

REIMAGINING MIGRATION RESPONSES

Learning from children and young people
who move in the Horn of Africa



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The Office of Research – Innocenti receives financial support from the Government of Italy, while funding for specific projects is also provided by other governments, international institutions and private sources, including UNICEF National Committees.

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This report has been peer reviewed both externally and within UNICEF.

This report was researched and written by Lucy Hovil, Mark Gill, Iolanda Genovese, Olivia Bueno, Josiah Kaplan and Ramya Subrahmanian, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti.

Any part of this publication may be freely reproduced if accompanied by the following citation: Hovil, Lucy, Mark Gill, Iolanda Genovese, Olivia Bueno, Josiah Kaplan and Ramya Subrahmanian, *Reimagining Migration Responses: Learning from children and young people who move in the Horn of Africa*, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence, 2021. Requests to utilize larger portions or the full publication should be addressed to the Communications Unit at: Florence@unicef.org.

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Cover image is from the video available at www.unicef-irc.org/child-migration-hoa

Editorial production: Sarah Marchant and Céline Little, UNICEF Innocenti

Design and layout: The Visual Agency (www.thevisualagency.com)

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Lucy Hovil · Mark Gill · Iolanda Genovese
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study was carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth (MOWCY) in Ethiopia; the Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs and Family (MESAF) in Somaliland; the Ministry of Women Development and Family Affairs (MOWDAFA) in Puntland; and the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) in Sudan.

External Reviewers: Jeff Crisp and Bina D'Costa.

The authors would like to acknowledge the contribution and support of the following individuals and organizations:

National research partners: Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA) in Ethiopia; the University of Hargeisa in Somaliland; the Peace and Development Research Center in Puntland; the Peace Research Institute at the University of Khartoum; and the Faculty of Law at the University of Gedaref in Sudan.

UNICEF: Karin Heissler, Aminul Islam, Tapfumanei Kusemwa and Ruth Regassa (UNICEF Ethiopia); Ahmed Osman Adam, Kamal Nidam Adan, Lawrence Oduma and Brendan Ross (UNICEF Somalia); Souad Al Hebshi, Tahani Elmobasher, Agnieska Korus, Mahmoud Esmat Mahmoud and Emilie Welam (UNICEF Sudan); Javier Aguilar, Teona Aslanishvili, Rosal Maya Fischer (Middle East and North Africa Regional Office); Jean Francois Basse, Belete Birara, Ndeye Marie Diop and Priscilla Ofori-Amanfo (Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office); Noela Barasa, Saskia Blume, Kirsten Di Martino and Cornelius Williams (NYHQ).

Office of Research – Innocenti: Priscilla Idele, Angie Lee, Céline Little, Sarah Marchant, Gunilla Olsson, Matilde Rocca, Dale Rutstein and Francesca Viola.

Additional Editors: Peter Stalker and Accuracy Matters.

Funding for this research was generously provided by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

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GLOSSARY

Asylum seeker

A person seeking to be admitted into a country as a refugee and awaiting decision on their application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments. In the case of a negative decision, they must leave the country and may be expelled, as may any alien in an irregular situation, unless permission to stay is provided on humanitarian or other related grounds.

Best interests assessment and determination

Describes the formal process with strict procedural safeguards designed to determine the child's best interests for particularly important decisions affecting the child. It should facilitate adequate child participation without discrimination, involve decision makers with relevant areas of expertise, and balance all relevant factors in order to assess the best option.

Child

A person aged under 18. For the purposes of this research, children aged 10–17.

Forcibly displaced

Refers to refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons.

Horn of Africa

For the purposes of this report, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan are included within the Horn of Africa. Primary data collection took place in Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan.

Internally displaced person

A person (or group of people) forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of, armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.

Irregular migration

Movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries. There is no clear or universally accepted definition of irregular migration.

Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)

Any type of local or outside support that aims to protect or promote psychosocial well-being and/or prevent or treat mental disorder.

Migrant

An umbrella term for a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.

Mixed migration

Complex population movements including refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants and other migrants.

Non-refoulement

A principle which prohibits States from returning a refugee or asylum seeker to territories where there is a risk that their life or freedom would be threatened on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.

Refugee

A person who “owing to well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”.¹

Separated children

Children separated from both parents or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members.

Smuggling

The procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a state party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.² Smuggling, contrary to trafficking, does not require an element of exploitation, coercion or violation of human rights.

Trafficking of persons

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving or payments of benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

Unaccompanied children

Persons under the age of majority who are not accompanied by a parent, guardian or other adult who by law or custom is responsible for them.

Young person

For the purposes of this research, a person aged 18–24.

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1. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951.
2. UN Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000, Art. 3(a).



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Migration is a lived reality for an increasing number of children and young people worldwide. Seeking safety and better economic and other opportunities, they feel compelled to leave their homes and communities. Most stay within their own countries, others move to neighbouring countries, and fewer move further afield, across continents. Although age-disaggregated data remain highly fragmented, UNICEF estimates that out of 272 million international migrants in 2019, 33 million were under 18.³ Current trends suggest that these numbers will continue to rise throughout the coming decades, accelerated by a complex and fast-changing ecosystem of demographic, economic, security and environmental drivers.⁴

Reflecting this complexity, migration movements themselves are becoming increasingly complex and mixed, with internal and cross-border population movements made up of people fleeing violence and conflict, those seeking employment, education or family reunification, and many for whom such incentives are mixed and difficult to reconcile with formal categorization.⁵ The international obligations of states to provide protection and services to migrants alongside nationals, however, often mean that cross-border movements are seen as a challenge to state sovereignty, and those who move unofficially are often labelled as 'irregular' migrants. Migration always entails some risk, but states' restriction of legal pathways for regular migration and stronger border controls have made these movements more dangerous for those on the move worldwide. Moreover, many children and young people may find themselves 'stuck' at various stages of their journey for extended periods of time – neither in their homeland nor in a settled destination where they feel they can make a new home.

In the Horn of Africa, where migration has been a key coping strategy throughout history,

these same trends are fundamentally reshaping children and young people's journeys within, and beyond, the region. In recent years, the international debate on migration from African countries has largely been shaped by migration to Europe, where the main aim of much policy has been to stem immigration or to restrict entry to wealthier countries. This approach has also influenced responses to migration within the Horn of Africa.⁶ Here too, migration is often framed or viewed primarily in terms of risk and the need for protection, rather than balanced with the potential benefits that movement and relocation may bring to those who move.

Evidence on children and young people involved in migration is inadequate and fragmented, both globally and in the Horn of Africa. A better understanding of how migration impacts children and young people is needed, in order to design policy and programming responses that are effective in reducing the risks of unsafe migration for those who choose to move, and helping all children realize their rights wherever they are. Research must give primacy to children's own experiences, and build an accurate, grounded picture of migration informed by those who live it.

About the report

This report helps address the evidence gap on child and youth migration in the Horn of Africa, by synthesizing findings from three detailed accompanying studies on the experiences of migrant children and young people in Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan. The study's objectives include:

- creating a better understanding of their perceptions and feelings of safety their well-being and their protective environments; and
- capturing a snapshot of their access to services and resources, and their trust in authorities and other service providers.

3. United Nations Children's Fund, *Uprooted: The growing crisis for refugee and migrant children*, UNICEF, New York, September 2016, <www.unicef.org/reports/uprooted-growing-crisis-refugee-and-migrant-children>, accessed 18 February 2021.

4. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2019*, UNHCR, Copenhagen, 2020, <www.unhcr.org/5ee200e37.pdf>, accessed 18 February 2021.

5. For a formal definition of 'mixed migration', see International Organization for Migration, *Glossary on Migration*, IOM, Geneva, 2019, <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf>, accessed 18 February 2021.

6. For the purposes of this report, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan are included within the Horn of Africa. Primary data collection took place in Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan. Additional data were collected in Egypt using the same methodology for specific indicators.

The primary audiences for this report are stakeholders working on policies and programmes designed to support children and young people who move within the Horn of Africa.

The report is based on surveys carried out between April 2019 and January 2020 with 1,290 migrant children (aged 14–17) and young people (aged 18–24) located in multiple settings: internally displaced person camps and refugee camps, border areas and urban areas.⁷ Of this sample, 37 per cent of respondents were children aged 14–17, and 63 per cent were young people aged 18–24; 42 per cent of respondents were female and 58 per cent were male.⁸

Surveys were further supplemented by 224 qualitative interviews across the three countries, including with 35 children (aged 10–17), 33 young people (aged 18–24), 60 government officials, including service providers, 46 representatives of civil society organizations and academia, and 14 representatives of United Nations agencies/international organizations. In addition, 36 respondents among religious leaders, representatives from the community and families were interviewed.

This report refers to children and young people's 'agency' and 'voice' throughout. The term 'agency' is used here to refer specifically to children and young people's personal capacity, or self-belief in their capacity, to act and to make free choices or to have control over their actions. Both voice and agency concepts are closely linked with that of meaningful participation and empowerment – children and young people, regardless of their migratory status, have the right to form and voice their views, and influence matters that concern them directly and indirectly.

The report covers many aspects of children and young people's movement – considering their reasons for moving, their experiences while travelling, their views of their current location and their future plans.

Considering the diversity of migration movements and categories, the research broadly uses the term 'migrant' to encompass all these different forms of movement. Notably, the research did not define and analyse respondents through the lens of formal migration categories, such as 'regular' or 'irregular', 'economic migrant' or 'refugee' and 'internally displaced person'. Instead, it sought to provide space through its methodology for children and young migrants to speak to their own experiences with migration, regardless of their formal categorization.

The high degree of agency that the children and young people interviewed for this study show in their migratory decision-making can help policymakers, programme implementers and practitioners better understand their lived experiences and aspirations. Some of these insights are relatively well established, but while they may be reflected in policy, they have yet to permeate practice; others point to the need for new thinking. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic since 2020 further underlines the importance of understanding and responding to the ever-changing pressures on the lives of vulnerable children and young people.

UNICEF is committed to ensuring that research and evidence-generation activities undertaken by the institution and its partners are ethically conducted, particularly for research involving children and young people. Research protocols addressing both ethics and protection were developed in line with organizational policy, which established concrete mechanisms and procedures to ensure that the research process was underpinned by key ethical principles and that the physical safety and emotional well-being of participants were promoted and safeguarded. These key principles included the need to respect the best interests of the child, the need to do no harm, the need to protect privacy, confidentiality and data security, and to ensure that informed consent or assent was obtained. For this reason, the survey questions did not specifically ask about experience of sexual and gender-based violence. A survey-based interview method

7. The respondents were found through a variety of means, including through the networks of the implementing partners, through 'snowballing' and referrals, and through randomly approaching potential respondents in locations known to have a high proportion of migrants.

8. Given the nature of the project, respondents were selected through a variety of means, including with the help of local community groups/NGOs, the research partner's own network, UNICEF partners, referrals and by approaching potential respondents in public places.

designed to touch upon broader migration-related issues is not an appropriate way to raise or explore these specific and more sensitive types of harm, and as such would have posed ethical challenges not commensurate with UNICEF's 'do no harm' approach to evidence generation within the context of this particular study.

Key findings and messages

This report confirms that most of those who move stay within the same region as their country of origin, and that their migration experience is complex, perceived by respondents as having both positive and negative impacts on their well-being and defined by patterns of often-repeated, sometimes cyclical movement. Governments and

international organizations tasked with providing support to children and young people should therefore have a multidimensional understanding of migration – appreciating that it is neither linear nor straightforward, and that while it carries risks, it is not necessarily or not always perceived as negative or dangerous by migrants themselves. It may still be evaluated by those who migrate as the best choice available to them within their overall circumstances.

Policies and programmes therefore need to be highly adaptive, recognizing the lived experience of children and young people who move and, most importantly, working with them in order to reduce the risks inherent in unsafe forms of migration.





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The report offers a number of findings, organized around three key messages.

Message 1. The complexity of children and young people’s migration journeys needs to be better understood for appropriate policy and programme responses:

- **Children and young people define their own migration narrative.** The diverse trajectories of children and young people moving within the Horn of Africa often complicate and challenge the binary categories generally used by international frameworks.
- **Children see themselves as primary agents of their migration story,** particularly older children and young people, and are able to articulate their perspectives and experiences, as well as their needs and aspirations.
- **Migration is also often cyclical, and continuous.** Children and young people reported an expectation of moving again (52 per cent) or remaining where they are for the foreseeable future (45 per cent).

Message 2. Children’s safety and well-being on migration journeys represent critical challenges and need investment and attention:

- **Migration can present both risks and opportunities,** which both need to be kept in mind when assessing what is in the best interests of a child.
- **Smugglers play a role in facilitating some children’s migration.** Where children and young people migrating in the Horn of Africa are forced into spaces of irregularity because their travel is either considered or treated as

‘illegal’ or discouraged by officials, they can become caught between state actors who wish to apprehend and return them to their homes, and those who wish to exploit them for profit, such as smugglers.

- **Lack of safety also stems from a lack of trusted reliable authorities they can turn to for assistance.** Few children and young people who said they felt scared also expressed a willingness to turn for help to the police or other authorities. Instead, they were more likely to turn to religious leaders, international charities and teachers.
- **Gender differences exist, though vary across types of risk.** Gender analysis of the data indicates differences in the perception of safety and risk that girls and boys report, as well as in relation to their respective access to services.

Message 3. Migrant children and young people’s access to many services is poor, and the needs they have are not being met:

- **Migrants lack access to many basic services.** By the nature of their movement, children and young people are less familiar with their surroundings and the services that might be available, while the services that are available are often overstretched.
- **Barriers include costs and location of services, exclusion based on language, as well as lack of identity documentation.** When asked about what services they most needed, those interviewed prioritized education, financial support, or support with finding a job, so that they would have the skills and means to improve their own and their families’ lives.

Recommendations

Building on the key findings and messages above derived from the three country reports, this report offers several recommendations for rethinking child protection approaches for child and youth migrants in the Horn of Africa.⁹ These recommendations are aimed at the wide spectrum of actors from national and local governments, intergovernmental bodies, donor partners and international organizations, as well as international and national civil society organizations which are either mandated or associated with policy and programmatic actions related to migration, collectively referred to below as ‘migration stakeholders’.

First, migration stakeholders should embrace a child-centred understanding of the drivers and characteristics of migration, recognizing that children have rights to protection irrespective of the circumstances or nature of their migration.

In particular, stakeholders should:

- incorporate in their activities the perspectives and lived experiences of child and youth migrants themselves;
- ensure that multiple dimensions of vulnerability are considered, and tailor responses accordingly;
- advocate for, and conduct training to support, more comprehensive best interests assessments and determinations; and
- develop and implement comprehensive information programmes, improve opportunities for children and young people in their home communities, strengthen family and economic support programmes, and develop supportive environments for children and young people who stay, those who wish to move and those who return home.

Second, child protection systems need to be reformed and strengthened to ensure effective protection of all children, including migrant children, irrespective of nationality or migration status. In particular, stakeholders should:

- develop appropriate mechanisms to end migrant child detention, their separation from parents, and any returns policies which risk breaching the principle of non-refoulement, as violations of child rights and contraventions of the principles of the child’s best interests;¹⁰
- support legislation and policies that facilitate access to documentation;
- ensure effective legal processes to reduce impunity for trafficking and exploitation;
- ensure appropriate best interests assessment and determination procedures to meet child and youth migrant needs; and
- consider the level of danger reported in border areas and increase the presence and coordination of child protection actors at borders.

In particular, migration stakeholders need to actively promote and invest in resilient child protection systems¹¹ that are accessible to all children, regardless of their migratory status.

This should include:

- putting effective firewalls in place between law enforcement/police and child protection officials and workers to enable the latter to focus on the well-being of children, irrespective of migration status;
- building and expanding social service workforce capacity to address gaps that have been identified through detailed country-level analysis;
- promoting the use of trusted mechanisms to support migrant children and young people, through diversifying service providers;

9. Genovese, Iolanda, Mark Gill, Lucy Hovil and Tekalign Ayalew Mengiste, *Reimagining Migration Responses: Learning from children and young people who move in Ethiopia*, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence, 2021.

Bueno, Olivia, Mark Gill, Lucy Hovil and Iolanda Genovese, *Reimagining Migration Responses: Learning from children and young people who move in Somalia*, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence, 2021

Bueno, Olivia, Mark Gill, Lucy Hovil and Iolanda Genovese, *Reimagining Migration Responses: Learning from children and young people who move in Sudan*, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence, 2021.

10. This point is addressed in Article 3, paragraph 1 of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No. 14 (2013), CRC/C/GC/14, paragraph 59; and also United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, Joint General Comment No. 23 (2017) on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return, CMW/C/GC/4–CRC/C/GC/23.

11. The concept of resilience in relation to systems refers to the ability of a system to predict, adapt and operate during unexpected events or a major disruption/crisis (i.e., displacement or Covid-19) and recover/return to normal operation after that. See Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Resilience Systems Analysis: Learning & recommendations report*, OECD, Paris, January 2017 www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/docs/SwedenLearning_Recommendationsreport.pdf, accessed 21 February 2021.

- training all actors on children’s rights and protections;
- guaranteeing that child protection officers and social workers are involved in all children’s best interests assessment and determination procedures;¹² and
- strengthening information management systems and considering the creation of centralized systems for child protection case management and effective monitoring.

Third, migration stakeholders should therefore adopt a multisectoral and integrated approach while designing and implementing programmes to ensure that all children, irrespective of migration status and nationality, do not face barriers in accessing basic services.

In particular, stakeholders should:

- facilitate access to services by adopting a multisectoral approach;
- prioritize strengthening of children and young people’s access to legal identity and documentation;
- make efforts to monitor access to services for migrant communities and ensure that those who are underserved are the subject of specific outreach and expansion efforts; and

- ensure access to long-term and durable solutions for children and young people who do not want to move onward, especially those who have no prospect of being able to work legally or to be naturalized in their current locations.

This report also brings to attention continuing evidence needs in building a collective understanding of child and youth migration, both in the Horn of Africa and globally. To that end, it identifies clear opportunities for further research, building on the methods applied here. Topics proposed as next steps include:

- (i) the gendered impact of migration;
- (ii) the current and emerging impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- (iii) the role of the family in children and young people’s migration decision-making and the collective impact of migration on families and households;
- (iv) better understanding of the relationships and political economies that shape interactions between children and smugglers; (v) the trajectories of returnees and children left behind by migrating parents or who chose not to move; and
- (v) the role of social workers as trusted intermediaries between government actors and migrants.



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12. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *UNHCR Guidelines on Determining the Best Interests of the Child*, UNHCR, Geneva, May 2008, <www.unhcr.org/4566b16b2.pdf>, accessed 19 January 2021.



CHAPTER 1

10

CHILD MIGRATION IN CONTEXT

Movements across the Horn of Africa region have involved children and young people throughout history, and to some extent have always entailed risk. At the same time, mobility has also offered opportunity. In recent years, however, official control of borders and other restrictions on movement have heightened the dangers and driven some migrants into the arms of smugglers and traffickers.¹³

In the Horn of Africa, contemporary migration patterns build on cultures of human mobility that are long established and deeply embedded.¹⁴ People have been migrating across Africa for centuries, either seasonally, as a way of coping with poverty, drought or conflict – or to seek better opportunities and lives. Such motivations have never been mutually exclusive, as households and individuals have always combined multiple reasons for movement. These long-established movements were disrupted by the advent of colonialism, which created states within Africa so that previously informal movements came to be regulated as ‘cross-border’ travel. Some of these national borders have remained highly porous and have little meaning, but others have been, or have become, strongly controlled.

Motivations for migration have long been defined by broad socio-economic divisions, with the better-off among the poor or lower middle classes choosing to migrate, and evidence suggesting that migration increases with income and overall levels of development.¹⁵ Alongside these largely voluntary patterns of movement, however, many children and young people, often the poorest and most vulnerable, are forcibly displaced. People can be

driven from their homes by conflict, for example, or natural disaster. Most remain within their home country as internally displaced persons. Others cross borders seeking temporary support or asylum – though generally remaining within the region. Across the three countries in which this research was conducted in 2020 – Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan – there were 6.2 million internally displaced persons (36 per cent of Africa’s total) and 2 million refugees (29 per cent of Africa’s total).^{16,17} In practice, households and individuals often have overlapping motivations – voluntary and forced – for the complex decision to move.

Most current migration is internal, particularly from rural to urban areas. Despite the scarcity of urban job opportunities, young people are driven to the cities by the lure of a ‘better life’, including responding to the pull of peer networks.¹⁸ And since African countries generally have young populations, a significant proportion of all migrants are children and young people.¹⁹ Statistics for those who move internally within their country are difficult to obtain, however, partly because a significant amount of movement occurs outside regular legal channels, and is either not officially counted or is underreported.²⁰

13. See International Organization for Migration, *Africa Migration Report: Challenging the narrative*, IOM, Addis Ababa, 2020, <<https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/africa-migration-report.pdf>>, accessed 18 February 2021; and Save the Children International/Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, *Young and on the Move: Children and youth in mixed migration flows within and from the Horn of Africa*, Save the Children International, Rome/RMMS, Nairobi, 2016, <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/10080/pdf/young_and_on_the_move_sep_2016.pdf>, accessed 18 February 2021.
14. See, for example, Aduagna, Girmachew, ‘Migration patterns and emigrants’ transnational activities: comparative findings from two migrant origin areas in Ethiopia’, *Comparative Migration Studies*, vol. 7, no. 5, 2019; and I. M. Lewis, ‘The Somali conquest of the Horn of Africa’, *The Journal of African History*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1960, pp. 213–230.
15. See, for instance, Clemens, Michael A., *The Emigration Lifecycle: How development shapes emigration from poor countries*, Working Paper 540, Center for Global Development, Washington, D.C./London, 18 August 2020, <www.cgdev.org/publication/emigration-life-cycle-how-development-shapes-emigration-poor-countries>, accessed 18 February 2021.
16. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre/Norwegian Refugee Council, *GRID 2020: Global Report on Internal Displacement*, IDMC, Geneva, 2020, <www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/2020-IDMC-GRID.pdf>, accessed 7 September 2020.
17. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR Global Report 2018, Regional Summaries - Africa, Geneva, 2018, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/gr2018/pdf/03_Africa.pdf#_ga=2.255337928.150663040.1599498452-600892468.1595025532>, accessed 7 September 2020.
18. United Nations Development Programme, *Scaling Fences: Voices of irregular African migrants to Europe*, UNDP, New York, October 2019, <www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/ScalingFences.html>, accessed 18 February 2021.
19. For instance, UNICEF estimates that out of 272 million international migrants in 2019 globally, 33 million were under 18. <<https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/migration/>>, accessed 20 February 2021.
20. See, for instance, Research and Evidence Facility, *Migration and Conflict in the Horn of Africa: A desk review and proposal for research*, EU Trust Fund for Africa (Horn of Africa Window) Research and Evidence Facility, London/Nairobi, March 2017, <www.soas.ac.uk/ref-hornresearch/research-papers/file120035.pdf>, accessed 25 February 2021.

Other migrants seek opportunities in different countries.²¹ These international movements are usually initially to neighbouring states, sometimes correlating with pre-colonial alignments in language and culture. In addition, a smaller number of people travel further afield to other African regions, whether following legal pathways or moving ‘irregularly’.²² Within the Horn of Africa, cross-border migration follows three primary routes – the ‘Eastern route’ towards the Gulf, the ‘Southern route’ towards Kenya and Southern Africa, and the ‘Western/Northern route’ towards Libya, Egypt, and for those who choose to make the further journey, onwards to Southern Europe.

Migration as ‘crisis’ and the increased risks for migrants

Recent global discussion on migration has been strongly influenced by the 2015 arrival of over a million refugees in Europe.²³ This sent political shockwaves through many countries in the Global North, and as a result public discourse and responses to migration became dominated by a narrative of ‘crisis’ and became disproportionately concerned with movements from less wealthy to more wealthy countries – even though these account for a small part of total migration.²⁴

One positive outcome of this debate was a renewed international commitment to sharing responsibility for migration globally. In September 2016 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, and in December 2018 the United Nations endorsed the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.²⁵

However, these positive initiatives are not legally binding and lack mechanisms for enforcement, so it is not clear whether governments will adhere to their commitments, particularly on sharing responsibility for ensuring the safety and well-being of migrants in their communities of origin, in transit and at their destinations.²⁶

The events of 2015 also provoked the wider expression of both existing and new negative attitudes to cross-border migration in general. Governments in wealthier countries came under increasing pressure from their own citizens to prevent migrants from reaching their shores, and adopted new, or hardened existing, policies that go against the spirit and letter of the Compacts – focusing instead on strengthening border controls and stemming migration by tackling the drivers or ‘root causes’ in the countries of origin.²⁷ In so doing, many governments also failed to focus on corresponding reformation, that is strengthening or expanding legal routes for regular migration.

As a result of these dynamics, children and young people who leave their homes to seek safety and better livelihoods are facing ever-narrowing legal and safe routes for regular migration, and are often labelled as ‘irregular’ migrants when they seek alternative routes. Once engaged in movement, they have to survive in the context of an often-hostile policy environment, exposing themselves to heightened risk, hiding from officials and staying away from formal protection services which they view as a threat to their safety or autonomy.

