

Families in the age of Artificial Intelligence: Rights, inclusion and empowerment

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AI and Families in Migration: Threat or Opportunity?



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AI and Families in Migration: Setting the Scene



- ✓ 281 million international migrants worldwide (UN, 2024).
- ✓ Migrant families increasingly encounter AI in border management, asylum processing, education, and public services.
- ✓ For migrant families, AI presents a dual reality:
 - ❑ opportunities for integration, language access, and service delivery
 - ❑ increased risks of surveillance, algorithmic bias, personal data leaks, and digital exclusion from essential services
- ✓ Gap: While AI governance is expanding (EU AI Act 2024, Council of Europe Framework Convention on AI 2024), **the intersection of AI, family rights, and migration remains underexplored.**

AI Benefits for Migrant Families



➔ **Healthcare & Social Protection:** AI diagnostic tools can improve health screening for migrants. Predictive analytics help anticipate humanitarian needs. AI-assisted case management accelerates asylum processing and social service delivery (Lancet Regional Health, 2025).

➔ **Education & Employment:** AI adaptive learning platforms support migrant children's integration into education systems. AI-driven skills matching connects displaced workers with employment. **UNHCR's Digital Transformation Strategy promotes refugee-centred AI tool design.**



➔ **Language & Integration:** AI-powered translation tools break down language barriers for migrant families. AI chatbots provide 24/7 access to legal and social service information in multiple languages. **The AILEM app launched in 2021, co-designed with refugees, supports language learning.**

AI Risks for Migrant Families

Border Surveillance:

- ✓ AI-powered drones, autonomous surveillance towers, and facial recognition are deployed at EU and US borders.
- ✓ Eurodac, EES, and ETIAS systems expand biometric data collection.
- ✓ AI surveillance can push migrants to more dangerous routes, increasing deaths (Migration Policy Institute).

Algorithmic Bias:

- ✓ The majority of algorithms still exhibit demographic differentials.
- ✓ Elevated false positive rates for children, women, elderly persons, and certain racial groups (NIST IR 8280; FRTE 2025).
- ✓ AI systems trained on biased datasets reinforce discrimination against specific nationalities and ethnic groups.

AI Risks for Migrant Families

Automated Decision-Making:

- ✓ AI tools like DIAS (Dialect Identification of Asylum Seekers) increasingly influence asylum outcomes.
- ✓ Errors in dialect analysis can lead to wrongful rejection and refoulement.
- ✓ EU AI Act Article 14(5) relaxes human oversight requirements specifically for migration contexts.

Data Privacy & Exploitation:

- ✓ Migrants face a “data-for-aid” dilemma: surrender biometric data or forgo essential services.
- ✓ Private companies profit from migration surveillance data – data privacy threats.
- ✓ Undocumented migrants have virtually no data protection safeguards under national security exemptions.

AI Risks for Migrant Families

Children at the frontline:

- ✓ The Eurodac recast (Regulation 2024/1358) lowers biometric fingerprinting from age 14 to 6.
- ✓ Children of undocumented parents grow up in AI systems that may track them from early childhood.





The “chilling effect”:

- ✓ Families avoid enrolling children in schools, visiting hospitals, or using digital public services out of fear that AI-driven systems will flag their immigration status and trigger enforcement actions.


Intergenerational power shifts:


- ✓ Migrant children often become the family’s primary interface with AI systems, navigating apps, translating via AI tools, managing asylum paperwork through chatbots.
- ✓ This inverts traditional authority and places adult-level burdens on minors.


Undocumented Migrants: Key Risks

-  AI surveillance creates an invisible leash: tracking, social media monitoring, and data scraping target undocumented communities with virtually no privacy safeguards.
-  Algorithmic gatekeeping in welfare, healthcare, and housing excludes undocumented families. Children face indirect discrimination through status-flagging algorithms.
-  Digital exclusion compounds risks: limited connectivity, low digital literacy, and fear of digital footprints create a parallel system of invisibility.
-  Undocumented family members are systematically excluded from AI-enabled services. A family may be **“half-visible” to the state: documented children in school systems, undocumented parents invisible to welfare algorithms.**

The EU AI Act and Migration: Key Concerns

-  Human oversight requirements are relaxed for migration (Art. 14(5)). The “de minimis” clause [Art. 6(3)] may exempt systems from high-risk classification if deemed low-impact: no mandatory bias audits, no transparency requirements, no fundamental rights impact assessments.

-  The AI Act leaves broad discretion for Member States to deploy AI in migration decisions. Undocumented migrants are effectively excluded from the regulatory protections framework.

-  Lack of transparency: even high-risk AI systems in migration are registered in a non-public database [Art. 49(4)], accessible only to the Commission and surveillance authorities, making it impossible for civil society, researchers, and affected communities to know what tools are being used on them.

What can we do? Towards a Rights-Based Framework

- ✓ **Mandate algorithmic impact assessments, before deploying AI in migration and asylum contexts**, with meaningful participation of affected communities.
- ✓ **Ensure transparency and explainability of AI-driven decisions affecting migrants.** Registration in public (not restricted) databases.
- ✓ **Close the regulatory gap for undocumented migrants by extending AI Act protections** regardless of immigration status and prohibiting national security blanket exemptions.
- ✓ **Invest in digital inclusion by providing connectivity, digital literacy, and multilingual AI tools** designed with and for migrant families.

Opportunity-A Family-Centred AI Framework



Family Impact Assessments: Before deploying AI in migration and asylum contexts, conduct mandatory assessments of how systems affect not just individual applicants **but family units**, including children, elderly dependents, and undocumented members. *Does this system create new dependencies? Does it expose children to adult-level data burdens?*



Participatory design with migrant families: Include migrant families, not just policy experts, in the co-design of AI tools. The AILEM language app (co-created with refugees) and NaTakallam's human-in-the-loop translation model show this is possible. Systems must account for collective decision-making, multilingual needs, and varying digital literacy within families.



Close the "chilling effect" gap: Establish legal firewalls between AI-driven public services (healthcare, education, welfare) and immigration enforcement databases. Guarantee that accessing a school portal or health app will never trigger status verification. **The EU AI Act must extend its protections to all family members regardless of immigration status.**



So...



How can we break the 'chilling effect' where migrant families avoid schools and hospitals fearing AI will flag their status? Should legal firewalls between public services and enforcement databases become mandatory?



The EU AI Act offers its weakest protections precisely in migration contexts, relaxed oversight, non-public databases, de minimis exemptions. How should civil society respond?



AI policy treats migrants as individuals, but impacts hit entire families , children becoming digital brokers, biometrics deciding who accesses food aid. How do we shift to a family-centred approach in AI governance?





Thank you

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