do not
11 meet the requirements to be granted the protections from the state they dwell. That is,
12 amongst other things, the result of a narrow conception over the basis of refugeehood,
13 once of most the countries adopt the definitions set out by international instruments such
14 as the UN Refugee Convention. Once illegal, they are no longer the needy children who
15 need protection, but the minors who are potential threats to security and to the public
16 order, therefore societies consider it fair if they are subjected to all kinds of atrocities,
17 such as sexual and labor exploitation.

18 Once both international and national law fails to make the receiving countries
19 treat these children according to the rights they allegedly possess just for being human, it
20 is the quest of civil society to take action on behalf of the state authority. It is not a case
21 of outsourcing the state responsibilities, however, once these children are subjected to
22 violence and abuse, they need to have their demands accomplished as fast as possible,
23 since they are in a particular level of development, development in which can be seriously
24 affected when depriving them from their basic necessities.

25 Social work as a profession has much to contribute to the full realization of these
26 migrant children’s rights once professionals base their actions on human rights principles.
27 Social work with Venezuelan migrant children may help them overcome specific
28 situations of vulnerability and rightlessness, since social workers navigate in areas which
29 they are able to make social, political and community rights a reality for many of their
30 clients. Human rights have been incorporated in ethical codes and professional standards
31 of social work, and it became quite clear throughout this research that the global
32 profession of social work is committed to advancing human rights for all people.

33 Yet, we recognize that social workers alone cannot change the societies in which
34 they exercise their duties regarding the well-being of migrant children. In fact, to ensure
35 the best interest of the child, there must be a multi-level cooperation that involves the
36 family, the state, the community, the private sector and who else might be a stakeholder
37 in situations involving these children.

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