Increasingly restrictive migration controls, rather than making movements safer, have therefore

21. In 2017, the total number of Africans living on the continent but outside of their home country was 25 million. See chapter 2 of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Economic Development in Africa Report 2018*, UNCTAD, Geneva, 2018, <https://unctad.org/en/PublicationChapters/edar2018_ch2_en.pdf>, accessed 25 February 2021.

22. ‘Irregular’ movement is defined as those who move without the necessary documentation to make their travel legal.

23. UNHCR website, ‘Over one million sea arrivals reach Europe in 2015’, 30 December 2015, <www.unhcr.org/afr/news/latest/2015/12/5683d0b56/million-sea-arrivals-reach-europe-2015.html>, accessed 22 February 2021.

24. Crawley, Heaven, Franck Düvell, Katharine Jones, Simon McMahon and Nando Sigona, *Destination Europe? Understanding the dynamics and drivers of Mediterranean migration in 2015*, Unravelling the Mediterranean Migration Crisis (MEDMIG) Final Report, MEDMIG, Coventry, 2016, <www.medmig.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/research-brief-destination-europe.pdf>, accessed 18 February 2021.

25. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Bringing the New York Declaration to Life: Applying the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)*, UNHCR, Geneva, January 2018, <www.unhcr.org/593e5ce27>, accessed 18 February 2021.

26. See for instance, Migration Policy Institute, *The Divergent Trajectories of the Global Migration and Refugee Compacts: Implementation amid crisis*, MPI, Washington, D.C., December 2020.

27. Carling, Jørgen and Francis Collins, ‘Aspiration, desire and drivers of migration’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 44, no. 6, 2018, pp. 909–926.

resulted in many migrants being criminalized as well as tempted to take greater risks.²⁸ Augmented border controls and securitization, with no corresponding increase in protection mechanisms, have led to a significant rise in the levels of risk taken by migrants: they have driven up demand for smugglers, which in turn has driven up the price and the risk for migrants.²⁹

Many of those travelling with the help of smugglers are children and young people. Much of the research on smuggling has been concerned with harm to children and young people, and the criminal nature of the networks associated with smuggling and trafficking. This is largely because it has addressed the most dangerous journeys, particularly those to Europe.³⁰ One study on the Central and Eastern Mediterranean route, for instance, found that 68 per cent of migrants were aged between 14 and 24.³¹ Less attention has been paid to smugglers' local connections and the services they provide which continue to make them attractive to many migrants, despite the risks they pose to safety.³²

Smugglers are seen by many migrants who use them as acting as humanitarians or 'travel agents',

despite representing significant harm and risk.³³ There is a thin line between smuggling and trafficking – what may start as an agreement to be moved from point A to point B (smuggling), can quickly result in exploitation and abuse including trafficking. Smugglers may turn on their clients during the journey, or kidnap and abuse them and then extort more money from their relatives in exchange for release or onward travel.^{34,35}

The complexity of the migration experience: opportunities and risks

Children and young people move to fulfil their aspirations and invest in a better future.³⁶ They do so with both agency and intent, taking calculated decisions along the way based on their circumstances.³⁷ They therefore have a right to be heard and to take decisions to the extent that their capacities allow.³⁸

At the same time, however, the considerable risks and harms that children and young people who move may face need to be recognized, understood and mitigated. For some, the opportunities override any such cautions about the harm and

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28. Hovil, Lucy and Lutz Oette, 'Tackling the root causes of human trafficking and smuggling from Eritrea: The need for an empirically grounded EU policy on mixed migration in the Horn of Africa', International Refugee Rights Initiative, School of Oriental and African Studies, and Strategic Initiative in the Horn of Africa, 2017, <<https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/26362/1/IRRI%20Report%20final%20Nov%202018.pdf>>, accessed 10 August 2020.
29. See, for instance, Tinti, Peter and Tuesday Reitano, *Migrant, Refugee, Smuggler, Saviour*, Hurst, London, 2016.
30. See, for instance, Hovil, Lucy and Lutz Oette, 'Tackling the root causes of human trafficking and smuggling from Eritrea: The need for an empirically grounded EU policy on mixed migration in the Horn of Africa', International Refugee Rights Initiative, School of Oriental and African Studies, and Strategic Initiative in the Horn of Africa, 2017, <<https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/26362/1/IRRI%20Report%20final%20Nov%202018.pdf>>, accessed 10 August 2020.
31. United Nations Children's Fund and International Organization for Migration, *Harrowing Journeys: Children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea*, UNICEF, New York/IOM, Geneva, 2017, <<https://data.unicef.org/resources/harrowing-journeys/>>, accessed 25 February 2021.
32. Ayalew, Tekalign, Fekadu Adugna and Priya Deshingkar, 'Social embeddedness of human smuggling in East Africa: Brokering Ethiopian migration to Sudan', *African Human Mobility Review*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2018, pp. 1333–1358.
33. Children make up a quarter of all detected trafficking cases globally and 64 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa. United Nations Children's Fund and International Organization for Migration, *Harrowing Journeys: Children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea*, UNICEF, New York/IOM, Geneva, 2017, <<https://data.unicef.org/resources/harrowing-journeys/>>, accessed 25 February 2021.
34. Ibid. It is important to note that smuggling and trafficking are two different crimes that are often conflated. Smuggling theoretically ends with the migrants reaching their destination (or, at the very least, being able to walk away from the smugglers), while trafficking generally involves ongoing exploitation including modern slavery (including forced labour), either during the migrants' journey or at their destination. Finally, smuggling, by definition, is always transnational, while trafficking can occur within a state as well as between states. See Hovil, Lucy and Lutz Oette, 2017.
35. Reitano, Tuesday, *The Khartoum Process: A sustainable response to human smuggling and trafficking?*, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria/The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, Geneva, November 2016, <<https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/policybrief93.pdf>>, accessed 18 February 2021.
36. Blaser, Caitlin and Loren B. Landau, *Managing Migration in Southern Africa: Tools for evaluating local government responsiveness*, Working Paper 19, Migrating Out of Poverty Research Programme Consortium, Brighton, September 2014; de Haas, Hein, *Migration Theory: Quo Vadis?*, Working Paper 100, International Migration Institute, Oxford, November 2014, pp. 1–39; United Nations Development Programme, *Scaling Fences: Voices of irregular African migrants to Europe*, UNDP, New York, October 2019, <www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/ScalingFences.html>, accessed 18 February 2021.
37. Crock, Mary and Lenni Benson, 'Central Issues in the Protection of Child Migrants', in *Protecting Migrant Children: In Search of Best Practice*, edited by Mary Crock and Lenni Benson, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, 2018, Sydney Law School Research Paper 18/65, <<http://ssrn.com/abstract=3264953>>, accessed 18 February 2021. [In the case of refugees, see Hovil, Lucy, *Refugees, Conflict and the Search for Belonging*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2016.]
38. Ibid., p. 19.

risks, and they may still attempt to move, often several times. It is important therefore to take a balanced approach that avoids an overly idealistic or romanticized picture – acknowledging that children and young people may be fleeing dangers at home, while losing protective structures provided by families, communities and states. In practice, the factors that lead people to leave their homes are complex, and the rationale for movement is often intertwined with a concomitant desire to seek better economic, educational or other opportunities, and a coercive impetus to escape violence, persecution and instability.

Many find themselves in limbo at various stages of their journey – neither in their homeland nor in a settled destination where they feel they can make a new home, often in contexts (trafficked into harmful labour, detained at borders, living in long periods of protracted displacement) with serious protection risks.^{39,40}

Viewed through the eyes of migrant children and young people themselves, for example, distinctions between the conventional categories of migration discourse – such as ‘economic migrant’, ‘forcibly displaced’, and ‘regular’ versus ‘irregular’ migration – regularly blur in the context of real lived experience or are more fluid and dynamic.⁴¹ For instance, individuals might fit one category when they leave home but shift into other categories along the way. Many migrants are also stuck, with some spending protracted periods in camps, in quasi- or explicit detention while awaiting asylum claims, and/or unable to access support in urban areas. They may feel the need to move onwards, often using irregular means. Moreover, the dangers and risks that an individual migrant encounters may have little to do with their legal status. For some, the decision to migrate is a choice they feel they were able to make of their own volition; they may not particularly like where they are living nor intend to make it a place of permanent residence. Others lack alternatives:

they are, or feel, unable to return home or go somewhere else. In this study, as many as 45 per cent of respondents said that they intended to stay for the next six months, and more than half intended to move somewhere else. They did not see their movement as a one-off event. In fact, two returnees in five said they planned to move elsewhere in the next six months.

Towards a child-centred understanding of migration

The terminology around migration is diffuse and contested, with definitions hard to pin down. For instance, terms such as ‘mixed migration’ are used to capture the dynamism inherent within migration journeys. While useful, however, they continue to be inconsistently applied and limited in their precision.⁴² But they matter, as they influence the ways in which responses and services are structured, entitlements determined, and resources allocated.

Certainly, it is important to establish different categories of migrants – particularly to identify and protect those who are most vulnerable, and implement programmes to match the needs of particular subgroups. However, definitions can also give rise to false dichotomies, for example between the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ migrant, or distinguishing between ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ migration. This kind of categorization, particularly where it takes on the cast of legal provision, can have a profound impact on people’s rights and circumstances. Restrictive legal definitions may also render invisible many victims of trafficking and other illegal acts. Such definitions may, for example, enable governments to present the small numbers of identified victims of trafficking who do receive services as evidence of success, despite the fact that the vast majority of such victims either remain unidentified and/or experience forms of exploitation and abuse as part of their migratory journey which do not fit a

39. Thompson, Amy, Rebecca Maria Torres, Kate Swanson, Sarah A. Blue and Óscar Misael Hernández, ‘Re-conceptualising agency in migrant children from Central America and Mexico’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2019, pp. 235–252.

40. United Nations Development Programme, *Scaling Fences: Voices of irregular African migrants to Europe*, UNDP, New York, October 2019, <www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/ScalingFences.html>, accessed 18 February 2021.

41. See Hovil, Lucy and Melissa Phillips, ‘Migrants and Refugees: What’s in a name?’, *Clingendael Spectator*, vol. 72, no. 4, 2018, Item 4 of 8, <https://spectator.clingendael.org/pub/2018/4/_pdf/CS-2018-4-hovil-phillips.pdf>, accessed 18 February 2021.

42. For a formal definition of ‘mixed migration’, see International Organization for Migration, *Glossary on Migration*, IOM, Geneva, 2019, <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf>, accessed 18 February 2021.

narrow, formal definition of trafficking. Categories and definitions, if applied in narrow ways, may therefore obscure the dynamic and fluid nature of migration from the perspective of migrants themselves and make it difficult to translate a more multidimensional understanding into policies, programmes and practice.

A better understanding of the character and complexity of risks, harms and vulnerabilities faced by children and young people who move in the Horn of Africa can be found in unpacking some of the ways in which they themselves understand their movement. The starting point is that children who move are children first, and refugees, asylum seekers, smuggled migrants or any other categorization second.⁴³ Those under 18 therefore benefit from the rights and protections that attach to them as children. At the international level, the cornerstone of these rights is the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which binds all states to respect and protect children's rights "irrespective of their nationality, migration status or statelessness."⁴⁴ The CRC says that governments should give primary consideration to the best interests of the child and ensure their rights to life, survival and development, while allowing children and young people to participate in decision-making that affects them. These commitments are further complemented by the additional rights frameworks all migrants are entitled to, regardless of their legal status (such as protection from non-refoulement), as well as the specific rights afforded to specific groups including refugees under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

Contextualizing the 'best interests' of the child

All the countries and regions covered by this research have ratified the CRC. Sudan and Ethiopia have also ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990),

which offers similar protections at the regional level. International agreements provide a robust basis for the protection of all migrant children. In particular, states are obligated to take a "clear and comprehensive assessment" of the child's age and identity, as well as "any particular vulnerabilities or protection needs they may have," and ultimately, to put these best interests ahead of any aims related to the limiting of irregular migration.⁴⁵

In practice, however, protections and assistance are often specific to, or restricted to, certain legal categories which can be problematic in practice.⁴⁶ There can also be disagreements over what is in the best interests of the child engaged in migration. In principle, voluntary returns have emerged as the preferred durable solution by the international displacement architecture. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for instance, presents the other options of resettlement/integration as alternatives "for those who *cannot* return". However, in practice, the choice of whether or not to move typically means balancing the vulnerabilities and threats at home against the risks as a result of moving or becoming stuck in unfamiliar places.

Children and young people themselves may differ in their views on the definition of their best interests, and therefore on decisions to return home. For instance, in this study, respondents largely reported feeling safer in their new environment relative to the homes they left. If the default assumption is that children are better off at home, and if such an assumption is not tested through implementation of a properly structured and supervised best interests determination process, more harm may be done to the child in the name of upholding their interests. Moreover, best interests determinations in the three countries of study were often reported to take place in an unstructured and informal way, which is not conducive to a deep understanding of countervailing factors.⁴⁷

43. Bhabha, Jacqueline, 'Introduction', in *Research Handbook on Child Migration*, edited by Jacqueline Bhabha, Jyothi Kanics and Daniel Senovilla Hernández, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, 2018, p. 3; and United Nations Children's Fund, *A Child is a Child: Protecting children on the move from violence, abuse and exploitation*, UNICEF, New York, May 2017, <<https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-child-protecting-children-move-violence-abuse-exploitation/>>, accessed 25 February 2021.

44. United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside their Country of Origin, CRC/GC/2005/6.

45. Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside their Country of Origin, CRC/GC/2005/6, para. 86.

46. Bhabha, Jacqueline, et al. *Children on the Move: An urgent human rights and child protection priority*, FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, Cambridge, MA, 2016, <<https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2464/2016/11/Oak-report2016.pdf>>, accessed 18 February 2021.

47. For more on this point, see accompanying country reports (see **footnote 9** on page 7).

Understanding how children and young people move and why

Migration, both globally and within the region, has encouraged a substantial body of literature but little of this has focused on children and young people.⁴⁸ Indeed, until the 1990s, neither policymakers nor scholars considered child migration as a category of study.⁴⁹ As a result, there is limited understanding on how children and young people experience migration and what they think about any mechanisms designed to protect them.⁵⁰ Their specific vulnerabilities and needs have remained largely hidden.⁵¹

More recently, however, there has been increased academic attention to child migration as a subject of study, corresponding to a rise in international, regional and domestic laws and policies focused on this growing global issue.⁵² As one commentator states, “age has become, if belatedly, a critical variable in the study of and engagement with migration, and ... migration history and status have become important facets impinging on the study and practice of children’s rights.”⁵³ Nevertheless, studies on migrant children and young people as a group are still limited. UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, for instance, carried out a qualitative study of children and young people moving in Somaliland in 2018–2019 which highlights the key challenges faced by this group but does not assess the extent of violations or consider the relative risks of various subgroups.⁵⁴

The research reported here therefore makes an important contribution to this small but essential literature on child-focused migration evidence, by offering a better understanding of how these different factors fit together.

Research objectives and key questions

This report summarizes the findings of three country studies in Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan on the experiences of child and youth migrants, and presents comparative top-line findings and recommendations drawn from these studies (see **Table 1**). While there are some local differences in patterns of migration, there are also striking similarities. All three countries are source, transit and destination countries for migration, and in all three most migrants stay in their home country.

Objectives of the study

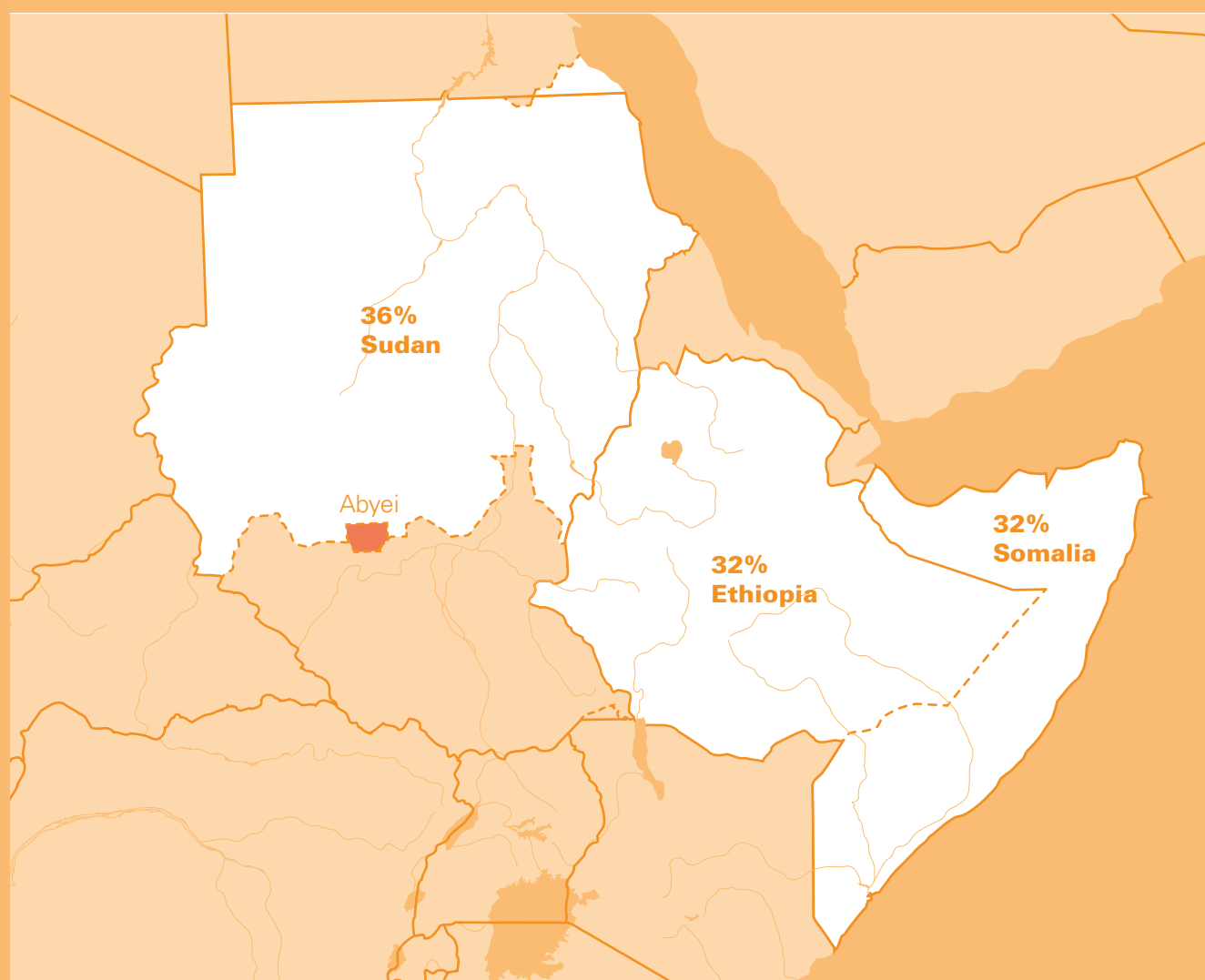
The primary objective of the study is to provide evidence to better understand the risks, harms and vulnerabilities of children and young people who move in the Horn of Africa – as well as their aspirations, resilience and coping strategies – and to produce insights to strengthen migration response, including those child protection systems and services relevant to migrant children and their families.

The primary audiences for this report are stakeholders working on policies and programmes

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48. For example, the Mixed Migration Centre’s 4mi only surveys adults and the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring Surveys (FMS) analyses (in International Organization for Migration, *Enabling a Better Understanding of Migration Flows (and its Root-Causes) from Ethiopia towards Europe*, Desk-Review Report, IOM, Geneva, April 2017, <https://displacement.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/Desk%20Review%20Report%20-%20ETHIOPIA%20-MinBuZa%20%2802%29_0.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=2168>) only survey those over 18; Ali, Nimo-Ilhan, *Going on Tahriib: The causes and consequences of Somali youth migration to Europe*, Rift Valley Institute Research Paper 5, Rift Valley Institute, London/Nairobi, 2016, <<https://riftvalley.net/sites/default/files/publication-documents/Going%20on%20Tahriib%20by%20Nimo-ilhan%20Ali%20-%20RV%20Rift%20Valley%20Forum%20Research%20Paper%205%20%282016%29.pdf>>, addresses the situation of both children and young people but relying only on qualitative data cannot provide age-disaggregated analysis. Turner, Jennifer and Bryan Burgess, *Overcoming Blind Spots: Making data work for children on the move*, AidData, Williamsburg, VA, May 2020, <http://docs.aiddata.org/ad4/pdfs/Overcoming_Blind_Spots_Policy_Brief.pdf>, accessed 18 February 2021.
49. Bhabha, Jacqueline, *Child Migration and Human Rights in a Global Age*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2014. See also Save the Children International/Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, *Young and on the Move*, 2016.
50. Bhabha, Jacqueline, ‘Introduction’, in *Research Handbook on Child Migration*, edited by Jacqueline Bhabha, Jyothi Kanics and Daniel Senovilla Hernández, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, 2018, p. 2
51. Bhabha, Jacqueline, *Child Migration and Human Rights in a Global Age*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2014. See also Save the Children International/Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, *Young and on the Move*, 2016.
52. Crock, Mary and Lenni Benson, ‘Central Issues in the Protection of Child Migrants’, in *Protecting Migrant Children: In search of best practice*, edited by Mary Crock and Lenni Benson, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, 2018, Sydney Law School Research Paper 18/65, p. 6, <<http://ssrn.com/abstract=3264953>>, accessed 18 February 2021.
53. Bhabha, Jacqueline, ‘Introduction’, in *Research Handbook on Child Migration*, edited by Jacqueline Bhabha, Jyothi Kanics and Daniel Senovilla Hernández, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, 2018, p. 1.
54. United Nations Children’s Fund, *“No Mother Wants her Child to Migrate”: Vulnerability of children on the move in the Horn of Africa*, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence, 2019, <www.unicef-irc.org/child-migration-hoa#sectionDownload>, accessed 18 February 2021; see also Save the Children International/Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, *Young and on the Move*, 2016.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by interview country and location

Base: 1,290 migrant children and young people, April 2019 to January 2020, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan



Note: The designations employed in this publication and the presentation of the material do not imply on the part of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) the expression of any opinion whatsoever concerning the legal status of any country or territory, or of its authorities or the delimitations of its frontiers.

The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. The final status of the Abyei area has not yet been determined.

Interview location

52% Urban area	35% Camp/settlement
	13% Border area



designed to support children and young people who move within the Horn of Africa. The methodological design and the insights drawn from listening to children and young people may have broader application to global discussions about the nature of migration in different contexts.

This research, therefore, places child protection within a broad understanding of children and young people’s experiences, encompassing exposure to physical harm and risks, emotional support and well-being, and access to a wide range of services and support. It necessitated a methodology that looked at children and young people’s experiences as a whole – considering their reasons for moving and their experiences while moving, assessing vulnerabilities as well as opportunities, including access to services and support. Ultimately, the intention was to ensure that the perspectives, views and ideas that children and young people have about migration should be reflected in both policy and programmatic responses to migration.

This report refers to children and young people’s ‘agency’ throughout. The term ‘agency’ is used here to refer specifically to children and young people’s belief that they have choices and are able to

express them in describing their migration journeys, including the extent to which the respondents felt they had a choice in moving initially, their evaluation of those who can help them or harm them, how they respond to risks and opportunities, and the amount of control they have over their next steps.

Finally, UNICEF is committed to ensuring that research and evidence-generation activities undertaken by the institution and its partners are ethically conducted, particularly for research involving children and young people. For this reason, research protocols addressing both ethics and protection were developed in line with UNICEF’s Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis⁵⁵ and UNICEF Innocenti’s ethical guidelines.⁵⁶ These protocols established concrete mechanisms and procedures to ensure that the research process was underpinned by key ethical principles and that the physical safety and emotional well-being of participants were promoted and safeguarded. These key principles included the need to respect the best interests of the child, the need to do no harm, the need to protect privacy, confidentiality and data security, and to ensure that informed consent or assent was obtained.⁵⁷

55. United Nations Children’s Fund, *UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis*, UNICEF, Geneva, 2015, <<https://www.unicef.org/media/54796/file>>, accessed 10 August 2020.

56. Graham, A., M. Powell, N. Taylor, D. Anderson and R. Fitzgerald, *Ethical Research Involving Children*, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence, 2013, <<https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/eric-compendium-approved-digital-web.pdf>>, accessed 10 August 2020.

57. Relevant ethics and protection protocols were developed and used throughout the research process in line with in-country requirements, UNICEF’s *Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis* and UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti’s ethical guidelines to ensure that the principles of ethical research (best interests, do no harm, privacy, confidentiality, data security) were adhered to and that all participants gave informed consent/assent. In addition to receiving ethical clearance both from an external Ethics Review Board, and by in-country review board (where existing), the UNICEF Country Offices obtained specific approvals from the relevant government counterparts.

