

## **From Muddy Boots to Business Class: To the Emergency Frontlines and Back**

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The now-iconic image of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi's body washed up on a beach in Turkey in September 2015 sparked a public outcry and turned global attention to Europe's refugee emergency. In 2017, the image of Aylan was replaced with that of a one-year-old Rohingya boy's lifeless body lying on the muddy shores of Naf river along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. In 2018, a two-year-old Honduran girl's image that captured her fear and anguish as her mother was searched near the United States-Mexico border replaced this little boy, whose name we will never know.

While these children have been quickly left unremembered, the recurrent multilayered yet somehow homogeneous narrative of a very large number of children displaced, missing, and dead invokes anxiety, demands our attention and underlines a central problem – we simply do not know enough about the dynamics and complexities of children and young people on the migration pathway. There are a lot of assumptions about children's displacement but not enough research-informed understanding of this phenomenon.

How can we make sense of such constructions of innocence and vulnerability and the contradictory state practices and strategies that exacerbate protection risks? This presentation provides insights from three recent global emergencies, and reflects on how evidence-based research and learning from experience can be used to strengthen global protection mechanisms.