Methodology: sampling and interviews

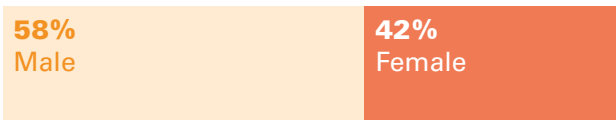
- In total there were 1,290 quantitative interviews and 224 qualitative interviews, gathered between May 2019 and January 2020. Just over 400 survey-based interviews were conducted in each of the three countries. An additional 224 qualitative interviews were also conducted across the three countries.⁵⁸
- In the quantitative survey, a standardized approach allowed for an objective and systematic measurement of the extent to which children and young people faced risks, harms and vulnerabilities, and offered reliable disaggregation opportunities – by gender, age, location and type of movement.
- This study did not try to classify the respondent as a refugee, asylum seeker, internally displaced person, irregular migrant or similar category. There were methodological and analytical reasons for this. Interviewers were wary of asking respondents about their legal status as this might have affected their answers. It was more important to reassure respondents that we sought their honest opinions and that there were no right or wrong answers, and the interviewers had not been trained to accurately assess the respondents' legal status beyond their nationality. Nevertheless, these categories are widely used in the migration literature and in policy documents, and in order to ensure that the study covered different forms of movement in each country, the research was undertaken in multiple locations. These included internally displaced person and refugee camps, as well as urban areas and border areas.⁵⁹ These sites were chosen to reflect the diversity of movement within and from the region. The respondents were found through a variety of means, including through the networks of the implementing partners, through 'snowballing'⁶⁰

and referrals, and through random approaches to potential respondents in locations known to have a high proportion of migrants.

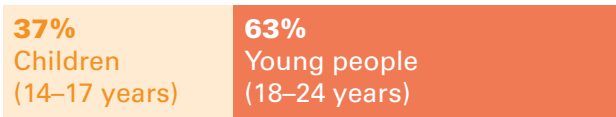
Table 2a: Profile of respondents (survey)

Base: 1,290 migrant children and young people, April 2019 to January 2020, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan

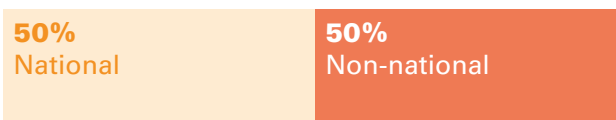
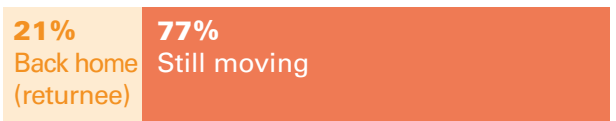
Gender



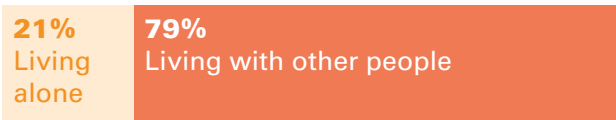
Age



Migration type



Living alone



58. These included 83 in Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland, 85 in Ethiopia, and 56 in Sudan.

59. This approach reflects the diversity of children on the move in the definition agreed upon by the Inter-Agency Global Migration Group: "Children who are migrating within their own country or across borders; children migrating on their own or with their caretakers; children forcibly displaced within their own country and across borders; and children moving in a documented or undocumented manner, including those whose movement involves smuggling or trafficking networks." Cited in United Nations Children's Fund, *Global Programme Framework on Children on the Move*, UNICEF, Geneva, 2017, <www.unicef.org/media/62986/file>, accessed 22 February 2021. It also resonates with the International Organization for Migration definition, which defines migrants as: "An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons"; IOM website, 'Who is a migrant?', <www.iom.int/who-is-a-migrant>, accessed 22 February 2021.

60. Snowball sampling is a sampling method applied when it is difficult to access subjects with the target characteristics. In this method, the existing study subjects recruit future subjects among their acquaintances. See Naderifar, Mahin, Hamideh Goli and Fereshteh Ghaljaie, 'Snowball sampling: A purposeful method of sampling in qualitative research', *Strides in Development of Medical Education*, vol. 14, no. 3, e67670, 2017.

- Given the sensitivities of studying this particular population of children and young people engaged in migration, utmost care was taken to ensure strict compliance with ethical guidelines for safe and responsible research. For a fuller description of ethical protocols, see the **Methodology Appendix** on page 68.
- In this context it is important to note that the questions did not specifically ask about experience of sexual and gender-based violence, such as female genital mutilation (FGM) or sexual violence. A survey-based interview method, designed to touch upon broader migration-related issues, is not an appropriate way to raise or explore these specific and more sensitive types of harm, and as such would have posed ethical challenges not commensurate with UNICEF’s ‘do no harm’ approach to evidence generation within the context of this particular study. Prompting respondents about very traumatic incidents in a quantitative-style survey would run the risk of retraumatizing some respondents where the enumerators were not trained to deal with such situations and would also likely impact on the quality of the data collected. Therefore, it was decided that specific mention of these types of harm would not be included as prompted questions, although opportunity to talk about these issues was given in the qualitative research.
- *Age groups* – Migrants aged between 14 and 17 are classified as children and those aged between 18 and 24 as young people.^{61,62} The majority of respondents reached in the survey – 63 per cent – belong to the latter category.
- *Gender* – The study disaggregates findings by gender, and significant gender differences for key indicators are highlighted throughout the report, although where there was not significant difference in the numbers, the disaggregation is not specifically mentioned. Of the total quantitative interviewees, 58 per cent were male and 42 per cent were female.

Box 1: International initiatives on child migration

International initiatives on child migration have emphasized certain key areas: non-discrimination and integration; the best interests of the child; children and young people’s access to services; ending child immigration detention; durable solutions; and child protection. These priorities were reflected in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which was adopted at the high-level Summit for Refugees and Migrants in September 2016 and further reinforced in the two Global Compacts on Refugees and Migrants.

In 2016, UNICEF outlined six policy elements to improve the lives of child migrants, including refugees and internally displaced persons:⁶³

- the protection of children and young people from exploitation and violence;
- ending child immigration detention;
- promoting family unity and birth registration;
- access to education and health;
- the need for action on the underlying causes of large-scale movements;
- measures to combat xenophobia, discrimination and marginalization in countries of transit and destination.⁶⁴

The study included children and young people who had moved from their habitual residence or had previously moved and returned within the last 12 months. Data for this group were further disaggregated by the following categories:

61. The qualitative research included interviews with those aged 10–14. See below.

62. As outlined in more detail in the **Methodology Appendix**, this age range was agreed as it was considered that the quantitative methodology and the type of questions were not appropriate for children younger than 14. The inclusion of respondents defined as young people provided additional perspectives, as it incorporates those who began to move when they were children and allows for useful comparisons between different age categories. In addition, a number of qualitative interviews were conducted with 10–14-year-olds.

63. United Nations Children’s Fund, *Global Programme Framework on Children on the Move*, UNICEF, Geneva, 2017, <www.unicef.org/media/62986/file>, accessed 18 February 2021.

64. They also find expression in the principles for the treatment of migrant children enshrined in the more recent Joint General Comments issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on Migrant Workers. The two General Comments are available at: <www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22408&LangID=E>, accessed 22 February 2021.

- *Locations* – These included camps, and urban and border areas, in Ethiopia, Somalia (Somaliland and Puntland) and Sudan.⁶⁵

Table 2a on page 19 shows the profile of the children and young people who were interviewed in the quantitative part of the study. The first part of the table provides a disaggregation of the overall profile by four key variables that are used throughout the report to analyse the survey findings. These are gender, age, migration type and whether the respondent was living alone.⁶⁶

Several other key variables are also shown in **Table 2b** on page 22 to illustrate the range and breadth of those interviewed. Where appropriate, key results are analysed by some of these additional variables in the relevant sections of the report.

Complementing the quantitative survey, there was a qualitative component through in-depth interviews with a smaller number of children and young people. These interviews gave more detail on individual life stories exploring sensitive issues. To gain additional insights, qualitative interviews were also conducted with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government officials, families and community members. The following chapters of this report summarize the results of this research, starting with why children and young people have moved and the choices they faced.

Box 2: Ethiopia case study

A group of approximately 200 children were living in drainage pipes in Wajale on the border between Ethiopia and Somaliland. A 15-year-old boy explained how he came to be living there:

“My parents died when I was young, and then my grandmother who looked after me died when I was 12. I moved to Dire Dawa, the nearest city to my home, and did menial jobs. I then decided to move to Djibouti where some friends told me there were better opportunities.

“I used all the money I had saved from working to pay a woman to pretend I was her son when we crossed the borders. But I could not find a job in Djibouti and was living on the streets, so I moved to Hargeisa. But I was arrested and beaten by the police because I was using drugs, and I was deported to Tog Wajale and now I’m here ... I recently went to a health clinic when I got into a fight with a friend who cut my face with a razor blade. But otherwise I don’t use any services.

“I live in one of the drainage pipes on the border. We inhale glue every day because we have no hope for our future. The community here see us as worthless, as the scum of the earth. They do not want to see us around, and they would be happy if we disappear from the area. The police and local militias beat us and physically abuse us on a daily basis without us doing anything wrong ...

“I pray every day for someone who would be willing to extricate me from this desperate and meaningless life. I want to go to school like other children, living with their parents. If not, I will go back to Djibouti. Going there would at least give me time to rest and stop abusing drugs because there are no drugs like these in Djibouti.”

– Interview with Ethiopian male, aged 15, Wajale, Somali region, Ethiopia, September 2019

65. Additional analysis of border crossings was complemented by further supplemental data collected in Egypt.

66. Percentages in following tables do not add up to 100 per cent in all instances, due to multiple answers, computer rounding or the exclusion of don’t know/refused answers.

Table 2b: Profile of respondents (survey)

Base: 1,290 migrant children and young people, April 2019 to January 2020, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan

Nationality

44% Ethiopian	21% Somali**	
	10% Sudanese	5% South Sudanese
14% Eritrean	4% Yemeni	
	1% Congolese	<1% Djiboutian
		<1% Saudi Arabia

22

Educational achievement*

56% Primary***	29% Secondary or higher	12% None
	3% Madrasa/church school	

* 'Education' includes the highest level of education achieved and does not distinguish between formal/informal forms of education or location (origin, in transit, destination, etc.) where education was achieved.

** 'Somali' includes those who described their nationality as being from 'Puntland', 'Somaliland' and/or 'Somalia'. (This category does not include Ethiopian-Somalis but does include Somali migrants interviewed in Ethiopia.)

*** Includes 3 per cent who said "preparatory".

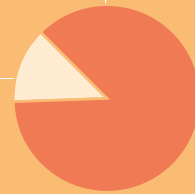
UNICEF/2019/Iolanda Genovese



Marital status

87%
Single

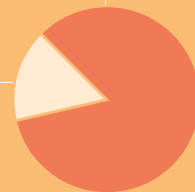
13%
Married



Have own children

84%
None

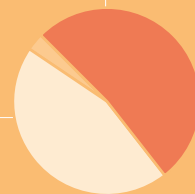
16%
One or more



Intention in next six months

52%
Move somewhere else

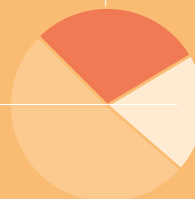
45%
Stay in current location



Documentation

29%
Have national ID

20%
Have a birth certificate



Children who reported not having an adult to care for them****

29%
Yes



**** This is based on those aged 14–17 and self-identification of whether or not an adult was responsible for their care.

CHAPTER 2

DECIDING TO MOVE

Children and young people move for a mixture of reasons. Some move primarily for economic purposes, others are concerned about their safety and security, and many are motivated by a combination of factors. Regardless of motivation, however, children and young people are not passive participants in their migration experiences. They make their own choices, as part of negotiated decision-making processes along their journeys.

For this research, children and young people explained why and how they moved. Forty per cent of children and young people described the primary reason for leaving their home area as economic hardship, loss of jobs and poverty. Economic factors were particularly reported for those living alone and for those who themselves had chosen to move.

Around a quarter of respondents, and roughly half of those living in a refugee or internally displaced person camp, cited security as their primary reason for moving. Gender differences among respondents were minor – approximately 24 per cent of boys and young men indicated moving for security reasons, compared with 29 per cent of girls and young women.

Families may encourage children and young people to move away for their safety. A 24-year-old Yemeni man said:

“Sometimes the parents compel us to leave, for fear that we will be conscripted into the armed fighting.”

– Interview with Yemeni refugee, aged 24, Bossaso, Somalia, May 2019

Likewise, children and young people living in Eritrea are often encouraged by their families to move in order to avoid national service. Given the uncertainty and precarious nature of their lives, they may consider that staying at home presents similar risks but, despite the dangers, migrating does at least offer hope.⁶⁷ And of course in some cases, the whole family may flee, particularly from armed conflict.

For those who left home for security reasons, forced recruitment is a major fear. This was

reflected in interviews in Somalia with refugees from Yemen. As one refugee put it:

“For people at my age, there is no going back to Yemen, since we are targeted. They force us to join the army. Those who refuse are shot on the spot. That is what forces boys of my age to escape Yemen.”

– Interview with Yemeni refugee, aged 24, Bossaso, Somalia, May 2019

There were also reports of militia groups blocking young men from leaving Yemen in order to forcibly recruit them.⁶⁸

Similarly, refugees from Eritrea in Ethiopia mentioned the issue of long-term national service which, apart from the risks, deprives their families of the main income earners. As one young man said:

“Having seen colleagues arrested and taken to prison, when I reached the age for national service I escaped and came here.”

– Interview with Eritrean male returnee, aged 24, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, September 2019

In some cases, this fear of recruitment combines with economic concerns. Another young Eritrean man said:

“I left there when I was 13 years old. I had no prospects, and I didn’t want to get sent to military service.”

– Interview with Eritrean student, aged 17, Khartoum, Sudan, November 2019

But it is important to emphasize that most children and young people had mixed motives for moving:

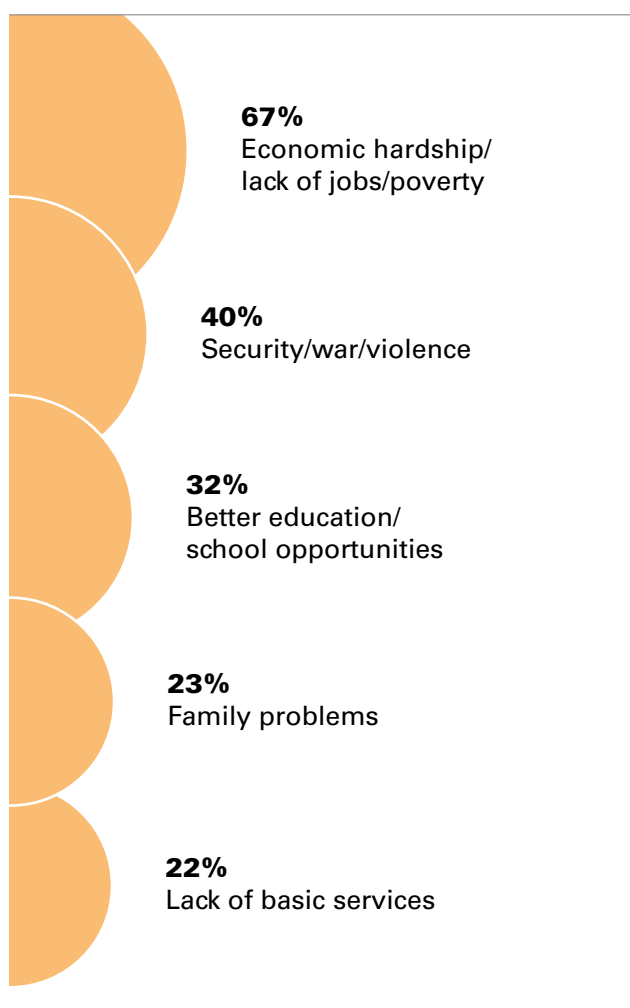
67. Interview with Eritrean man, community representative, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, September 2019.

68. Interview with key informant, Berbera, Somalia, April 2019.

three quarters of respondents moved for multiple reasons. To capture this complexity in a systematic way, the researchers read out to respondents a list of 16 possible reasons and asked whether any reason applied to them. These findings were then combined with those who had identified a primary reason for moving. **Figure 1** illustrates the results, showing the top five reasons for moving – indicating the extent to which children and young people are driven not just by poverty and insecurity and the lack of basic services but also by family problems and the hope of better education.

Figure 1: Top five reasons for moving from home area, percentage of respondents

Base: 1,290 migrant children and young people, 14–24-year-olds, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan



Note: This combines single and 'other' reasons for moving.

In the case of those who left for security concerns, 26 per cent of respondents said this was their primary reason, but an additional 40 per cent said that it was one of their motivations for moving. For those who left for security reasons, around half also said that economics played a part. Indeed, of those who left for economic reasons, only around one fifth said that this was their only reason for moving.

In terms of economic motivations, respondents moved in order to help their families financially. For example, a 14-year-old Ethiopian girl said that she had moved to a nearby town to repay her mother's debt so that she would not lose her house.⁶⁹ A young woman who returned to Ethiopia after migrating to Saudi Arabia told of how she used migration to support her family.⁷⁰

In some cases, this movement is seasonal: children and young people may go to urban areas or across nearby borders during school holidays or during non-productive seasons to diversify household livelihoods and return home for the agricultural production season.⁷¹ In others, the choice to migrate is longer term. Either way, economic migration is deeply embedded within families and communities as a key coping strategy.

The family as a factor and motivator in child and youth migration

In Ethiopia, girls spoke of how they were actively encouraged by their families to migrate in search of work and had felt the pressure to do so. Those who spoke about economic reasons for moving talked about the lack of livelihoods and opportunities and sometimes the pressures of supporting families. As a young Somali girl who had returned said:

“... there was nothing good about life here, so I decided to go outside.”

– Interview with female Somali returnee, aged 20, Borama, Somaliland, April 2019

69. Interview with Ethiopian girl, aged 14, Mekelle, Tigray, Ethiopia, August 2019.

70. Interview with Ethiopian woman, aged 18, Hosanna Town, SNNPR, Ethiopia, August 2019.

71. Interview with Head, public prosecutor office of Hosanna Town Administration, Hosanna Town, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (SNNPR), Ethiopia, September 2019.

Others focused on family needs. An Ethiopian girl who had emigrated to Saudi Arabia and returned said:

“I moved first to Addis to support my poor parents, my younger sisters and brothers. My father’s income was not enough to meet the family’s basic needs, and I was the oldest sibling ... But in Addis the wage I earned was not enough to provide for my needs and support my parents, so I decided to migrate to Saudi Arabia.”

– Interview with Ethiopian female, aged 18, Hosanna Town, SNNPR, Ethiopia, August 2019

Moreover, despite the heartbreak of separation and the risk involved, some parents encourage their children to leave due to protection concerns. This was confirmed in an interview with an Eritrean community leader in Ethiopia:

“Rather than watching their children tortured and jailed, [parents] prefer to send them out.”

– Interview with Eritrean male, community representative, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, September 2019

The motives for migration also include family issues, including violence. A 15-year-old boy living on the streets in Addis Ababa described how his stepmother used to refuse him food:

“She also told my father that I am naughty, so my father used to punish me. That was the reason I left my home ... and became a street boy.”

– Interview with Ethiopian boy, aged 15, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, September 2019

Likewise, a 10-year-old boy described how his mother mistreated him:

“She punished me severely when I went to fetch water as I usually took some time to play before taking the water to her.”

– Interview with Ethiopian boy, aged 10, Shashemene, Oromia, Ethiopia, September 2019

In some cases, family problems were linked to broader insecurity. For example, in Sudan an internally displaced person from Darfur said:

“I went out of the house due to family problems and the death of my father, [and] my older brother was stabbed.”

– Interview with Sudanese boy, aged 17, Khartoum, January 2020

Not surprisingly, family dynamics impact boys and girls differently. Families in the region often want girls to remain within the home. For example, in Somalia this had led some to migrate. Several interviewees said increasing numbers of girls wanted to migrate because they felt neglected and stigmatized by cultural practices that favour boys and men. It is also important to note that a significant proportion of respondents – 16 per cent (all female) – have children of their own, and 13 per cent were married at the time of their migration. This raises additional questions regarding early marriage as a strategy used by girls and their families to secure male protection in the course of migration.

Others emphasized that migration provided opportunities. Education was often mentioned as a reason for moving. As a young Ethiopian man said:

“I moved because I wanted to gain some money to finish my education.”

– Interview with Ethiopian male, aged 20, Lugdi, Sudan, December 2019

Or as an Eritrean girl said:

“We came here [to Sudan] to complete our studies, because we had heard that we can get books and even meals so that we can go to school.”

– Interview with Eritrean girl, aged 17, Shagarab refugee camp, Sudan, December 2019

These reflections – drawn from children and young people’s own recounting of their lived experiences and explored in further detail in each of the three country reports – suggest that it is a mistake to

provide protection or support to migrants based solely on why they moved. If people move for multiple reasons, it follows that they should be supported and protected in multiple ways.

Making difficult choices

Children and young people may migrate as a result of structural factors beyond their control. But it would be a mistake to assume that they are passive victims of circumstance.⁷² Many believe they have a choice in their migration decisions – that they have ‘agency’.

Three quarters of respondents reported having moved of their own volition. This was the case even for those who can be assumed to have been forced to leave, such as Yemeni migrants in the Horn of Africa escaping the civil war. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that a quarter of all respondents said that leaving was not their choice. These children noted that they did not wish to leave in the first place, but were forced out of their homes by violence, by political oppression or by families pushing them to migrate.

Respondents tended to feel they had the least choice when their primary motivation for movement was a lack of security. Here, only around half felt they had any choice in their decisions – although this is still a significant percentage. Even among those who travelled with their family, around three fifths also said it was their choice to leave. Most of those who used smugglers reported having little trust in the information provided by smugglers, and felt they needed to make their own assessments of what smugglers could or could not do.

Children and young people are also fleeing abuse at home. A young woman in Hargeisa in Somaliland, for example, said:

“I was scared to return home, because I knew that my brother would beat me severely and accuse me because I had stayed out so late.”

– Interview with young female returnee, aged 19, Hargeisa, Somaliland, March 2019

Rather than going home, she stayed overnight with a friend and left her hometown the next day.

Regardless of the initial impetus, a majority of young migrants reported feeling more in charge of their own destinies since embarking on their migratory journey. Almost all said it would be their choice either to stay or to leave the area where they are currently based. This suggests that the process of movement can play a role in enhancing their sense of agency, as defined in this report.

As one 15-year-old girl who had previously moved away from her home said:

“I am planning to try to emigrate again, as I don’t have opportunities here. I know that it is dangerous, and I am scared, but I don’t have anything here and no reason to stay.”

– Interview with female returnee, aged 15, Hargeisa, Somaliland, April 2019

A young woman put it even more starkly:

“In my community, the dead corpse of a migrant is more respected than a poor person at home. So, although I know that illegal migration is surrounded by challenges, risk and death, it is better to die on the move than wait for death at home.”

– Interview with Ethiopian returnee, aged 18, Hosanna Town, SNNPR, Ethiopia, August 2019

Information sources about dangers and realities of the journey

Across the three countries, children and young people had access to multiple sources of information about the dangers involved in the journey before they moved or started their journeys. The level of trust in the information received varied depending on the source, with family members and friends being the most trusted, followed by community members. A significant proportion of children and young people trusted no one to give them reliable information and even fewer trusted smugglers or

72. Thompson, Amy, Rebecca Maria Torres, Kate Swanson, Sarah A. Blue and Óscar Misael Hernández, ‘Re-conceptualising agency in migrant children from Central America and Mexico’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2019, pp. 235–252.

“travel agents”. In Somalia, less than 1 per cent of those surveyed trusted government officials to provide them with reliable information. Often this was linked to perceiving that the information was being provided to deter migration. As one young woman put it:

“I had heard about some people drowning in the sea and I heard about people being ransomed but I didn’t believe that it was true. I thought that those people were just saying those things because they wanted us to stay in the country.”

– Interview with young female returnee, aged 21, Hargeisa, Somaliland, April 2019

Many understood that the information they receive might not be reliable or fully accurate, as this 18-year-old Ethiopian returnee explained:

“I trusted the *delala* [smuggler], but he was providing only positive information.”

– Interview with Ethiopian young man, aged 18, Amhara region, Ethiopia, August 2019

Others said that, even where they received useful advice about the dangers of the journey, this was not sufficient to stop them from moving:

“My teacher told me many things about dangers of migration and I trust him. But I have no choice other than migrating.”

– Interview with Ethiopian man, aged 19, Amhara region, Ethiopia, August 2019

“Media/TV, but for me it was better to die or be abused in another country rather than in mine by people speaking my language.”

– Interview with Ethiopian man, aged 24, Amhara region, Ethiopia, September 2019

Considerable effort has been put into creating awareness of the dangers and risks of irregular migration. However, these messages have often failed to override both peer group support for migration and the context in which people made the decision to move. Narratives of successful journeys to Europe play a strong role in the popular imagination around migration for young people.



Despite the many warnings of danger, the success stories that filter through are a key driver for others to leave. Bound up in this is the extent to which peer influence plays a dominant role in children and young people’s decision-making. As a community representative put it:

“[Children and young people] simply tell each other to move. Friends and schoolmates communicate with each other. Often, they don’t tell their family. They talk to each other, plan, meet at a secret rendezvous and leave unnoticed.”

– Interview with Eritrean man, community representative, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, September 2019

Another interviewee said:

“They ask for help from their Facebook friends. Through Facebook, they get friends here on purpose and then those friends host them here temporarily.”

– Interview with community representative, Harawa, Somali region, Ethiopia, May 2019

One interviewee estimated that one in five households in the Somali region of Ethiopia have seen at least one member of their family attempt to migrate to Europe.⁷³

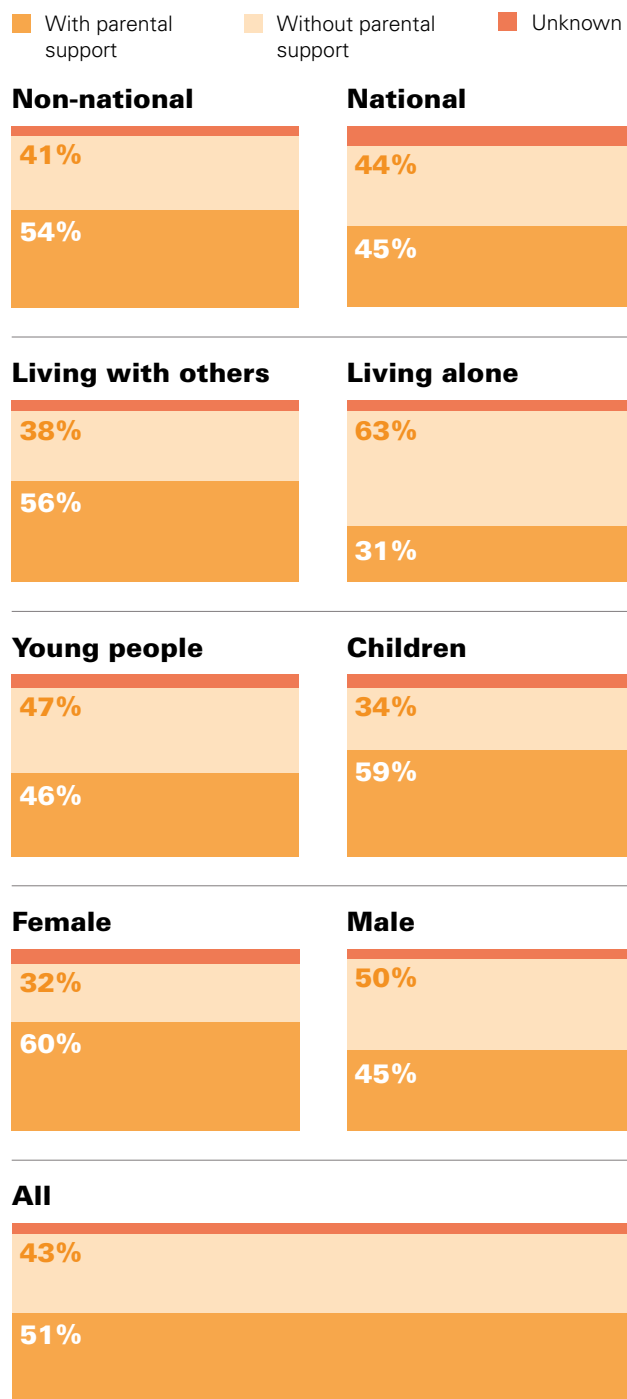
A number of those interviewed in the qualitative research appeared to have limited access to information before their journeys. A girl described relying on information acquired more or less incidentally from her grandmother:

“Before when we used to go to the farm with our grandmother, she used to tell us that this was the way to Sudan. She was just chatting with us, but we remembered when we wanted to go to join our mother.”

– Interview with Eritrean girl, aged 15, Shagarab refugee camp, Sudan, December 2019

Figure 2: Children and young people leaving with and without parental support*

Base: 1,290 migrant children and young people, 14–24-year-olds, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan



*‘Without parental support’ combines answers from respondents who explained that they either did not tell their parents, or that their parents opposed their decision. The label ‘unknown’ is a combination of those who said their parents were split in terms of support or the respondents did not know their parents’ views or did not answer.

73. Interview with Woreda Chief, Somali region, Ethiopia, May 2019.

Others referred to getting information from friends:

“I knew the road from my colleague (a friend of my friend) who went to Sudan on this road and later made it to Europe.”

– Interview with Eritrean boy, aged 17, Shagarab refugee camp, Sudan, December 2019

At the same time, it is also clear that migration is encouraged by many families, despite the dangers. As one interviewee said:

“The families are the ones promoting unsafe migration. Around here there is a saying, ‘either plant an apple tree or send your child to an Arab country’”

– Interview with youth mobilization expert, Youth and Sport Bureau, Tigray, Ethiopia, August 2019

While many children and young people are taking their own decision to move, in other cases families are actively encouraging or even coercing their children into migrating.⁷⁴

Planning the journey

Some children and young people travel with their parents, or at least with their encouragement and support. Others make their own plans and travel alone, even against their parents’ wishes or without their knowledge. In these difficult decisions, children and young people have to weigh up who to trust. Frequently, they have little confidence in public authorities.

Of the children and young people interviewed in this survey, eight respondents out of ten had some help in planning their journey. For around

half, the main source of help was their parents. But they also looked beyond their own households to friends, for example, or to smugglers. A number of interviewees said they did not inform their families about their plans because they expected their parents to oppose the decision.⁷⁵

As well as having concerns for their children’s safety, parents are likely to be afraid that they will subsequently be faced with ransom demands from smugglers if children cannot pay their way. A man described how he had to start begging on the streets to raise the money to have his son released in Libya:

“... it makes you ashamed in your community.”

– Interview with Ethiopian man, Jijiga, Somali region, Ethiopia, September 2019

Another interviewee had gone heavily into debt to everyone in his village in order to pay a ransom sum, and unless his son makes it to Europe and sends back significant sums of money, he will be destitute.⁷⁶ Others described families selling their camels, other livestock, houses, land and any other assets they have.

Overall, in the three-country survey, just over half of respondents had parental support to leave (see **Figure 2**). Those who left without such support are more likely to be young people (aged 18–24), to be male and to be currently living alone.

The second most likely group to help children and young people plan their journey were friends – who supported around one third of respondents. Friends were twice as likely to have helped those who had moved primarily for economic rather than security reasons. In some communities, children and young people have a culture of migration fed by stories from friends abroad who appear to have found success.⁷⁷

74. Zewdu, G. A., ‘Ethiopian female domestic labour migration to the Middle East: Patterns, trends, and drivers’, *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2018, pp. 6–19.

75. In an earlier study conducted by UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, interviews with Somali children and young people provided deeper insights into family involvement in decision-making. A young female returnee in Hargeisa, interviewed in July 2018, had then explained: “If my family knew that I was migrating, they would have stopped me or done anything in their power to keep me.” United Nations Children’s Fund, “No Mother Wants her Child to Migrate”: *Vulnerability of children on the move in the Horn of Africa*, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence, 2019, <www.unicef-irc.org/child-migration-hoa#sectionDownload>, accessed 24 February 2020.

76. Interview with Somali man, Jijiga, Somali region, Ethiopia, September 2019.

77. United Nations Children’s Fund, “No Mother Wants her Child to Migrate”: *Vulnerability of children on the move in the Horn of Africa*, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence, 2019, <www.unicef-irc.org/child-migration-hoa#sectionDownload>, accessed 18 February 2021.

In the past, the cost of embarking on a long migration journey would have dissuaded most children and young people – except those from wealthier families and those who had strong connections in the diaspora. Increasingly, however, ‘travel now, pay later’ schemes have made it possible for more people to set off on their journey without financial support from their parents. Those who planned their journeys on their own were more likely to be boys than girls and those who had moved for economic reasons.

Accessing support

Respondents were asked who was most likely to help or harm them. The results are shown in **Figure 3**. Understandably, the most trusted were family and friends. Children and young people were also likely to have confidence in religious leaders, their teachers and international charities (under which respondents included NGOs, community-based organizations and United Nations organizations). But they had far less trust in government officials and the police – who were also thought the most likely to cause them harm.⁷⁸ Views were similar by gender, although slightly more girls than boys had confidence in government officials (a difference of 9 percentage points) and the police (10 percentage points).

Government officials may also use violence against children and young people. As one social worker said:

“In addition to holding them against their will, they also sometimes treat them badly. So, they come with a bad feeling from the beginning.”

– Interview with social worker, Khartoum, Sudan, January 2020

Box 3: Somalia case study

A young Somali woman told her story:

“There was nothing good about my life before I left. I had no education. I couldn’t afford to get anything, and I had nothing to do. And if you don’t have an education you don’t have a future. So, I left because I wanted to change my life and that of my family, I wanted to reach anywhere in Europe. I was 16 when I left.

“The smuggler took us and said that he would take care of us all the way up to Libya. He promised that he would take care of and simplify everything and that when you get there you will ask for money and when the money comes you will go. But then they cheated us very badly. We were beaten and they asked us to call our families. They asked us for US\$500. My family took two months to collect the money, and then my father came and took me back and he asked me, ‘Why did you do this?’ He had to ask my uncles for the money.

“A few months later I tried to go to Djibouti. I went there with a family and got a job. I heard that there were people who could take you from there to Saudi Arabia. The smugglers charged me 60,000 Djiboutian francs (US\$337) to take me to Saudi Arabia in a boat. I had been in Djibouti almost one year and I worked and saved so that I could pay to go. When you’re on the boat it is so scary, but we were safe.

“When we got to Saudi Arabia, we didn’t have money for food, and we were hiding. I got injured when we were running away from the police, but the smuggler showed us the way to a hiding place, which was like an office. They give us a very small [amount of] food. Through the whole time we had very little food and no health care. Eventually the government found us, and the police came. When they came the smuggler ran away, but the police beat us up and sent us back to Djibouti.

“When I got to Djibouti, I called my parents and they asked me to come back. I came back because I realized that I couldn’t reach my goal. My family blames me for this.”

– Interview with young Somali woman, aged 20, Borama, Somaliland, April 2019

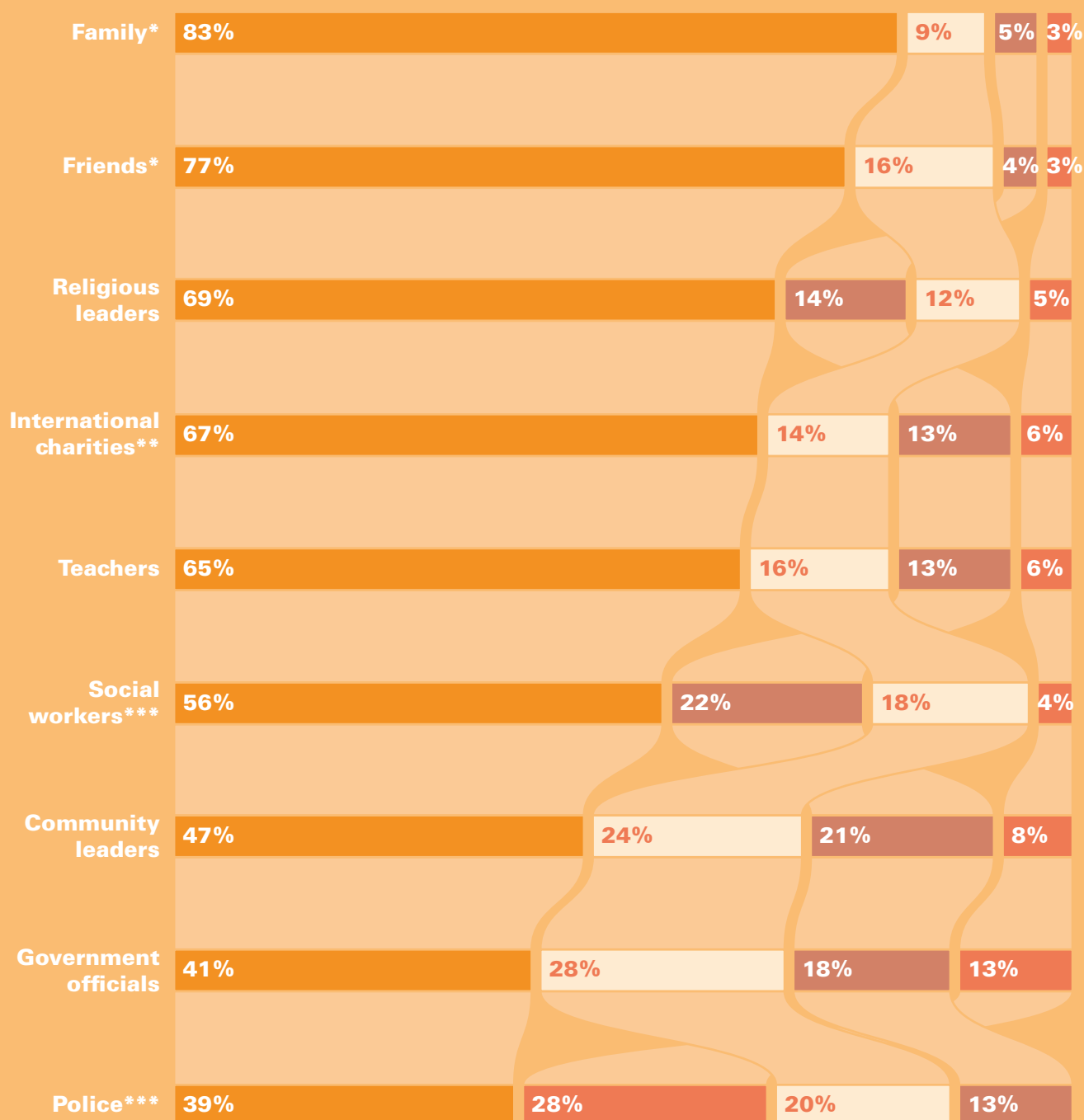
78. Although police and social workers may be considered government officials, in this research these indicators referring to each actor-type were assessed separately for precision.

Figure 3: Who is likely to help?

Base: 1,290 migrant children and young people, April 2019 to January 2020, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan

Q) Do you think these types of people and organizations would generally help someone like you or harm someone like you?*

■ Help
 ■ Depends
 ■ Harm
 ■ Don't know



* Family and friends asked in Ethiopia and Sudan only (N=872).

** To ensure child-friendly language, United Nations agencies were included in the label 'international charities'.

*** Although police and social workers may be considered government officials, in this research these indicators referring to each actor-type were assessed separately for precision.



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Others talked of how they felt let down by those in official positions as they had not met their expectations. A Yemeni refugee put it:

“Refugees here have no rights – no health, no education.”

– Interview with Yemeni refugee male, aged 22, Borama, Somaliland, April 2019

Or as an Ethiopian woman said:

“No one helps us besides the family.”

– Interview with Ethiopian woman, aged 21, Borama, Somaliland, April 2019

It is striking that few respondents said that they would turn for protection to the police or other authorities. This is understandable from their accounts of their experience. A 15-year-old Somali girl told of how she was arrested and detained at the request of her mother to punish her for trying to migrate. As a result, she had lost her trust in the police.⁷⁹ Another young woman talked of how she was beaten by the police:

“When they came, the smuggler ran away but the police beat us up and sent us back to Djibouti.”

– Interview with Somali woman, aged 19, Borama, Somaliland, April 2020

79. Interview with Somali girl, aged 15, Hargeisa, Somaliland, April 2020.



UNICEF/2019/IolandaGenovese

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In Sudan, a number of Eritreans interviewed talked about their fear of harassment by authorities for not having the right documentation.

Lacking protection from the authorities, many children and young people have built up their own networks of support. In Addis Ababa, for example, they have established relationships with multiple individuals, including market stall holders, café owners and hotel staff, in order to get leftover food and other benefits and to find spaces to sleep where they can stay out of the way of the authorities.⁸⁰

In the next chapter, the report considers the implications of these findings for strengthening appropriate and accessible services and support for children and young people who move.

80. The country reports contain more detail on unofficial networks of support in each country, including perspectives from government and civil society.

CHAPTER 3

RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Children and young people who migrate may face dangers from many directions during transit, from traffickers, to local authorities, and even wild animals. Their new locations may also be hazardous but most of those interviewed said they feel safer having moved there.

In all three countries, respondents were asked about any risks and harms that they might have experienced while living in their current location. They were shown a list of 11 possible harms, which included feeling scared, physical harm, detention, being forced to work, being forced to join armed groups and carrying a weapon for personal defence.⁸¹

Overall, just over half of respondents had experienced one or more of the types of risk or harm covered in the survey. The most common was feeling scared of other people followed by being physically hurt by someone they did not know, being scared of wild animals or being physically hurt by someone they did know (see **Figure 4** on page 38). While serious, these experiences are not all equivalent, and the impact and actual harm will vary considerably. Being physically hurt or experiencing trauma over a period of time, in particular, can have more severe physical and mental consequences.

The nature of the dangers became evident during the qualitative interviews. A young man who tried to reach South Africa, for example, described how he frequently saw dead bodies of migrants during his journey. He added:

“The memory still hurts me. I will never forget what I have experienced in my journey ... There is no one to protect you there. But whenever we faced any challenges, we tried to help each other ... Words are inadequate to explain how much I was sad and lonely.”

– Interview with Ethiopian man, aged 18, Hosanna Town, SNNPR, Ethiopia, August 2019

He used all his family’s resources to travel and has now returned to Ethiopia with no money. He is living alone in the town, too ashamed to go back to his home in the village.

An interviewee who had returned from Libya said:

“I need to take pills to sleep, but what hurts me is that I miss the love of my father – he didn’t accept me back at home because he cannot provide for me and I don’t have resources to provide for myself, let alone my family.”

– Interview with Ethiopian male returnee, aged 24, Amhara region, Ethiopia, September 2019



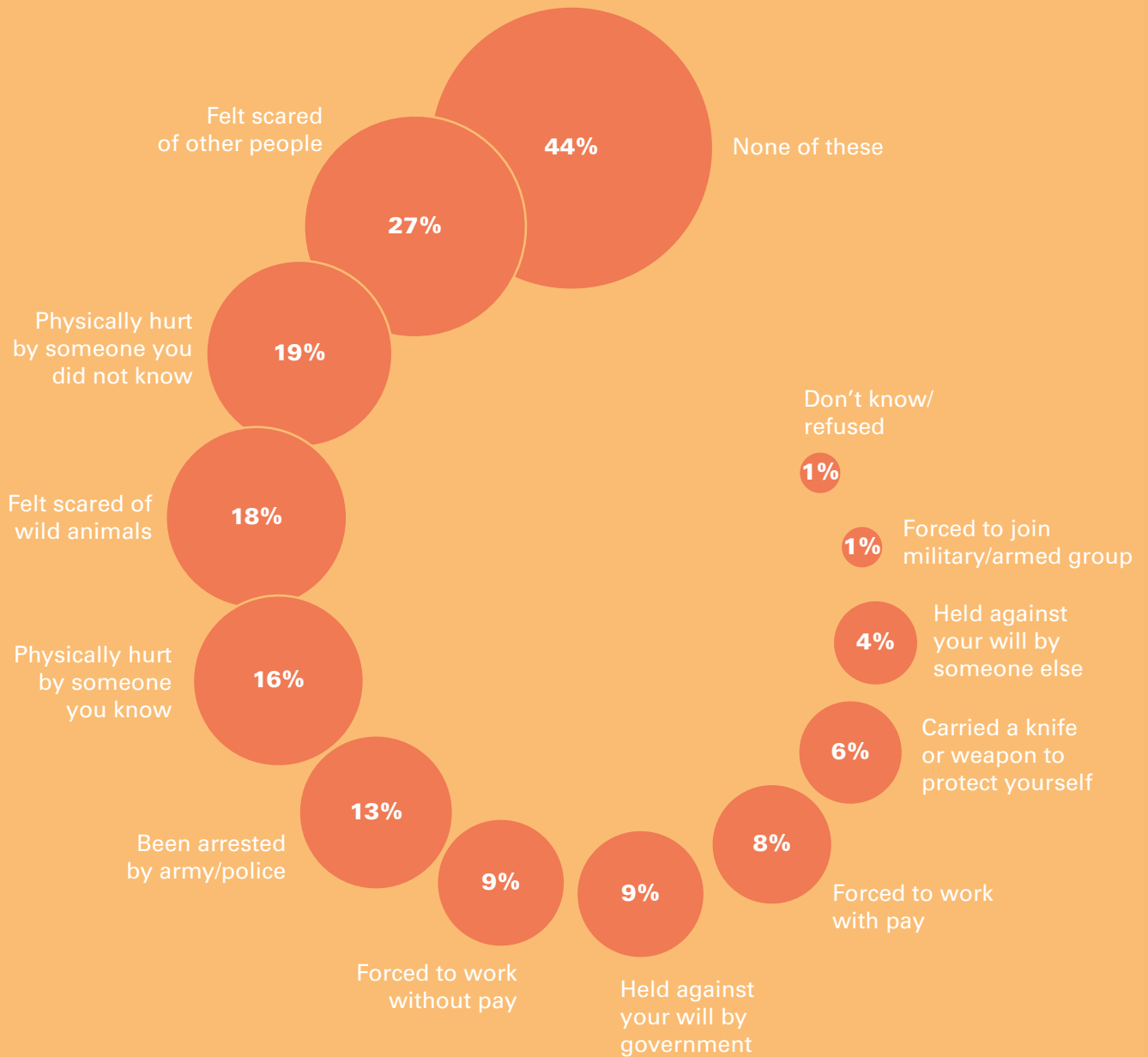
UNICEF/2019/AhmedOsmanAdam

81. A separate question also asked about experiences of the same harm and abuses while they were “moving between their home area and where they are now based”. Results from the two questions were almost identical and therefore for simplicity of reporting only one set of data is analysed here.

Figure 4: Experience of risks and harms

Base: 1,290 migrant children and young people, April 2019 to January 2020, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan

Q) Since you have been staying here, have you experienced any of these?*



* The same question was asked of both returnees and active migrants, and regarding current as well as past experiences while migrating.

A Somali refugee said:

“We were in the boat for six days ... we were only drinking water mixed with petrol the whole time. Some fell out of the pickups [trucks] on the way. Out of the 88 that had left Yemen, only 74 made it to the village [where we stopped in Sudan].”

– Interview with male returnee, aged 20, Borama, Somaliland, April 2019

Others spoke of walking for days without water or food and suffering from exhaustion.

There was also frequent reference to abuses perpetrated by officials and those who should have had a protective role, as well as abuses by smugglers, traffickers or others trying to take advantage. An Ethiopian returnee said:

“There were also stories from returnees who had made it as far as Libya of their experiences of being kidnapped for ransom by traffickers and the abuses they suffered as a result.

“When we approached the border of Tanzania the border guards opened fire on us and killed four of my friends because the driver did not stop.”

– Interview with male Ethiopian returnee, aged 18, Hosanna Town, SNNPR, Ethiopia, August 2019

Another returnee reported:

“I have been beaten and abused frequently by [the travel] broker when I was in Sudan ... I experienced the same violence in Saudi Arabia by my employer. The elder son of my employer also tried to rape me twice. There was no one there to protect me.”

– Interview with female Ethiopian returnee, aged 18, Hosanna Town, SNNPR, Ethiopia, August 2019

The respondents were asked to recall whether they had experienced similar risks and harms in their home area, before their journey. In most cases,

the responses were similar: the children and young people had faced these risks at home and largely to the same extent as in their new location. But there were two differences. Fewer said they feared having to join a military group. On the other hand, the proportion being forced to work without pay rose from 9 per cent to 15 per cent.

Feelings of safety

To gain an overall understanding of children and young people’s perception of their safety and security, the researchers asked whether respondents felt safe or unsafe during the day, or during the night where they slept. The results are shown in **Figure 5**. This shows that most felt safe during the day, and to a lesser extent during the night. There were no substantial differences reported by gender – 38 per cent of girls and young women reported feeling scared compared with 33 per cent of boys and young men, although more

Figure 5: Feelings of safety

Base: 1,290 migrant children and young people, April 2019 to January 2020, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan

■ Safe ■ Unsafe ■ Sometimes safe, sometimes unsafe

Q) Do you feel safe or unsafe during the day now?



Q) Do you feel safe or unsafe where you sleep at night now?



Q) Did you feel safe or unsafe in home area?



boys and young men (29 per cent) reported feeling unsafe at night compared with girls and young women (19 per cent). This may reflect different sleeping arrangements for boys and girls, but the data did not permit any clear conclusions to be drawn about these differences.

Respondents were also asked about how safe they had felt at home before they began their journey. Considerably fewer had felt safe at home – only around a half.⁸² This does not seem to correspond with earlier answers when they reported that risks at home and in their new location were similar. This may be because some had moved due to concerns for their safety, and that the act of moving itself had provided them with a greater sense or perception of safety.

Even those whose reason for moving was not primarily a lack of security thought they were now safer, with the proportion feeling safe among that group rising from 70 per cent to 82 per cent. But for those who moved for security reasons, the change was understandably even more dramatic. Only 28 per cent had felt safe at home but 77 per cent felt safe in their current location. This confirms that moving can be an effective coping strategy.

This finding also highlights the danger of assuming that the best solution for migrant children and young people is to return home. As a young Ethiopian boy said:

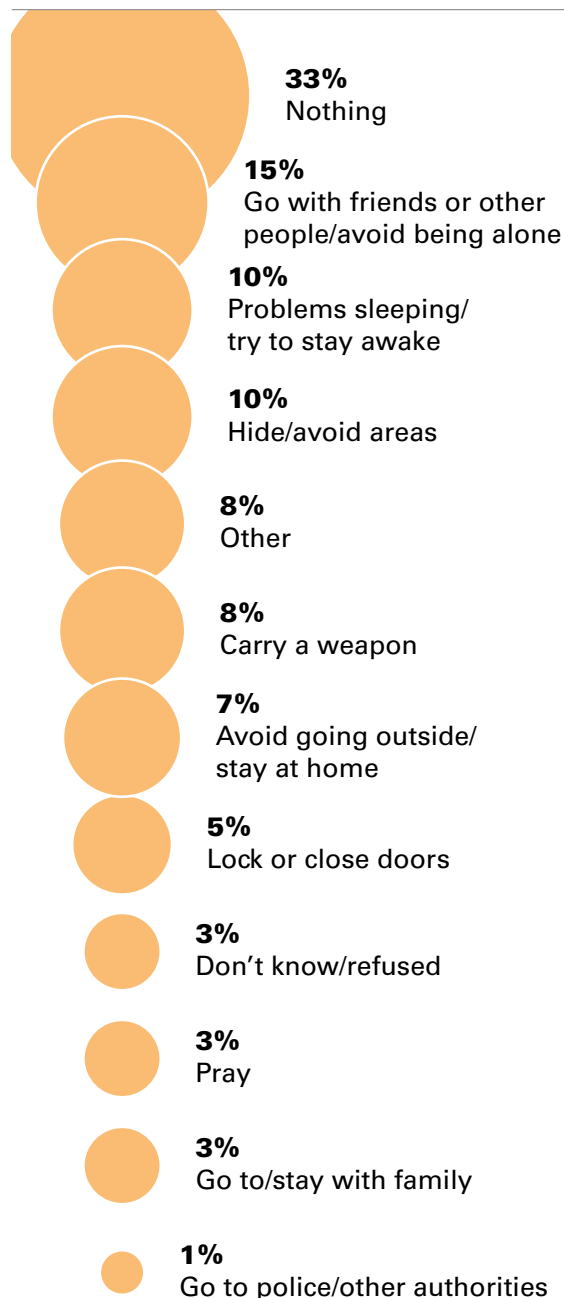
“I feel sad and lonely because I am separated from my home. But I left because of family pressures like being punished by hunger by my stepmother and physical attacks by my father. So, I had no choice but to travel.”

– Interview with Ethiopian boy, aged 10, Shashemene, Oromia, Ethiopia, September 2019

This suggests that he is unlikely to feel safe even if the general security situation has improved.⁸³

Figure 6: What do you do to help protect yourself?

Base: 446 migrant children and young people who felt unsafe in current location, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan



Note: This was an open-ended question where the respondent gave their answer without being prompted. The answers were then reviewed and coded post-survey. In some cases, answers may have been coded into more than one category.

82. The question about perceptions of safety in the home area did not ask the respondent to differentiate between how safe they felt in the daytime or at night.
 83. For more on those who stay, see Barcus, Holly and Cynthia Werner, 'Choosing to Stay: (Im)Mobility decisions amongst Mongolia's ethnic Kazakhs', *Globalizations*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2017, pp. 32–50; van Zyl, Melinda and Alain Tschudin, *Why Children Stay*, Research Report, Save the Children International, London, October 2018, <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/14277/pdf/why_children_stay.pdf>, accessed 18 February 2021; and Schewel, Kerilyn, 'Understanding immobility: Moving beyond the mobility bias in migration studies', *International Migration Review*, vol. 54, no. 2, 2019, pp. 328–355.

At the same time, it is important to emphasize that a quarter of respondents still felt unsafe at night and 13 per cent felt unsafe during the daytime. These respondents are likely to need protective systems, so it will be important to understand their concerns and risks.

Strategies for self-protection

To further explore the situation of children and young people who felt unsafe at night, this group was asked what they did to help protect themselves. The answers are indicated in **Figure 6**.

Most children and young people felt that staying safe was ultimately largely beyond their control, and that they did not pursue any specific strategies beyond their normal behaviour to help mitigate threats to their immediate physical protection. As one 15-year-old Ethiopian boy put it:

“We sleep in the street and we are vulnerable to violence.”

– Interview with Ethiopian boy, aged 15, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, September 2019

Those who did try to protect themselves were likely to go with friends or simply to hide or avoid certain areas.

As an Eritrean child living in Khartoum said:

“I mostly just stay at home to stay safe.”

– Interview with Eritrean boy, aged 17, Khartoum, Sudan, November 2019

Others reported difficulty sleeping. As a young woman in Puntland put it:

“I stay awake all night because I have an eight-year-old daughter. I am scared for her to be raped because I was previously raped several times. I am scared of people in this camp because several of them have accused me of being a thief and I am afraid that they believe that and want to take revenge on my daughter.”

– Interview with young Somali woman, Garowe, Puntland, Somalia, April 2019

Responses to this set of questions showed a higher proportion of girls (43 per cent) who indicated they felt scared but felt they could do “nothing” to mitigate these fears, compared with 27 per cent of boys who felt the same. Slightly more boys than girls said they would go out with friends or avoid being alone (18 per cent vs. 11 per cent).

A 15-year-old Ethiopian boy who was living on the streets talked of how he felt at risk from adults, including those who were supposed to protect him:

“Often the police punish and force us to leave the place where we sleep and we move into any area to be safe from police punishment ... At night, people come and disturb us when we sleep. To protect ourselves from any strange act we sleep together and use our dogs to defend us. Therefore, together with other street friends and dogs, we can defend ourselves against any stranger.”

– Interview with Ethiopian boy, aged 15, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, September 2019

Facilitation by smugglers

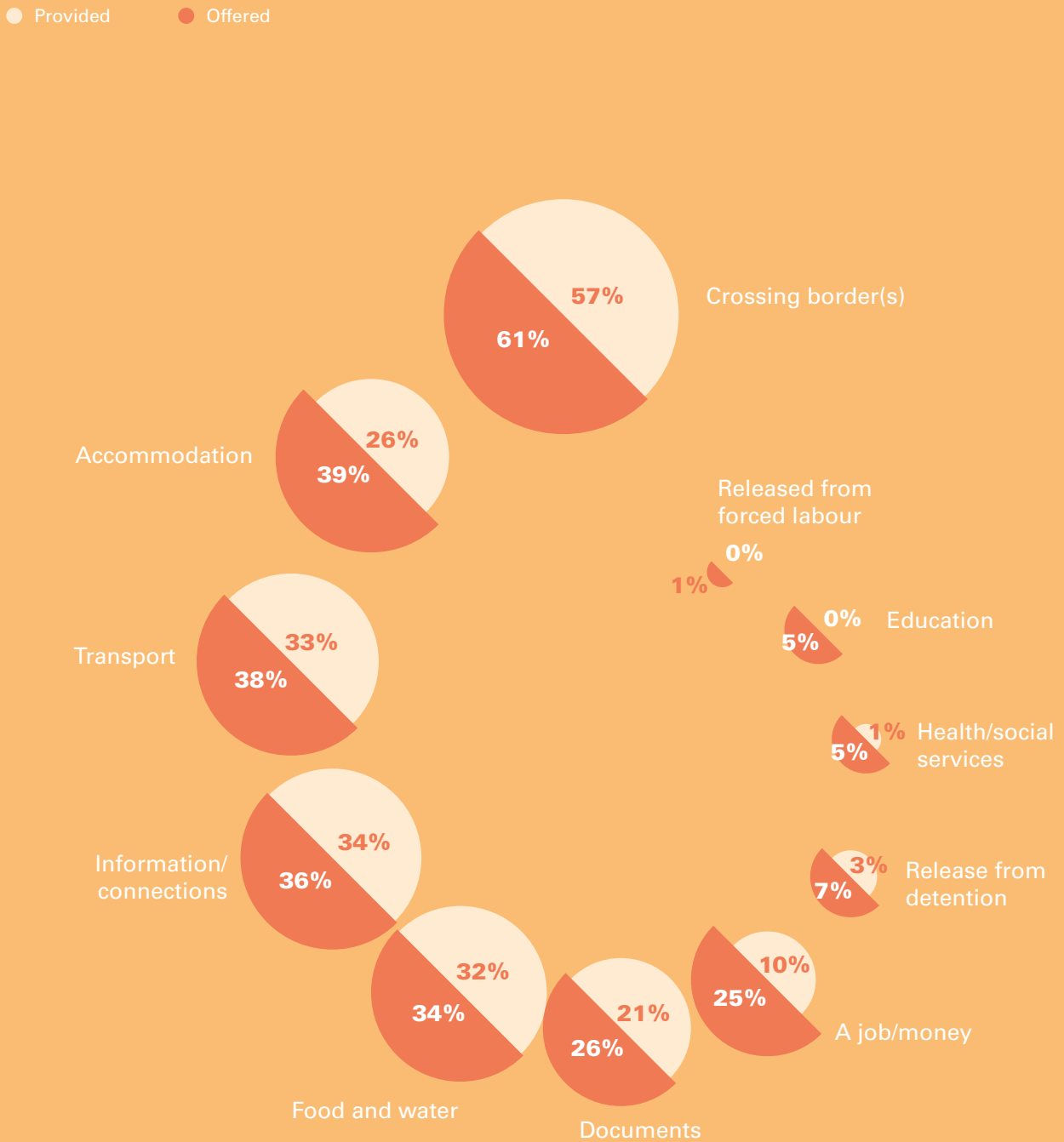
Around 20 per cent of respondents who had crossed a border had a smuggler help them plan their journey – the third most-likely source of help in planning the journey, albeit much less common than help received from friends or family. While this research did not ask about use of a smuggler at all points of the journey (only at the beginning), it is clear that some started without the help of a smuggler but then decided that their services were needed in order to move further. For example, an Eritrean refugee boy described how he was able to navigate his way out of Eritrea into Sudan by following routes described by friends but was now thinking about moving on to Khartoum – which would mean moving in contravention of encampment policies, as refugees are expected to remain in camps. As he said:

“If I move on, I would go with a smuggler. In the night when we chat with our colleagues here, they told me that if you have money, there are people who can take you to Khartoum.”

– Interview with Eritrean refugee, Shagarab refugee camp, Sudan, December 2019

Figure 7: Services and support from smugglers, percentage of users

Base: 202 migrant children and young people who used a smuggler to help plan journey, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan



The services and support that smugglers offered – along with those they actually delivered – are indicated in **Figure 7**. The most common help, for around two thirds of respondents, was in crossing borders, along with accommodation, transport, and food and water. And for the most part the smugglers did deliver what they had promised – the main shortcoming was in providing jobs and money.

Respondents did not, however, necessarily like the smuggler – around half thought they were a bad person and the other half good. Perceptions of smugglers are also likely to be influenced by the fact that they are sometimes embedded within communities or have strong networks within and across the community and wider region. As an official explained:

“Family members, police officers, government officials, taxi and truck drivers, hotel owners and managers, are all very much involved and provide support for smugglers in this town.”

– Interview with Community Care Coalition Chairperson (CCC), SNNPR, Ethiopia, September 2019

Of those who used a smuggler, 63 per cent of boys and young men described the smuggler as a “bad person”, compared with 28 per cent of girls and young women.

Nevertheless, smugglers can cause harm. Of respondents who had used a smuggler, around one fifth said the smuggler had hurt them, while around one quarter said they had threatened to hurt them. Of those who were hurt or threatened, four fifths described the smuggler as a bad person.

Some of those who had used a smuggler said the relationship started out on a positive basis but then became less supportive – or openly abusive. A young returnee woman talked about an initial warm welcome:

“The smugglers paid for everything for us. They bought food and clothes. They were telling us that things were very bad in Somaliland and that it would be better in Europe.”

– Interview with young female returnee, Hargeisa, Somaliland, April 2019

The abuses often arise because of the smugglers’ ‘travel first, pay later’ schemes, which enable children and young people to leave without telling their families. Then, if they cannot pay, the smugglers kidnap them and call their families, demanding ransom money for their release. Many families are heavily in debt as a result, and their only hope is that their child will be able to continue their journey to Europe or the Middle East in order to send back money. This impact on families is part of the strategy used by smugglers and traffickers:

“Before agreeing to facilitate the journey for a child, the trafficker asks if he or she has a mother, because they know that she will do everything for her child.”

– Interview with prosecutor, Wajale, Somali region, Ethiopia, September 2019

Children and young people appear to exercise judgement when they opt to use a smuggler. They are aware that some risk is involved but they see using a smuggler as a necessary and rational choice. In some cases, they will have more confidence if they already know the smuggler, who may be a relative or a neighbour. Children and young people may also be lured with often false promises of better opportunities.

Children and young people should not need to use smugglers but often may do so in the absence of legal pathways. There has been significant advocacy for greater legal opportunities for movement and much rhetoric around the need to ensure safe and orderly migration.^{84,85} However, in practice little has changed.

84. See, for instance, United Nations Development Programme, *Scaling Fences: Voices of irregular African migrants to Europe*, UNDP, New York, October 2019, <www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/ScalingFences.html>, accessed 18 February 2021.

85. See, for instance, the Global Compact for Migration, <<https://refugeemigrants.un.org/migration-compact>>, accessed 22 February 2021

The experience of crossing borders

Little is known about border crossings within the Horn of Africa. This study provides additional insights on such movements from the perspective of the migrants themselves. Respondents were asked about the last border they crossed.⁸⁶ Additionally, 344 interviews were conducted with children and young people now living in Egypt to provide supplemental insights specifically into the experience of crossing borders. The information from both was merged to create a larger data set of 1,634 respondents.

Overall, 70 per cent of respondents recalled crossing an international border.⁸⁷ **Figure 8** summarizes their experiences, which were generally not positive.

Just over half of respondents believed that the last border they crossed was at an official crossing point and a third said they crossed unofficially. As shown on the right-hand side of the figure, whether they crossed at an official border crossing made a significant difference to their descriptions of the border. Those who crossed at an unofficial point were considerably more likely to believe the border was lonely and a place where the authorities did not care about their needs. The key difference, however, was the perception of safety. One respondent in four felt that the official border was unsafe, but if it was an unofficial crossing then three respondents in four felt it was unsafe.

It is also clear that what respondents considered specifically unsafe was the process of crossing from one side of the border to the other. Almost 90 per cent of those who were interviewed in a border area said they felt safe. This perception is also reflected in the overall responses. There was a clear correlation between crossing a border and exposure to risk and harm. Those who crossed a border were much more likely to have experienced some type of harm during the journey than those who stayed within their own country. The dangers

Figure 8: Crossing borders

Base: 1,097 migrant children and young people who recalled crossing an international border, Egypt, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan

Q) Thinking about the last border you crossed would you describe the border as...



emerged vividly in the qualitative interviews. An Eritrean community representative in Ethiopia said that many children and young people faced the risk of being sexually abused, trafficked and attacked by wild animals such as snakes and hyenas, particularly when crossing the border. And a number of children and young people had simply gone missing on their way.⁸⁸

Others directly described attacks by officials:

86. The question asked the respondents to describe their experience of the “last border” that they crossed. Therefore, by definition, this would be the border into the country where they were interviewed, rather than borders further away (e.g., Libya to Tunisia). However, in the areas where we conducted research in northern Somalia, there was sometimes confusion about whether borders between Somaliland and Puntland constituted international borders.

87. Sixty-three respondents were not asked this question and therefore have not been included in this analysis.

88. Interview with Eritrean man, community representative, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, September 2019.

“We planned to cross over the next day at 7 p.m. When we tried to cross, we found that the military was there. They shot at the bus and the bus went off the road. Some died and some were injured in the crash.”

– Interview with young male returnee, aged 22, Borama, Somaliland, April 2019

“Actually that night I faced a lot of problems that I cannot talk about. The police were saying to each other that as long as they are here, we might as well enjoy ... Losing my virginity was the worst thing.”

– Interview with key informant, aged 20, Hargeisa, Somaliland, April 2019

There were also accounts of violence at the hands of smugglers and traffickers, including in a detention camp in Somaliland near the border with Ethiopia. A government official described how he had witnessed many children who had been tortured by smugglers or traffickers in Somaliland:

“They cut their hands and asked their parents for ransoms ... Sometimes we go there to take them from their camp.”

– Interview with local government official, Wajale, Somali region, Ethiopia, September 2019

A young Somali woman described being held by traffickers in Bossaso:

“They asked our families for money and when they didn’t pay, they tortured us.”

– Interview with female returnee, aged 19, Hargeisa, Somaliland, April 2019

Her parents eventually paid US\$300 for her release.

Significant levels of abuse were evident in other border locations: migrants had reportedly been kidnapped for ransom over the border in eastern Sudan,⁸⁹ and a member of the trafficking task force in Ethiopia talked about reports of organ harvesting on the border crossing with Sudan.⁹⁰

There are also risks from border officials. Overall, 22 per cent of respondents said they had been detained at a border as part of their journey and 16 per cent had been deported from a country. A Somali girl described being sexually abused by the police after being detained for her lack of immigration documentation:

Detention

Some border officials might believe that detaining children in order to return them to their families would be in the children’s best interests. However, these decisions are at best ad hoc and result in children often being held temporarily in jails or prisons, or in similar conditions in police stations or makeshift detention centres.

Detention of children and young people in transit again reflects the official view of migration as primarily a security issue. From this perspective, detaining children (often as a temporary response until they are returned) may be seen as an acceptable response both for the individual themselves and for the state – despite the fact that the detention of child migrants, and their separation from parents, constitutes a violation of the child’s rights and is not in the child’s best interests. While there are risks to children in official detention centres, forced or coerced return can have the unintended effect of diverting children and young people to non-official borders where they will be at even greater risk.

Differential experience of harm

In order to better understand the ways in which different groups of children and young people experience migration, the survey allowed for various forms of disaggregated analysis:

Gender – **Table 3** on page 46 shows the disaggregation of the types of risk and harm by gender of the respondents. Experiences for males and females were similar in terms of most of the risks and harms. However, one third of boys and young men reported having been physically hurt compared with around one fifth of young women/

89. Interview with Ethiopian woman, aged 18, Hosanna Town, SNNPR, Ethiopia, August 2019.

90. Interview with The Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs representatives, Bahir Dar, Amhara, Ethiopia, September 2019.

girls, and young men/boys were more likely to have been detained. A slightly higher proportion of girls/young women than boys/young men reported having felt scared (of wild animals or other people). As noted, the report did not survey respondents on sexual and gender-based violence due to ethical considerations, although these perspectives were explored in qualitative interviews.

Age – The harms experienced across age groups were similar (see **Table 4**). Fear is an issue for slightly more children than young people, particularly at night, and a few more children said that they had been physically hurt (but the difference was only 5 percentage points). In contrast, many more young people than children were exposed to risks around using a smuggler (three times higher) and more crossed an international border (9 percentage points higher).

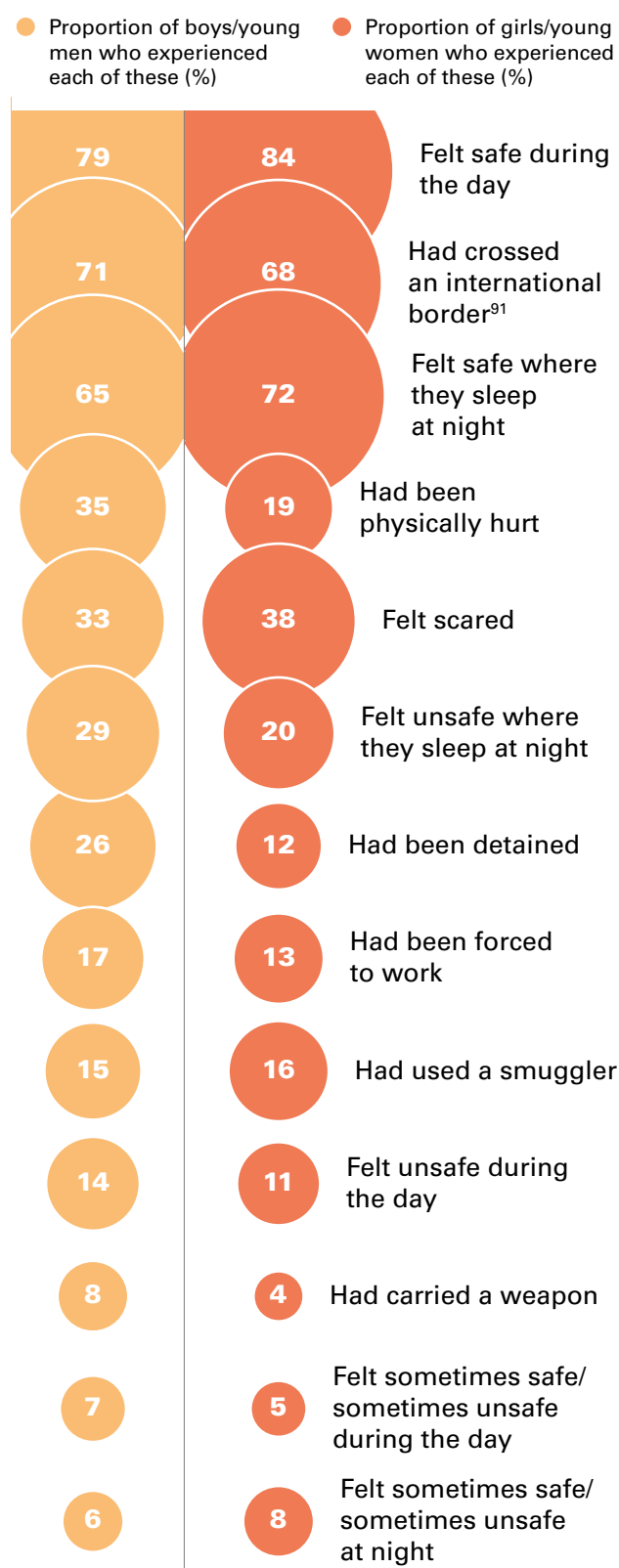
Nationality – There are several differences in response between nationals and non-nationals who were asked about their experience in the country they were now in (see **Table 5**). The survey shows that while a higher proportion of non-nationals reported feeling unsafe during the day and night relative to those moving within their own country, nationals often faced as much risk of harm as non-nationals.

The fact that non-nationals were more likely to feel unsafe and more likely to have crossed a border makes intuitive sense. However, the fairly significant differences in having felt scared or having been physically hurt among nationals required additional investigation.

Further analysis (by country of interview) of the data on those who had been physically hurt found little difference between nationals and non-nationals. However, those interviewed in Sudan were considerably less likely to have reported to have been physically hurt. Given that a higher proportion of those in Sudan were non-nationals, this therefore impacted the overall findings. In respect of the differences in terms of having felt scared, nationals in Ethiopia were much more likely to have said they were scared than non-nationals, while in the other countries there was little difference. Given that there was a higher proportion

Table 3: Types of risk and harm disaggregated by gender

Base: 1,290 migrant children and young people, April 2019 to January 2020, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan



91. The analysis by this indicator also includes interviews that were conducted in Egypt.

Table 4: Types of risk and harm disaggregated by age group

Base: 1,290 migrant children and young people, April 2019 to January 2020, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan

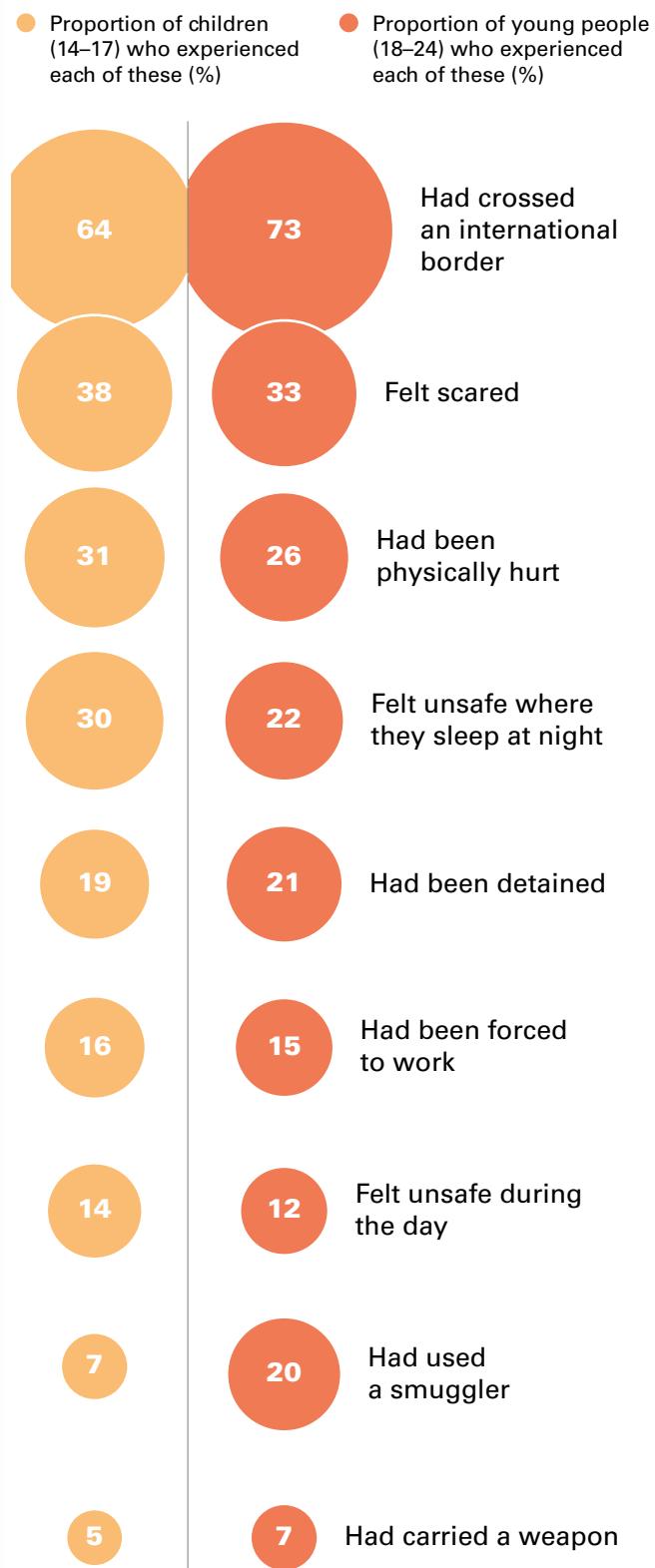
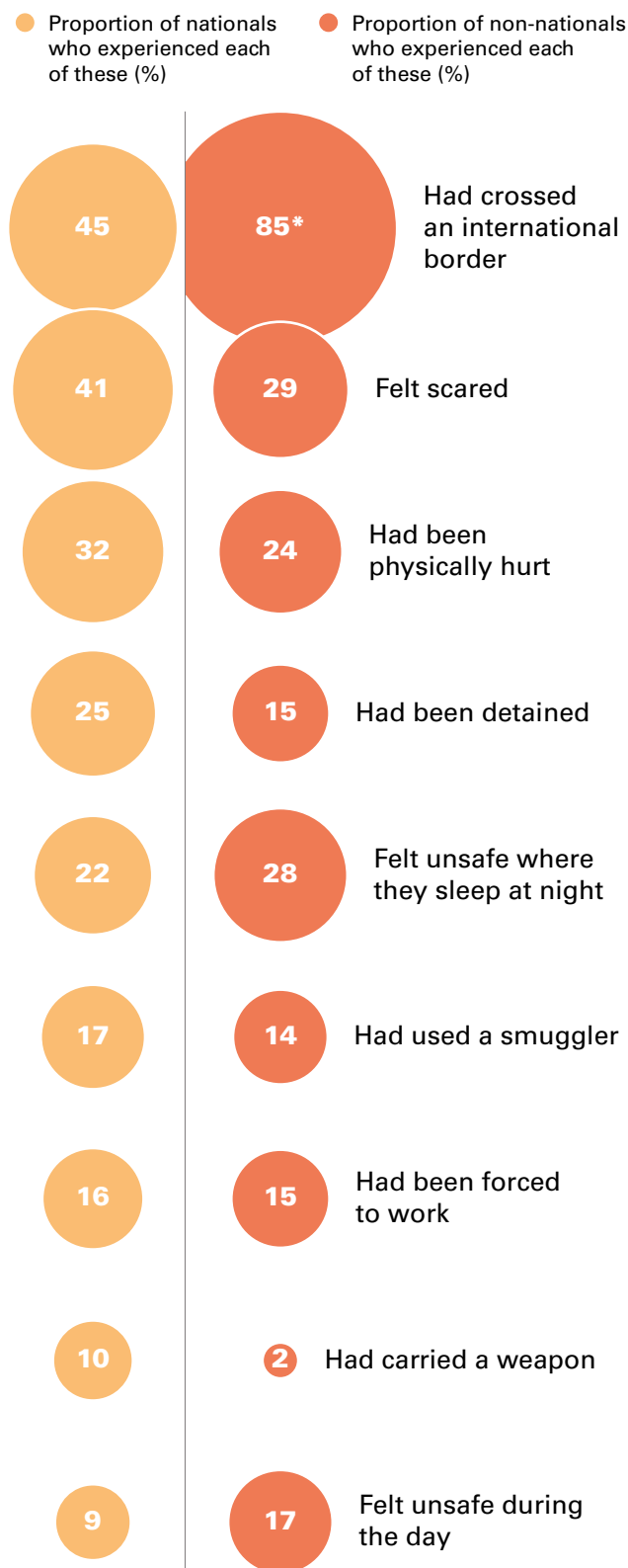


Table 5: Types of risk and harm disaggregated by nationality

Base: 1,290 migrant children and young people, April 2019 to January 2020, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan



*This does not add up to 100 per cent because some said "don't know", "refused" and might include some non-nationals who never left the country of interview.

of nationals in the Ethiopia sample, this explains much of the overall difference.

This analysis suggests that policymakers should not assume that nationals who have moved within a country are necessarily less likely to be harmed, and therefore their protection needs should not be overlooked when also addressing the risks faced by migrants from other countries. Indeed, respondents who move within their own country often faced as much risk of harm as non-nationals.

Living alone – At the greatest risk were those who were living alone (see **Table 6**). More than one third of those living alone felt unsafe where they slept at night – compared with around one fifth of those living with others. They were also more likely to have felt unsafe during the day, to have been forced to work, to have crossed an international border and to have been detained.

Living in camps – Respondents held similar views on their perceived level of security, regardless of whether they lived in or outside a camp (see **Table 7**). Overall perceptions of safety were similar for the two groups. Those living in camps were less likely to have been detained, and were considerably less likely to have used a smuggler to help them plan their journeys.

As this chapter has demonstrated, children and young people who move face many different risks. When offering support, it is important therefore to look beyond narrow definitional categories and take into account their own multidimensional experiences and complex views of migration as a lived experience.

Box 4: Sudan case study

An Eritrean boy in a refugee camp described his experience:

“I used to live with my mother, father and sisters in Eritrea. I went to school up to Grade 9, but when we finish Grade 10, then we have to go into the military. I did not want to go into the military, so I decided to go to Sudan.

“The trip from our village to the Sudan border was only six hours. I did the journey at night and alone. I didn’t face any problems on the road, but it is very dangerous, full of wild animals and traffickers. We know that there are dangers [from others] on the way. Before I left my friends told me where to go.

“I am here now to complete my education in a place where there are no problems and no military and then I can work and collect money. I would like the camp authorities to give us computer training and I would also like to have a library. I would also like training on how to deal with electricity so that I can work as an electrician.

“Now I live in a refugee camp. But the help that my colleagues told me that I would find, I haven’t found it. Everything is bad in the camp. I need the camp authorities to speed up the procedures for our papers. I still haven’t received an ID card. They should let us work at the market in the daytime. The camp authorities don’t agree to let us move any time, and this is bad for us because we are used to mov[ing] any time in our country, but here they simply lock the door and then you can’t go out without permission.

“Sometimes, I suddenly I remember my family and my village, and I feel sad. I sometimes think that I did the wrong thing by coming here. I would like to go to Khartoum. I would go with a smuggler. In the night when we chat with others here they [tell] me that if you have money, there are people that can take you to Khartoum, but first you have to collect the money. I would like more information about how I can go to Khartoum: I am looking for this from my colleagues in the camp and also with those people in the market.”

– Interview with Eritrean refugee boy, aged 17, Shagarab refugee camp, Sudan, December 2019

Table 6: Types of risk and harm disaggregated by living situation

Base: 1,290 migrant children and young people, April 2019 to January 2020, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan

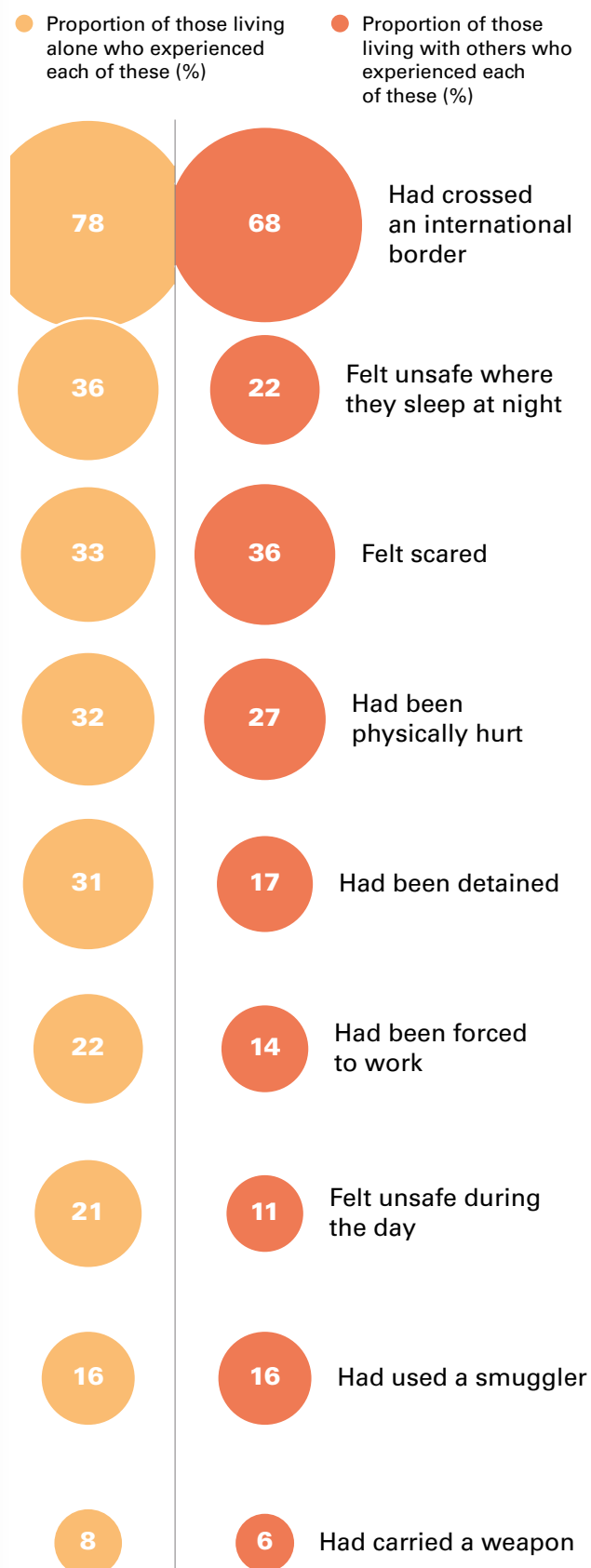
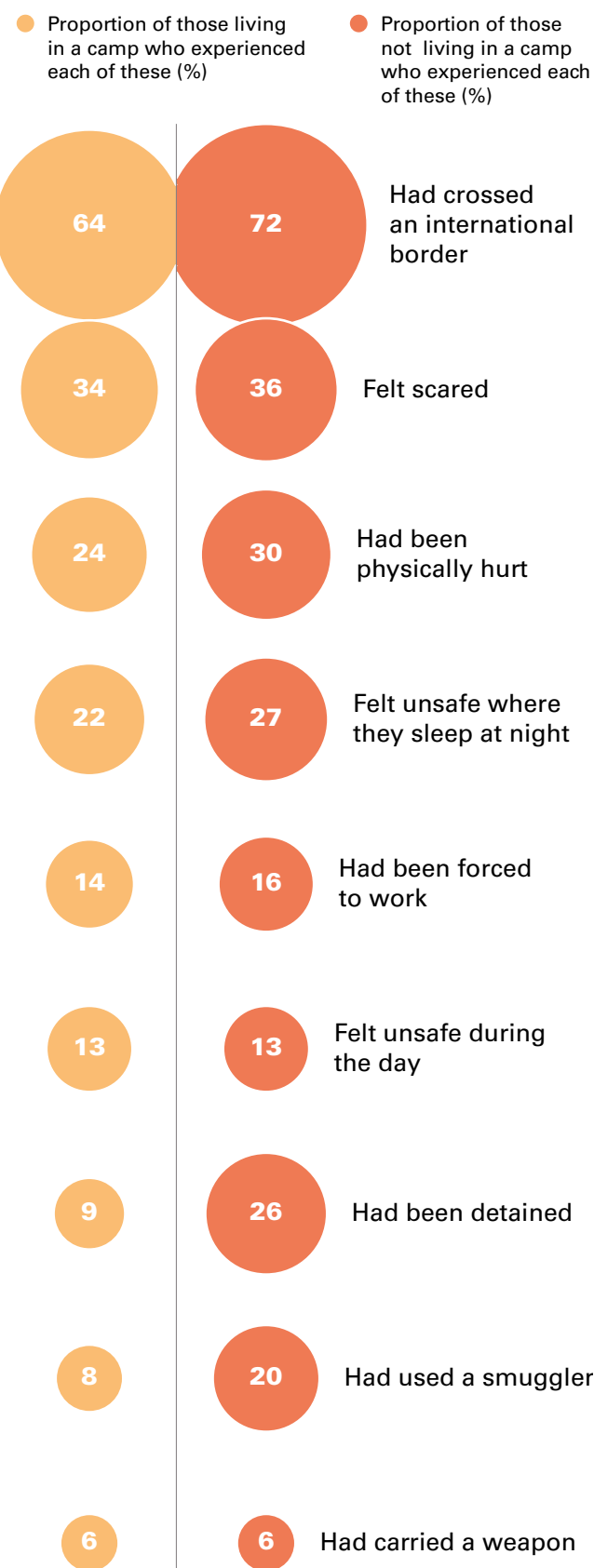


Table 7: Types of risk and harm disaggregated by whether they live in a camp

Base: 1,290 migrant children and young people, April 2019 to January 2020, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan



CHAPTER 4

50

ACCESS TO SERVICES ON THE MOVE

The children and young people talked about the situation in their new location and the services that they used or felt excluded from. They also reported on their general well-being and their participation in local organizations, as well as their friendships.

Around one fifth of the children and young people interviewed were living by themselves at the time of interview. Of the rest, 40 per cent were with one or both parents, 35 per cent with other adults and 20 per cent with other children. Overall, however, the majority of children were with a responsible adult – most likely to be a parent or other family member.⁹² By contrast, before their journey, only 2 per cent said they had been living on their own – an indication that movement had separated families and weakened informal, protective networks.⁹³

Of the children and young people interviewed, two thirds had been in their current location for at least 6 months and around one third for at least 12 months. They were asked if they had received any support from a range of services. The results are shown in **Figure 9**.

The most likely source of support is religious-based organizations, used by seven respondents in ten, followed by shelters, health-care providers and adults in the community. Around one third said they had used schools. Of those aged 14–17, just over one third had been to school within the previous month but almost half said it had been longer than a month ago, and a further 15 per cent said that they had never attended school.

In Sudan, these levels of school attendance are similar to those of the national population. But in Ethiopia and Somalia they are significantly lower than the national average, which supports the growing recognition of significant barriers faced by migrant children and young people in accessing both migrant-specific and host community educational services.⁹⁴

It is concerning that only around half of children and young people had accessed shelters or health centres. It should not be assumed, however, that because only around three respondents in ten had accessed a school seven in ten were necessarily denied access – some children with access to school or other services may nevertheless choose not to attend, for a range of reasons. To clarify this potential ambiguity, the survey also allowed respondents to select one of the following options for each of the services: used; wanted to use but was unable to; did not need. The respondents could also have said “don’t know” or have refused to answer.

These responses, regardless, clearly highlight an unmet demand for services, both those specifically designed for migrants and general public services that benefit both migrants and host populations. As indicated in **Figure 9**, the highest level of unmet demand – for around two fifths of children and young people – was for schooling and employment services, respectively, followed by help from social workers and legal services. Reported demand could reflect both the extent of awareness (or lack of it) about the availability of the service, as well as the actual need for and use of the services. Only a small number had accessed services specifically targeted at migrants: family tracing and reunification help, for example, and resettlement services.

Generally, there were few gender differences observed in the survey – though boys and young men were less likely than girls and young women to have access to shelters. There were, however, some differences by age. Children were more likely than young people to feel excluded from health or money transfer services. There were also some

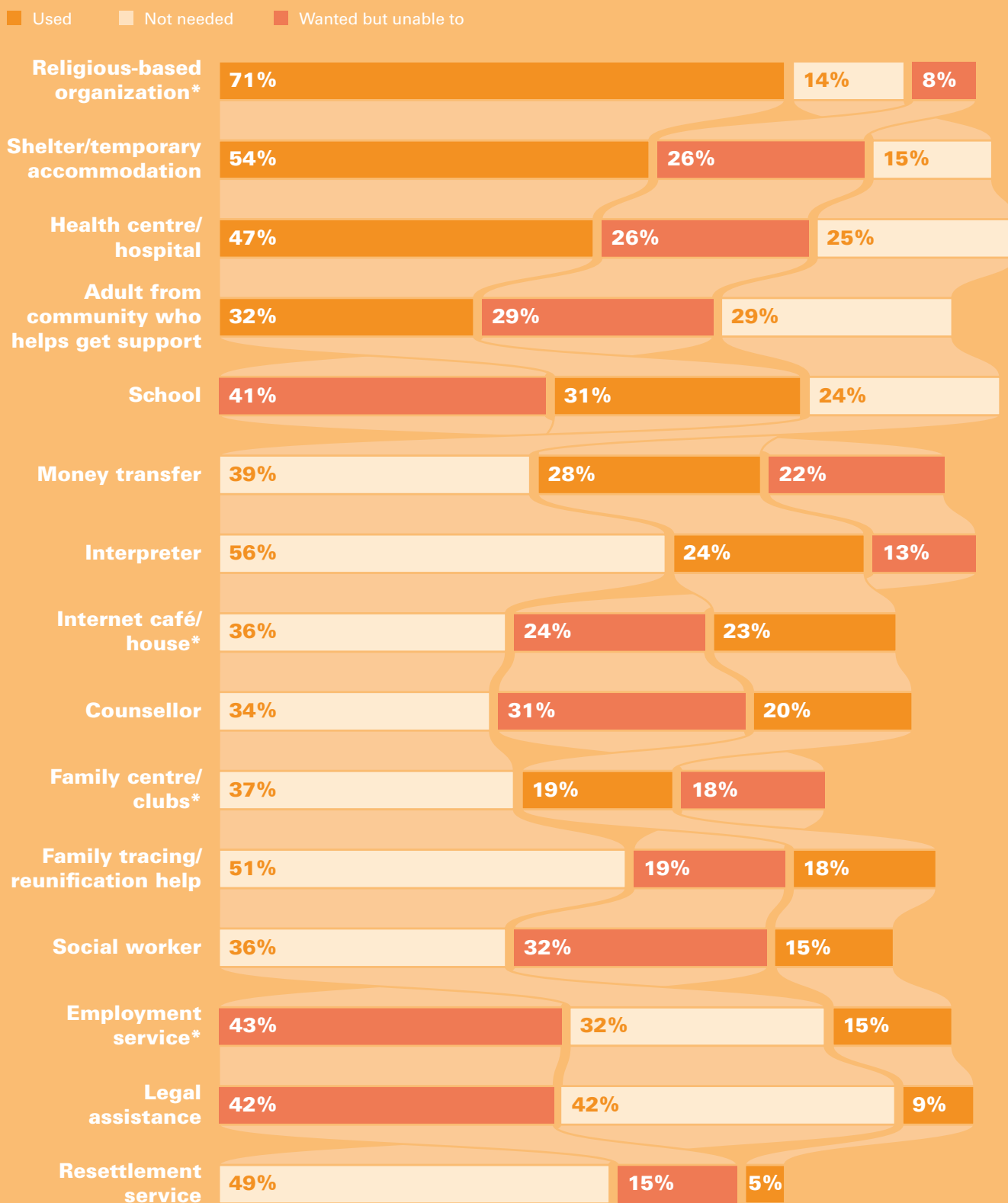
92. The question on “the adult responsible for your care” was not asked in the Somalia survey and therefore the data are based on those in Ethiopia and Sudan. This was a multi-code question and therefore the total adds up to more than 100 per cent.

93. See Subrahmanian, Ramya, Lucy Hovil, Mark Gill, Olivia Bueno and Iolanda Genovese, *Situational Brief. Research report on heightened vulnerabilities of migrant children & young people living alone in the context of COVID-19: Lessons from three Eastern African countries*, Lancet Migration: Global Collaboration to Advance Migration Health, June 2020, <https://1bec58c3-8dcb-46b0-bb2a-fd4addf0b29a.filesusr.com/ugd/188e74_7028c5425ce244e4915be11fcd0408c2.pdf>, accessed 25 February 2021.

94. World Bank website, ‘School enrollment, secondary (% gross) – Ethiopia’, <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.ENRR?locations=ET>>, accessed 23 February 2021.

Figure 9: Use of services and support

Base: 1,290 migrant children and young people, 14–24-year-olds, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan



*Asked in Ethiopia and Sudan (n=872)

Note: Those services marked with an asterisk (*) in the chart were not asked about in the Somalia survey and therefore the percentages are based on interviews conducted in Ethiopia and Sudan only.

Figures do not add to 100 per cent due to remainder of respondents who indicated 'don't know/refused' answer.

differences by location: those living in camps were understandably better off in terms of shelter, but, in this sample, respondents said they had less access to, or were less aware of, family tracing services, social workers, schools or money transfer services.

Barriers to accessing services

For key services, more than half of respondents said that the main barrier was cost. This applied to schools (60 per cent of respondents), primary health-care centres or hospitals (66 per cent) and shelters/temporary accommodation (55 per cent). For other services, such as access to social workers and counsellors, for around half of children the main problem was a perceived lack of availability – although, as noted above, this may also be linked to limited awareness of the services themselves.

Even when services were officially free, there could nevertheless be associated costs: for instance, transport to reach a health centre or books for school. Given these associated expenses, children regularly have to prioritize which services or activities they seek out. As an Ethiopian girl said:

“I now go to school, but I don’t have the materials I need.”

– Interview with Ethiopian girl, aged 14, Amhara region, Ethiopia, August 2019

An Eritrean child in Ethiopia said:

“When I see my family like this without food to eat, when I find myself helpless and hopeless, I sometimes think of ending my life. I am always worrying about my family. So, while there is a school, I never think of going there. Because what should come first is survival.”

– Interview with Eritrean boy, aged 17, Tigray, Ethiopia, August 2019

The second major factor is location. Many children live in remote areas far from services. A young man living in a camp in eastern Sudan said:

“I wanted to learn, but there was no school there. Plus, it was a camp and so far from everything else.”

– Interview with male Eritrean student, aged 18, Khartoum, Sudan, November 2019

Another issue for children attending school is the language of instruction. In Somaliland, for example, Ethiopians are expected to integrate into ordinary schools even when they do not speak Somali. A further obstacle is lack of documentation. In Ethiopia, this made it hard to enrol in school,⁹⁵ and in Sudan, children struggled to present appropriate documentation to allow them to register for school or sit the national exams.^{96,97}

Access to documentation is important for migrants in order to provide a legal identity, raise children’s visibility and facilitate access to services. This priority also links with Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that every child has a right to be registered at birth. Birth registration is, consequently, a key goal of UNICEF’s wider child migration programming. Overall, most respondents (65 per cent) had at least one of the seven documents asked about and around one third (35 per cent) did not have any of them. The most likely document that they had was a national ID card (29 per cent), followed by birth certificate (20 per cent) and student ID card (20 per cent).

There was no difference by gender in terms of whether respondents had a national ID card or birth certificate, and generally there were only small to negligible differences across the key demographics for those with a birth certificate. There were bigger differences when considering who had a national ID card. Three times as many young people than children had a national ID card (39 per cent vs. 13 per cent), as did more than twice as many returnees compared with those still on the move (55 per cent vs. 23 per cent), which is to be expected given that national ID cards are often obtained only above a certain age.

95. Interview with Ethiopian woman, founder of a CBO working with street children, Dessie, Amhara, Ethiopia, August 2019.

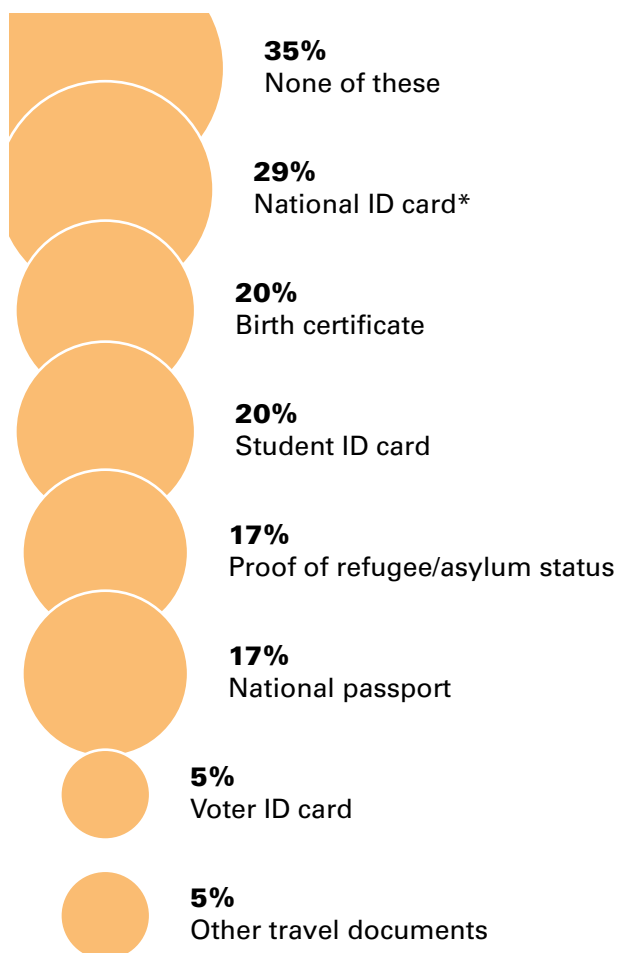
96. Interview with key informant, Gedaref, Sudan, November 2019.

97. Interview with academic, Khartoum, Sudan, November 2019.

Figure 10: Documentation

Base: 1,290 migrant children and young people, 14–24-year-olds, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan

Q) Which of these documents do you currently have?



*National ID card includes kebele ID for those interviewed in the Ethiopia survey.

Avoiding the use of available services

Even when services are available, some children and young people may deliberately avoid using them if they believe this will force them to stay in their current location, since around half of respondents intended to continue their journeys. This choice can put them on a collision course with officials.

Even returnees might want to keep out of sight. In some cases, return was seen as evidence of

a failure to migrate. There can also be stigma for girls and young women who have returned from the Middle East who are assumed to have been sexually abused.⁹⁸ In Somalia, an official said:

“Most of those that return hide. They don’t want to be judged for coming back ... they don’t want the shame. We don’t know their problems because they hide.”

– Interview with key government official, Borama, Somaliland, April 2019

In other cases, child protection and social workers are often more successful in reaching migrant children and young people. In a city on the border of Somaliland and Ethiopia, a child protection worker explained:

“Because we talk to them nicely then they tell us the truth and then we can take them back to their places.”

– Interview with child protection official, Wajale, Somali region, Ethiopia, April 2019

In addition to choosing from a list of services, children and young people were asked an open question about what other types of support they needed. Respondents’ needs could be categorized under three general headings, with around a third of respondents saying they needed education, a third jobs and a third money for basic needs. Much of the interest in education was related to improving their skills in order to access employment. There was also a strong link between money and jobs – many respondents said that they wanted money in order to support or start a business of their own.

A young woman said:

“I lost my time, my working and schooling age as a result of illegal migration. I would be happy if I could get training so that I could open a beauty salon if I get financial support either from the government or any other organization.”

98. See, for instance, Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) website, ‘Who cares as long as they are not going to Europe?’, April 2018, <<https://sihanet.org/gender-alert-who-cares-as-long-as-they-are-not-going-to-europe/>>.

– Interview with female Ethiopian returnee, aged 18, Hosanna Town, SNNPR, Ethiopia, August 2019

Likewise, a young Somali woman described how a lack of education was a barrier to engaging productively as an adult:

“I had no education. I couldn’t afford to get anything, and I had nothing to do. If you don’t have an education, you don’t have a future.”

– Interview with young female Somali returnee, aged 20, Borama, Somaliland, April 2019

The children and young people typically wanted support in the form of a ‘hand-up’ rather than a ‘hand-out’. They wanted more control of their own lives rather than to become passive recipients of support. A Yemeni refugee in Somalia said:

“The only problem we have is that we lack the financial capital to initiate our own business in town, to enable us to stand on our [own] feet.”

– Interview with Yemeni refugee, aged 24, Bossaso, Somalia, May 2020

It is also interesting that few respondents were preoccupied with greater safety or security. To some extent this may reflect the general levels of safety, but it also shows that other factors were seen as more urgent, namely well-being, belonging and participation.

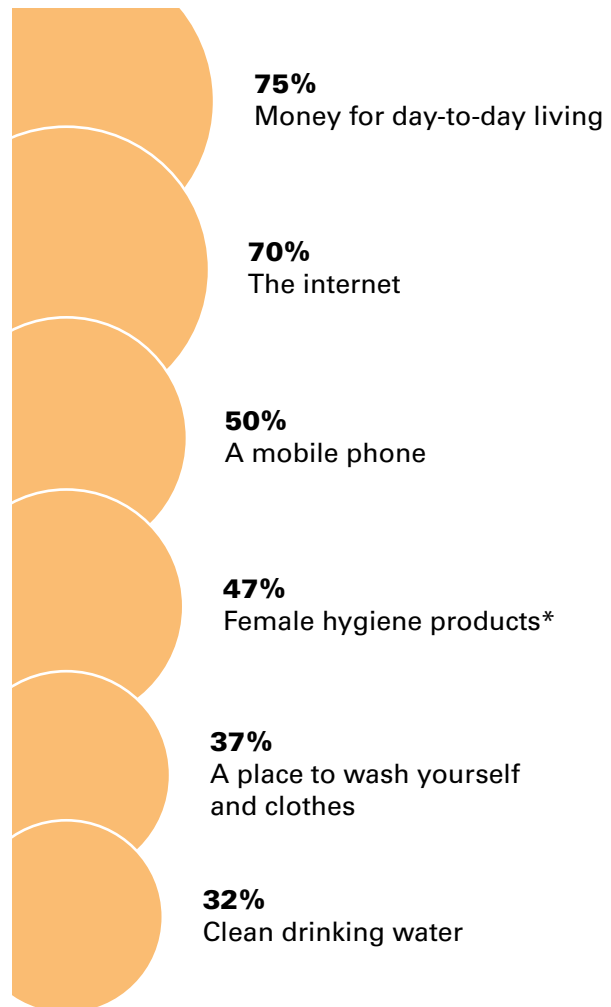
In addition to being asked about access to services, children and young people were also asked about other things they lacked that would improve their lives. Around three quarters of respondents said they did not have money for day-to-day living or access to the internet, while half said they did not have a phone. There were also concerns about access to female hygiene products and general washing and water supplies.

Gender differences appear not to be significant except in terms of access to the internet and mobile telephones. The main differences by age group were that more children than those aged over 18 did not have money (79 per cent vs.

Figure 11: Wider aspects of well-being

Base: 1,290 migrant children and young people, 14–24-year-olds, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan

Percentage who did not have access to...



*Female hygiene products asked of 369 females in Ethiopia and Sudan

72 per cent) or access to the internet (78 per cent vs. 65 per cent), and this was particularly marked when it came to not having a mobile phone (75 per cent of children did not have a phone, compared with 36 per cent of young people).

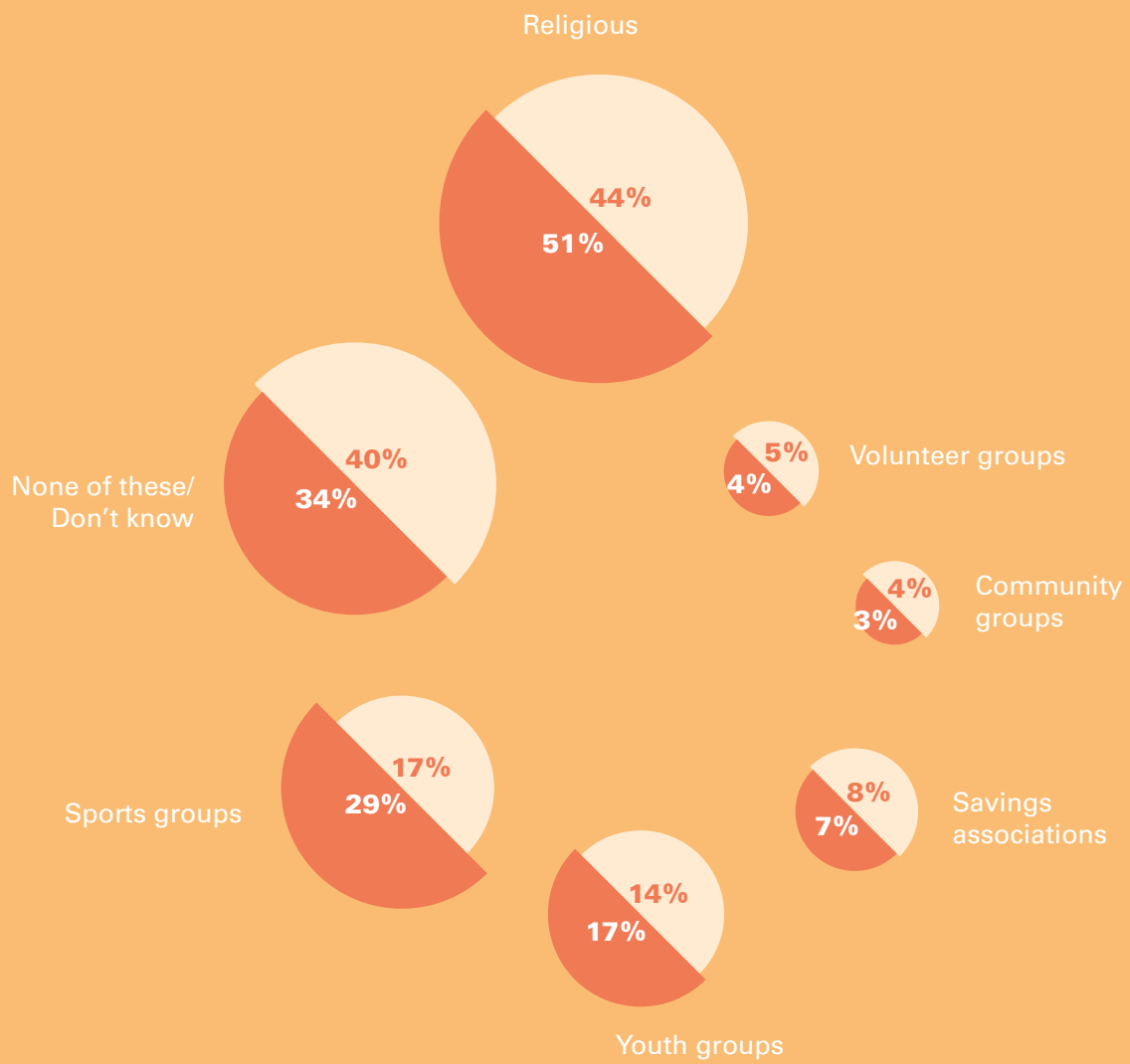
There were also significant disadvantages for those living alone compared with those who were with other people. For instance, around two fifths of respondents who lived alone did not have access to clean drinking water compared with a quarter of those living with others. And more than half of those living alone did not have somewhere to wash compared with one third of those living with others. The only area where there was no

Figure 12: Participation in organizations - now vs. location of origin

Base: 872 migrant children and young people, 14–24-year-olds, Ethiopia, Sudan

Q) Are you/were you part of any of the following types of organizations or groups?

● % living here ● % at home area





UNICEF/UN016722/Ayene

discernible difference between these two groups was access to money for day-to-day living.

The children and young people who were most likely to lack these requirements were also those who reported feeling unsafe or having been harmed (see **Chapter 3**). One third of this group of respondents said they lacked somewhere to wash their clothes, but for those who had been harmed the proportion rose to around half. This type of research cannot determine a causal relationship between fear, harm and lack of access to essential services. But it does point to strong correlations between them. It follows, therefore, that strategic approaches to improving child protection would benefit from both general efforts to improve the child's well-being, as well as providing more specific services to facilitate short-term needs (such as interpreters or social workers who facilitate family reunification), or services that are specifically designed to target migrant populations (such as temporary shelter and accommodation for large movements of migrants).

Participation in organizations and groups

Children and young people have the right to take part as advocates and participants in organizations that work on their behalf, particularly at the community level, as well as a right to engage in leisure, play and culture. **Figure 12** shows the proportion of children and young people who were part of six types of organization or group. Generally,

respondents were less likely to be members of such groups now than they had been in their home area.

The main gender differences observed are that girls and young women were more likely than boys and young men to be part of a religious group, while boys and young men were more likely to be in sports groups. Generally, those less likely to participate were those living alone.

Figure 13: Is life better or worse than before the move?

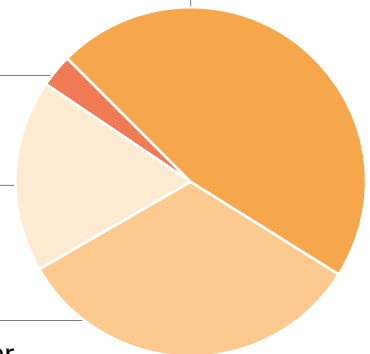
Base: 872 migrant children and young people, 14–24-year-olds, Ethiopia and Sudan

47%
Life would be worse if I had not left

3%
Don't know

18%
Life would be about the same

33%
Life would be better if I had not left



Note: Refers to children and young people in Ethiopia and Sudan; questions not included for Somalia.

Looking back, looking forward

Around half of respondents felt that their situation had improved – that life would have been worse if they had not left. For many, therefore, movement, even with its associated risks, was seen as a way to improve their lives. The converse, not moving, was often regarded as the worse outcome. In this study, 45 per cent of respondents said that they intended to stay where they were at the time of interview for the next six months, and more than half intended to move somewhere else. They did not see their movement as a one-off event. In fact, two returnees in five said they planned to move elsewhere in the next six months.

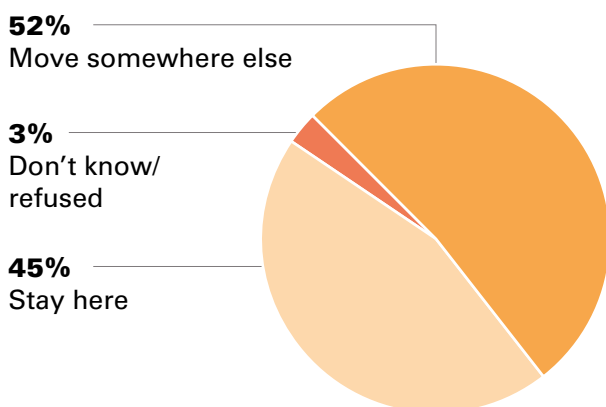
No significant gender differences were noted in these responses, with a slightly higher percentage of girls/young women than boys/young men reporting that their lives would be better if they had not left (37 per cent compared with 30 per cent) but almost identical numbers reporting that life would be worse if they had not left (46 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively).

Respondents were also asked about their aspirations for the immediate future, defined as the next six months. Children and young people

Figure 14: Plans to move or remain over the next six months

Base: 1,290 migrant children and young people, 14–24-year-olds, Ethiopia and Sudan

Q) In the next six months do you plan to stay here or move somewhere else?



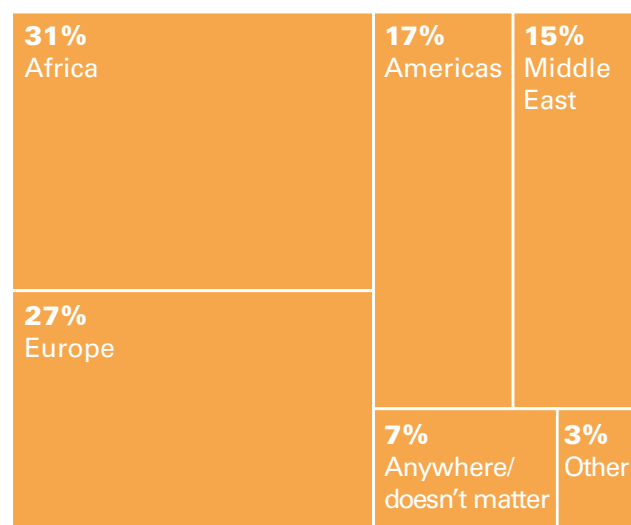
were split on whether they planned (or hoped) to stay in their current location (45 per cent), or move somewhere else in the next six months (52 per cent).

Among returnees, almost four in ten (37 per cent) said that they planned to move elsewhere in the next six months. This provides further evidence of the circularity of migration – a substantial proportion of those who have moved indicated they will try to do so again.

Overall, among those who said that they planned to move elsewhere in the next six months (52 per cent of all respondents), they said they planned to go to the following locations:

Figure 15: Where are you planning to move in the next six months?

Base: 671 migrant children and young people, 14–24-year-olds, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan



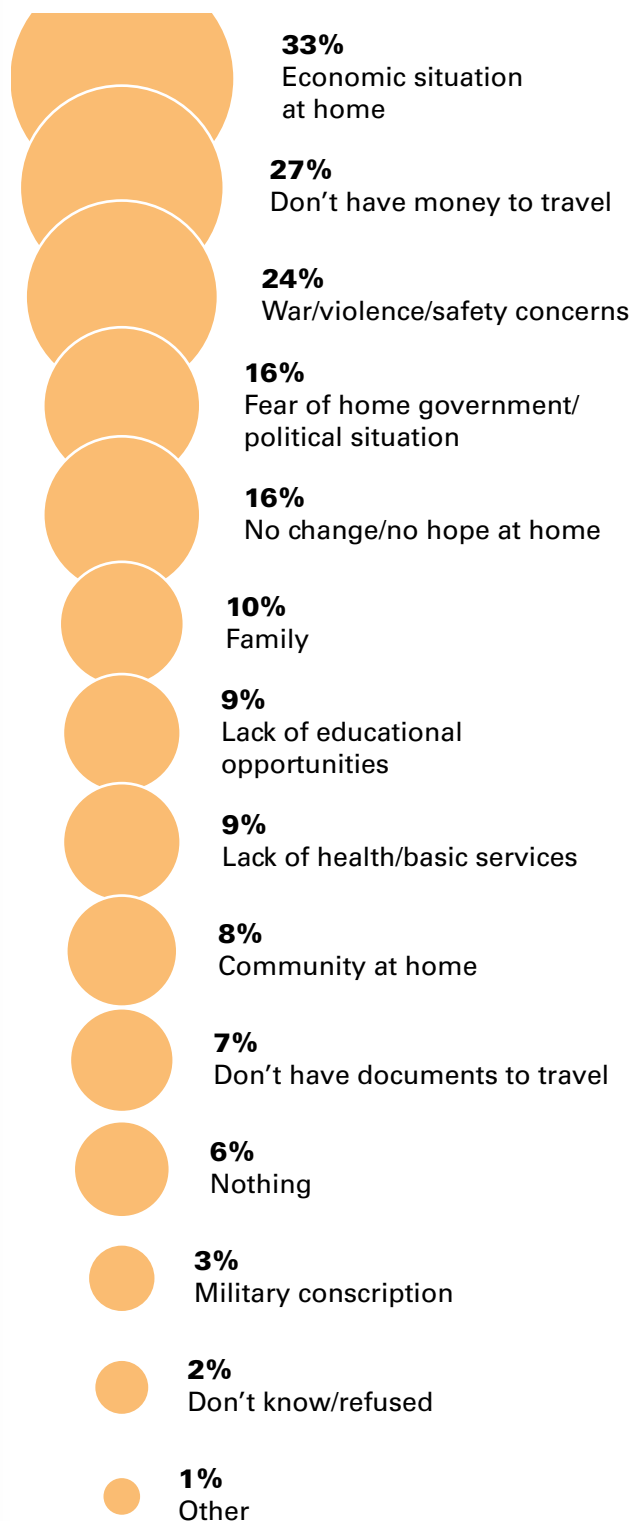
Those children and young people who said that they are still on the move (i.e., who had not returned to their home area) were also asked what, if anything, was stopping them from going back to their home area.

Very few respondents (only 6 per cent) said that there was no barrier to them returning home. A very large number pointed to economic factors (cited by 33 per cent of respondents) and security (24 per cent) as their reasons for not returning. As these are also the main reasons cited for moving, this indicates that the primary reasons not to return

Figure 16: Barriers to returning home

Base: 994 migrant children and young people who are still on the move, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan

Q) What, if anything, is stopping you from going back to your home area?



remain the factors that forced them away in the first place. As a 15-year-old male returnee said:

"I am planning to try to emigrate again, as I don't have anything here. I know that it is dangerous, and I am scared, but I don't have anything here and no reason to stay."

– Interview with male returnee, aged 15, Hargeisa, Somaliland, April 2019

For the one respondent in four (27 per cent) who cited lack of funds as a barrier to returning home, it may be the case that they feel stranded by their lack of resources. As an Ethiopian migrant in Puntland put it:

"If we had the means, I would return home. If I am to be idle and jobless, I would rather be that in the companionship of my family and parents ... than to [be] here in a community foreign to me. But it is too expensive."

– Interview with Ethiopian migrant, aged 17, Bossaso, Somalia, May 2019

Additional respondents spoke of other reasons for not wanting to return. A 15-year-old Ethiopian child said:

"I am a street child, I have no home to go back to."

– Interview with Ethiopian refugee, aged 15, Hargeisa, Somaliland, April 2019

Others are hesitant to return because they have begun to build a life in exile.

The 45 per cent of respondents who indicated that their plan was to stay in the same location for the next six months were then asked why they planned to stay.⁹⁹ Around half (52 per cent) said that employment opportunity was a reason for them to stay in the same location. The next most common reasons were around safety/security (42 per cent), education (34 per cent) and family life (24 per cent).

99. This was asked as an open-ended question, without any prompting from the interviewer. Instead, the respondent's response was written down and the answers back-coded into various categories post-survey.

CHAPTER 5

60

HOW BEST TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO MIGRATE

Programming for children and young people should be based on a deeper, more complete understanding of migrants' lived experiences, and should focus more specifically on movements within the Horn of Africa region.

Across the Horn of Africa, many children and young people are moving to another part of their own country or to a neighbouring state for multiple reasons. The research summarized in this report, and explored in greater detail in the accompanying country studies, has revealed how and why children and young people move, the opportunities they find, and the harms and risks they may encounter.

Most importantly, it has provided insights into these dynamics through the lens of their own perspectives. In this regard, the findings provide an important complement to the small but emerging evidence base on child and youth migration in the Horn of Africa, one which presents their voices as a central point of reference.

It has highlighted the self-perception of personal agency that is demonstrated by those who move. Recognition of this should be a key factor in understanding how older children and young people try to, and want to, access services and support. It has also shown that the majority of respondents seem to have personal and familial protective mechanisms to rely on – most commonly their family and then their friends. However, a significant minority are alone as they move or live away from their home area and the supportive mechanisms located there. Around 15 per cent of the sample had no friends at all; those respondents more likely to say they had no friends were girls, those living alone and non-nationals. Finally, the report has explored the role of child protection services and support for migrant children and young people in light of these findings.

As the findings have demonstrated, many children and young people continue to seek a sustainable 'solution' to their migration. They will continue

to move – or try to move – until they find a place where they can feel safe, where they feel they belong, where they can integrate, and where they can find education and jobs and build supportive relationships. For some, this journey will be cyclical, involving multiple periods of migration and return throughout their childhood and adult life. It is important therefore to take their views into account. Children and young people are seeking to overcome present and future challenges and build better lives and opportunities. They need support to give them the capacity to embrace their future as they see fit.

The research took place prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and, at the time of writing, the true extent of the pandemic in the Horn of Africa, as in other regions, is still emerging.¹⁰⁰ There is every reason, however, to expect that the pressures on migrants and their households, and the challenges children and young people engaged in migration face along their journeys, will have only intensified – as a result of extraordinary movement restrictions, drastic economic disruptions and a host of migration-specific considerations, including host community stigma. Understanding how Covid-19 is changing the protection context of migration in the Horn of Africa and elsewhere is a clear priority for follow-on research.¹⁰¹

Drawing on the voices of children and young people and following a standardized methodology, research in each of the countries has generated a series of detailed country-specific recommendations for Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan, developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.¹⁰² These recommendations have been framed to address the vulnerabilities and risks faced by children who migrate, irrespective of their motivation for movement,

100. See, for instance, World Bank, *COVID-19 Crisis Through a Migration Lens*, Migration and Development Brief No. 32, World Bank, Washington, DC, 2020, <<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33634>>, accessed 18 February 2021.

101. Subrahmanian, Ramya, Lucy Hovil, Mark Gill, Olivia Bueno and Iolanda Genovese, *Situational Brief. Research report on heightened vulnerabilities of migrant children & young people living alone in the context of COVID-19: Lessons from three Eastern African countries*, Lancet Migration: Global Collaboration to Advance Migration Health, June 2020, <https://1bec58c3-8dcb-46b0-bb2a-fd4addf0b29a.filesusr.com/ugd/188e74_7028c5425ce244e4915be11fcd0408c2.pdf>, accessed 25 February 2021.

102. Series of validation workshops held in Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan between August and October 2020.

or the category of migrant under which they might be classified. However, wherever possible, the country reports identify actionable recommendations further disaggregated by legal categories. In comparing and synthesizing these various recommendations across all three studies, three key messages emerge.

Key findings and messages

This report confirms that most of those who move stay within the same region as their country of origin, and that their migration experience is complex, perceived by respondents as having both positive and negative impacts on their well-being and defined by patterns of often repeated, sometimes cyclical movement. Governments and international organizations tasked with providing support to children and young people should therefore have a multidimensional understanding of migration – appreciating that it is neither linear nor straightforward, and that while it carries risks, it is not necessarily or always perceived as negative or dangerous by migrants themselves. It may still be evaluated by those who migrate as the best choice available to them within their overall circumstances.

Policies and programmes therefore need to be highly adaptive, recognizing the lived experience of children and young people who move and, most importantly, working with them in order to reduce the risks inherent in unsafe forms of migration.

The report offers a number of findings, organized around three key messages:

Message 1. The complexity of children and young people's migration journeys needs to be better understood for appropriate policy and programme responses

Children and young people define their own migration narrative: International frameworks generally use binary categories of migration: forced or voluntary; regular or irregular; internal or cross-border. These can be important to identify and protect those who are most vulnerable and to implement programmes to match the needs of particular subgroups. However, the diverse trajectories of children and young people moving within the Horn of Africa often complicate and

challenge these categories. Categories and definitions, if applied in narrow ways, may therefore obscure the dynamic and fluid nature of migration from the perspective of migrants themselves and make it difficult to translate a more multidimensional understanding into policies, programmes and practice. They compel a broader human development approach to addressing migration, focusing on strengthening the capabilities and capacities of children and young people, rather than an approach developed purely based on narrowly defined security considerations.

Children see themselves as primary agents of their migration story, particularly older children and young people, and are able to articulate their perspectives and experiences, as well as their needs and aspirations. Around three quarters of respondents report moving for more than one reason, and the same percentage said it was their decision to leave home. Nearly all said it would be their choice whether to stay in their new location or move. Even among those who moved primarily for security reasons, around half said it was their choice to leave their homes.

Migration is also often cyclical, and continuous: 52 per cent of children and young people interviewed foresee moving again in the next six months, while 45 per cent of children and young people interviewed wish to stay where they are.

Message 2. Children and young people's safety and well-being on migration journeys represent critical challenges and need investment and attention

Migration can present both risks and opportunities: A majority of respondents (47 per cent) said that life would be worse if they had not left their homes, and reported feeling safer in their new situation than in their location of origin. However, the migration journey within and across the Horn of Africa brings risks along with opportunities and both need to be kept in mind when assessing what is in the best interests of a child. Many face severe dangers and some are harmed, particularly when exposed to protection risks in transit (such as being physically hurt, held against their will, arrested or detained, forced to work or forced to join armed groups, among others).



Smugglers play a role in facilitating some children and young people's migration. Many children and young people migrating in the Horn of Africa are forced into spaces of irregularity because their travel is either illegal or discouraged by officials. They then become caught between state actors who wish to apprehend and return them to their homes, and those who wish to exploit them for profit, such as smugglers. A lack of safe routes and options for migration in and across the region can increase reliance on unsafe routes as well as middlemen and brokers, who may at times provide effective help but also exploit and abuse migrants, especially children. While they did not necessarily trust smugglers, around one sixth of migrant children and young people interviewed in this study reported deciding to use them regardless of the risk. In many cases, smugglers delivered what they promised, but also caused harm and violence in the process.

Lack of safety also stems from a lack of trusted reliable authorities children and young people can turn to for assistance. Only two respondents in five felt that government officials or the police would help them. Scarcely any children or young people who said they felt scared said they would turn for help to the police or other authorities; they were more likely to turn to religious leaders, international charities and teachers. One respondent in 12 said they would instead carry a weapon as a way to protect themselves. Forty per cent of children in camps and settlements felt excluded from using a social worker – impeded by language differences, a lack of documentation or xenophobia, or by the temporary nature of their stay.

Gender differences exist, though they vary across types of risk. Gender analysis of the data indicates differences in the perception of safety and risk that girls and boys report, as well as in relation to their respective access to services.

While a higher proportion of girls/young women than boys/young men reported having felt scared (typically of other people or wild animals), fewer felt unsafe where they slept, experienced actual harm, had been detained or felt the need to carry a weapon to protect themselves. Girls/young women were also less likely to have been excluded from using a shelter/temporary accommodation; they were also less likely to have access to a mobile phone or the internet.

Qualitative data collected for the research point to the distinct vulnerabilities girls experience in terms of exposure to sexual violence, and 16 per cent of all respondents were girls travelling with children, suggesting higher rates of marriage and childbearing than their male peers.

In some contexts, more boys than girls reported perceptions of being at greater risk. This could be a result of being more likely to travel alone, and therefore being more likely to encounter certain risks that are more easily mitigated by travelling in a group. Boys and young men, for example, reported being more likely to have been physically hurt and to feel unsafe where they sleep at night. More research focused on gendered differences is needed for greater exploration of the underlying factors that drive differential risk perception and experience for boys and girls, and for young women and men.

Message 3. Migrant children and young people's access to many services is poor, and the needs they have are not being met

Migrants lack access to many basic services. By the nature of their movement, children and young people are less familiar with their surroundings and the services that might be available. In addition, services that are available are often overstretched by demands from host populations and may not be well positioned and resourced to accommodate migrant populations, or to overcome cultural differences or language barriers.

Around one third did not have access to clean water, seven in ten lacked internet access and three quarters did not have money for day-to-day living. But when asked about what services they most needed, those interviewed prioritized services such as education or support with a job or money, so that they would have the skills and means to improve their own and their families' lives.

Barriers include costs and location of services and exclusion based on language, as well as lack of identity documentation. For key services – schools, primary health-care centres and hospitals – more than half of children and young people said that the main barrier was cost. For other services, such as access to social workers and counsellors, for around half of children the

main problem was lack of availability. A second major factor is location. Many children live in remote areas far from services. Another issue for children attending school is the language of instruction. A further obstacle is lack of documentation. Migrants' access to documentation is important in order to provide a legal identity, raise children's visibility and facilitate access to services.

Recommendations

Building on the key findings and messages above derived from the three country reports, this report offers several recommendations for rethinking child protection approaches for child and youth migrants in the Horn of Africa.¹⁰³ These recommendations are aimed at the wide spectrum of actors from national and local governments, intergovernmental bodies, donor partners and international organizations, as well as international and national civil society organizations which are either mandated or associated with policy and programmatic actions related to migration, collectively referred to below as 'migration stakeholders'.

First, migration stakeholders should embrace a child-centred understanding of the drivers and characteristics of migration, recognizing that children have rights to protection irrespective of the circumstances or nature of their migration. This is also underscored by international rights mandates such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).¹⁰⁴ A child-centred understanding of migration entails engaging with and including children's perspectives and experiences to better understand their vulnerabilities and decision-making strategies and using these to inform both policies and resource allocations, and also best interests determination where relevant.

In particular, migration stakeholders should:

- incorporate the perspectives and lived experiences of child and youth migrants themselves in assessing vulnerabilities, designing policies and resource allocations, and determining best interests wherever possible and appropriate;
- ensure that multiple dimensions of vulnerability are considered (e.g., gender, age, unaccompanied status, etc.) to fully understand the needs of child and youth migrants, and tailor responses accordingly – stakeholders should advocate for, and conduct training to support, more comprehensive best interests assessments; and
- develop and implement comprehensive information programmes along with improving opportunities for children and young people in their home communities, strengthening family and economic support programmes and developing supportive environments for children and young people who stay, those who wish to move and those who return home. At the same time, awareness-raising programmes must take into account that, even where risks are well understood, they may be tolerated where the perceived potential for gain is significant.

Second, child protection systems need to be reformed and strengthened to ensure effective protection of all children and young people including migrant children, irrespective of nationality or migration status. In particular, stakeholders should:

- develop appropriate mechanisms to end migrant child detention, their separation from parents, and any returns policies which risk breaching the principle of non-refoulement, as

103. Genovese, Iolanda, Mark Gill, Lucy Hovil and Tekalign Ayalew Mengiste, *Reimagining Migration Responses: migrant children and young people's experiences in Ethiopia*, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence, 2021.
 Bueno, Olivia, Mark Gill, Lucy Hovil and Iolanda Genovese, *Reimagining Migration Responses: migrant children and young people's experiences in Somalia*, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence, 2021.
 Bueno, Olivia, Mark Gill, Lucy Hovil and Iolanda Genovese, *Reimagining Migration Responses: migrant children and young people's experiences in Sudan*, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence, 2021.

104. Governments have a legal obligation under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to protect and safeguard all children, including children and young people who migrate within and across borders, based on Article 3.1 of the Convention, which stipulates: "The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions affecting children." General Comments No. 6 and No. 21 (issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child to states' parties to aid interpretation and implementation) provide additional important guidance for responding to the needs of vulnerable children, including those in migration pathways. See D'Costa, Bina and Emilia Toczydlowska, *Not Refugee Children, Not Migrant Children, Children First: Lack of a systematic and integrated approach*, Innocenti Research Brief 2017-15, UNICEF Innocenti, Florence, 2017, <www.unicef-irc.org/publications/904-not-refugee-children-not-migrant-children-but-children-first.html>, accessed 25 February 2021.

- violations of child rights and contraventions of the principles of the child's best interests;¹⁰⁵
- support legislation and policies that facilitate access to documentation such as universal birth registration, IDs and temporary residence permits;
- ensure effective legal processes to reduce impunity for trafficking and exploitation – all human trafficking and exploitation cases involving children should be dealt with as the highest priority, setting speedy trials and specific time limits;
- ensure appropriate best interests assessment and determination procedures to meet child and youth migrant needs, recognizing that children and their families will continue to move if they feel that it is in their best interests; and
- consider the level of danger reported in border areas, increase the presence and coordination of child protection actors at borders, and ensure that all borders security authorities are trained to identify unaccompanied and separated children and refer them to child protection actors.

In particular, migration stakeholders need to actively promote and invest in resilient child protection systems¹⁰⁶ that are accessible to all children, regardless of their migratory status. This should include:

- putting effective firewalls in place between law enforcement/police and child protection officials and workers to enable the latter to focus on the well-being of children irrespective of migration status;
- building and expanding social service workforce capacity to address gaps that have been identified through detailed country-level analysis;
- promoting the use of trusted mechanisms to support migrant children and young people, through diversifying service providers – including community-based organizations (CBOs), NGOs, faith-based organizations and others – to help children overcome the lack of trust that causes them to avoid contact with officials and services;
- having modules on children's rights and protections in training curricula for all actors responsible for or exposed to migrant children and guarantee that child protection officers and social workers are involved in all children's best interests assessments and determinations procedures;¹⁰⁷ and
- strengthening information management systems and considering the creation of centralized systems for child protection case management and effective monitoring.

Third, migration stakeholders should therefore adopt a multisectoral and integrated approach while designing and implementing programmes to ensure that no children, irrespective of migration status and nationality, face barriers in accessing basic services, including clean water, washing facilities, schools and primary, secondary and tertiary health-care facilities. Children interviewed highlighted their need to access money, communication and employment services in order to transition safely into adulthood.

In particular, stakeholders should:

- facilitate access to services – including clean water, washing facilities, money, communications, education/training and employment services – by adopting a multi-sectoral approach, linking child protection efforts with interventions in other allied sectors such as education, social protection and health;
- prioritize strengthening of children and young people's access to legal identity and documentation, in line with Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- make efforts to monitor access to services

105. This point is addressed in Article 3, paragraph 1 of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 14 (2013), CRC/C/GC/14, paragraph 59; and also United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, Joint General Comment No. 23 (2017) on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return, CMW/C/GC/4–CRC/C/GC/23.

106. The concept of resilience in relation to systems refers to the ability of a system to predict, adapt and operate during unexpected events or a major disruption/crisis (i.e., displacement or Covid-19) and recover/return to normal operation after that. See Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Resilience Systems Analysis: Learning & recommendations report*, OECD, Paris, January 2017 <www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/docs/SwedenLearning_Recommendationsreport.pdf>, accessed 21 February 2021.

107. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *UNHCR Guidelines on Determining the Best Interests of the Child*, UNHCR, Geneva, May 2008, <www.unhcr.org/4566b16b2.pdf>, accessed 19 January 2021.

- for migrant communities and ensure that those who are underserved are the subject of specific outreach and expansion efforts; and
- ensure access to long-term and durable solutions for children and young people who do not want to move onward, especially those who have no prospect of being able to work legally or be naturalized in their current locations.

Further research

This report offers a robust evidence base but one that was necessarily limited in scope. Further research that builds on the methods applied here could provide greater insights, including in the following areas.

Gender: Further research on the gendered impacts of migration is needed, in particular to uncover the experience and perspective of a hidden population. It is relevant that 16 per cent of children (all girls) across the sample have children of their own and 14 per cent are married; early marriage may be one of the ‘protective’ strategies used by families to enable girls to move, and this needs further exploration.¹⁰⁸ Vulnerability to violence and sexual exploitation is experienced by both girls and boys, and specifically designed and ethically conducted research is essential especially with respect to services for survivors of violence.

Covid-19: Further research is needed on how the pandemic has affected young migrants and their families – and the services available to protect them.

The role of the family is little understood in terms of the drivers of migration as well as the support, nor is the impact of migration policies on families staying together or being separated.

Social workers: Why do children and young people use or not use a social worker? Do they see social workers as safe ways to access government-related services or as a firewall between them? What level of demand is there for ongoing care, even where the individual moves elsewhere, and for those who want it what benefits and safeguards are required?

Smugglers: How do children see smugglers and are there viable options to achieve the same ends through safer means? There should also be more analysis of the incentives, disincentives and business models that shape smugglers’ decisions.

Children who stay: If children and young people decide not to move, what are their motivations and barriers, how do they protect themselves, and how should policies be adequately tailored to support children who stay?

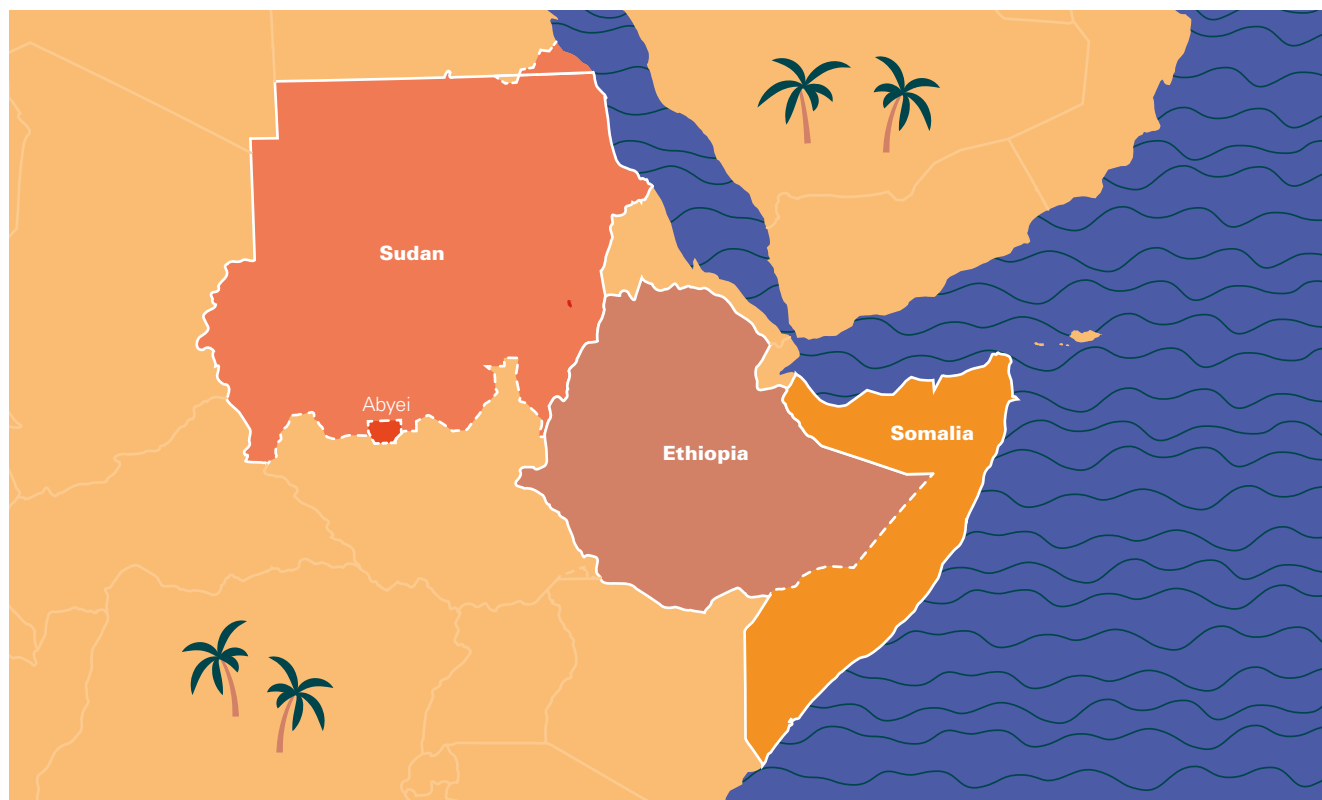
Returnees and children left behind by migrating parents: What happens to those who return and why do they choose to move again? What role do shame and stigma and mental health issues play in these decisions? Where migration is a long-term and cyclical process, how can support best be provided? What are the impacts of the migration of a parent on the children staying and their family (i.e., economic impacts as well as separation, family disruption, mental health and psychosocial support consequences)?

Other locations: The issues raised in this report can be studied across different migration routes in different regions to spotlight the experiences and challenges faced by children.

108. United Nations Children’s Fund, ‘No Mother Wants her Child to Migrate’: Vulnerability of children on the move in the Horn of Africa, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence, 2019, <www.unicef-irc.org/child-migration-hoa#sectionDownload>, accessed 18 February 2021.

APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY



Note: The designations employed in this publication and the presentation of the material do not imply on the part of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) the expression of any opinion whatsoever concerning the legal status of any country or territory, or of its authorities or the delimitations of its frontiers.

The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. The final status of the Abyei area has not yet been determined.

A common questionnaire, translated into appropriate languages, was administered in a structured way. However, certain questions were tailored to each location and some were not asked in all three countries. The interviewers were also supplied with topic guides for their discussions. In total there were 1,290 quantitative interviews and 224 qualitative interviews.¹⁰⁹

Profile of respondents

Table 2a and **Table 2b** show the profile of the children and young people who were interviewed in the quantitative part of the study.

Gender and age – The study was designed to capture the views and experiences of boys/young men and girls/young women. But since efforts were made to interview similar numbers of both genders, the percentages here do not represent the gender breakdown of the population as a whole. Overall, 37 per cent of the respondents were children aged

between 14 and 17 and 63 per cent were young people between 18 and 24 years old.

Migration type – Considerable efforts were made to include children who had undertaken different patterns of movement (internally displaced persons, refugees, migrants and returnees). But rather than relying on legal categories, the research used a number of proxies. For example, one respondent in five said that they were now back in their home area when they were interviewed and were therefore classed as returnees; most of the rest therefore were still “on the move” even if they did not have plans to move on in the foreseeable future. Around 20 per cent of those interviewed were in their own country, though the proportion varied between countries – 28 per cent in Sudan, 64 per cent in Somalia and 70 per cent in Ethiopia.

Location – The research was designed to provide sufficient interviews in the different types of settings in which children on the move live.

109. A total of 418 quantitative and 83 qualitative interviews were conducted in Somalia between April and May 2019; 405 quantitative and 85 qualitative interviews in Ethiopia between July and October 2019; and 467 quantitative and 56 qualitative interviews in Sudan between November 2019 and January 2020.

Therefore, just over half (52 per cent) of the interviews were conducted with children and young people living in urban settings, one respondent in three (35 per cent) were interviewed in a camp or settlement, and the remainder (13 per cent) were living in or close to a border area. Just under half of respondents (45 per cent) said that they planned to stay in the same location in the next six months and around half (52 per cent) said they planned to move elsewhere.

Ethical protocols

UNICEF is committed to ensuring that all research by the institution and its partners is conducted in an ethical manner, particularly when it involves children and young people. The *research protocols were therefore designed in line with UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis* and Office of Research – Innocenti's ethical guidelines. Enumerators had five days' training on the ethical protocols and techniques.

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These protocols protect the best interests of the child, emphasize the need to do no harm and promote the physical safety and emotional well-being of participants – and in particular minimize the risks of retraumatizing participants. This meant, for example, protecting the children's privacy, confidentiality and data security, while ensuring that they gave informed consent or assent. In all aspects, the safety of both interviewers/enumerators and respondents was paramount. There were also referral systems tailored to each location.

Interviewers explained the scope and purpose of the interview and obtained verbal consent from respondents. And for those under the age of 18, parental/guardian/caregiver consent was sought, where practical. Enumerators were required to document consent and, in a small number of cases where consent was not affirmed, those interviews were excluded. The overall ethical protocols were reviewed by ethical experts at UNICEF Innocenti and ethical clearance was obtained from an external Ethics Review Board.

The sampling approach for the quantitative part of the study took into account a number of considerations. The first was to ensure that broadly the same number of interviews were conducted

in each area – Ethiopia, Somalia (Somaliland and Puntland) and Sudan. The second consideration was to select sample points for the interviewing in different types of locations.

- *Capitals/urban areas* where migrants are more likely to be 'invisible' and fear accessing services due to the fact that their presence may be 'illegal' and are likely to be exposed to particular vulnerabilities as a result of this status, but at the same time may have access to educational and employment opportunities not available elsewhere.
- *Camps* or other areas identified as having high numbers of migrants, including refugee and/or internally displaced person camps where migrant populations are very visible and where services are likely to be more readily available and specifically targeted at migrants. In the context of this research this refers in some cases to formally constituted refugee or internally displaced person camps and in some cases to informal and unregulated areas where these populations congregate.
- *Border areas* where specific vulnerabilities are likely to come into play, particularly where children and young people interact with border officials, seek to access new territories and experience more unfamiliar environments.

In some cases, these categories overlapped. For instance, some camps are near urban areas and some urban areas are close to or located at borders.

Just over 400 quantitative interviews were conducted in each of the three countries, providing an overall sample size of 1,290 survey respondents. An additional 224 qualitative interviews were conducted, including 84 in Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland; 85 in Ethiopia; and 55 in Sudan. This is a large enough sample to provide meaningful analysis of the data overall and by key subgroups and provides a balance between the number of interviews achievable within the budget and timeframe against the depth of question areas covered in each interview.

The third consideration was to have sufficient sample points so that interviews were not clustered in a small number of locations. Although it was not practical to have hundreds of sample

points in each country, because of issues around costs, timings, availability of interviewing teams and security concerns, when planning the locations within each country consideration was given to ensuring as broad a range of locations as was feasible. In total, interviews for this study took place in 32 sample points.

The interviewing teams were provided with guidelines on the profiles of children/young people to interview and targets were set with regard to gender and displacement type with a view to ensuring a viable sampling of the major types of displacement in the region (including camp, urban and border environments).

The respondents were found through a variety of means, including through the networks of the implementing partners, through snowballing and referrals, and through randomly approaching potential respondents in locations known to have a high proportion of migrants.

The questionnaire consisted of different types of questions. The majority of questions were closed, where one answer was provided. Some questions allowed for more than one answer (referred to as “multi-code”). In a small number of cases, the interviewer read out to the respondent a list of possible answers and the respondent selected those answers that were applicable to her or him – this is a prompted recall approach and where this was used it is highlighted in the report. In addition, a small number of open-ended questions were also asked where the respondent was asked a question and their answers were written down by the interviewer. These answers were then coded and analysed post-survey.

Training and fieldwork

National government partners and research partners worked with UNICEF Innocenti to implement the project in each country and we would like to extend our special thanks to the following lead national research partners, their institutions and their colleagues:

- in Ethiopia, the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth (MOWCY) and the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA);

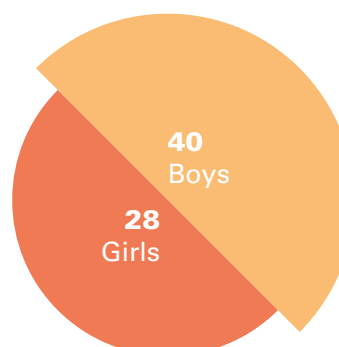
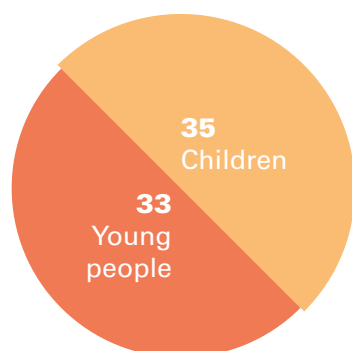
- in Somaliland, the Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs and Family (MESAF) and the University of Hargeisa; in Puntland, the Ministry of Women, Development and Family Affairs (MOWDAFA) and the Peace and Development Research Centre in Somalia;
- in Sudan, the Universities of Khartoum and Gedaref and the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW).

Qualitative methodology

A total of 224 qualitative interviews were carried out by UNICEF Innocenti staff, consultants and partner organizations. This was primarily designed to provide two perspectives. First, conversations with children and young people were intended to gather experiences that could personalize and shed light on issues given space and explored in the quantitative research. Second, interviews were carried out with families, government officials, civil society organizations and community leaders who work with children, to understand

Table A.1: Qualitative interviews – children and young people

Base: 68 children and young people, April 2019 to January 2020, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan



Reimagining Migration Responses

how child protection systems in the country are supposed to work and how they work in practice. By triangulating views of both children and young people and the actors who are supposed to protect them, a fuller view of the gaps in protection and services can be obtained.

Tailored interview maps were created for each category of respondent, with a view to soliciting the needed information from each subgroup. Efforts were made to ensure that respondents came from a range of backgrounds and movement patterns.

Table A.2: Qualitative interviews – key informants

Base: 156 Key informants' interviews, April 2019 to January 2020, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan

■ Sudan ■ Ethiopia ■ Somalia

Government officials



Civil society organizations and academics



UN/international organizations



Family and community and religious leaders





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