

RESEARCH REPORT

Youth on the Move

Investigating decision-making, migration trajectories and expectations of young people on the way to Italy

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REACH Informing more effective humanitarian action



MHUB

The NORTH AFRICA MIXED MIGRATION HUB
LE CENTRE RÉGIONAL DES MIGRATIONS MIXTES D'AFRIQUE DU NORD
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MIMP MIXED MIGRATION PLATFORM



Norwegian Embassy

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Implemented by REACH within the framework of the MMP and the MHub

This report was produced by REACH within the framework of the Mixed Migration Platform (MMP), and in partnership with the Mixed Migration Hub (MHub).

The MMP is a joint-NGO initiative providing quality mixed migration-related information for policy, programming and advocacy work, as well as critical information for people on the move. The platform was established by seven partners – ACAPS, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Ground Truth Solutions, Internews, INTERSOS, REACH and Translators Without Borders (TWB) – and acts as an information hub on mixed migration in the region. For more information visit: mixedmigrationplatform.org.

The MHub is an autonomous entity that works on behalf of the North Africa Mixed Migration Task Force (NAMMTF) as a knowledge management, research, information collection, analysis and dissemination hub and Secretariat to the NAMMTF. The NAMMTF is currently made up of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the DRC, the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS) and Save the Children’s Regional Office for the Middle East and Eurasia. For more information visit: www.mixedmigrationhub.org.

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A note on terminology

Young people on the move: Building on the definition of ‘*Children on the Move*’ used by the Inter-Agency Group on Children on the Move¹ and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)’s definition of youth², for the purposes of this study, young people on the move shall be defined as young people aged 15 to 24 moving for a variety of reasons, voluntarily or involuntarily, within or between countries, with or without their families, and whose movement, while it may open up opportunities, might also place them at risk (or at an increased risk) of economic or sexual exploitation, abuse, neglect and violence.

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¹ Inter-Agency Group on Children on the Move (2013) Background Paper: The UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development 2013: Why children matter.

² UNESCO, What do we mean by youth?

Executive Summary

Since March 2016, more than 260,000 refugees and migrants have arrived on Italian shores.³ The majority of them are young people,⁴ with unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) accounting for up to 15% of all arrivals.⁵ In order to strengthen policymakers' and humanitarian actors' responses in countries of transit and destination, this study was designed to shed light on young people's decision-making and preparedness levels, the mechanisms shaping their migration trajectories, and their expectations on the way to Europe. The assessment used purposive sampling to identify and interview 81 respondents originating from West Africa, East Africa and the Middle East, between the ages of 15 and 24 years, who arrived in Italy after March 2016.

Political⁶ and security issues,⁷ which often intertwined with economic concerns, were reported as the most common reasons inducing young people to consider migration. Deciding to migrate can take many years. Most respondents reported that they started thinking about migrating around one year before their departures. Specific events such as personal or household issues and human rights violations were reported as key migration triggers.

Unless the choice to migrate was triggered by abrupt events, respondents tended to leave before turning 18 to pursue their aspirations, as part of a transition to adulthood. The age breakdown uncovered that, while children's migration is typically associated with vulnerability, passivity or forced dynamics, respondents who leave before the age of 18 have a set of interests and aspirations they wish to pursue through migration.⁸

Our findings show that **young people's levels of preparedness before the journey were mixed.** While most people tried to gather enough information and the economic resources to cover at least the first part of the journey, information, mostly provided by interpersonal networks, could be inaccurate and even misleading.

Most young people intending to move chose their destinations after gathering information about the place and the means to reach it. Generally, the young people interviewed for this study did not struggle to find information about the migration process. However, the **information received often proved to be general and not always fully representative** of the difficulties they could meet along the way. Word of mouth, the experiences of returnees and family members on the move or abroad, social media channels such as Facebook and YouTube, traditional media such as radio and TV, and dedicated websites and documentaries were reported as the most common sources of information used by young people to acquire information about the journey.

In a large number of reported cases, **the decision to move to Italy was secondary,** and was undertaken months, or even years, after the first decision to leave a country of origin. **Young people on the move to Italy often experienced long and fragmented journeys.** A lack of economic capital, security concerns in Libya, and, on a smaller scale, migration policy barriers, were reported as the key factors affecting the length of the journey.

³ Author's own calculation based on data from the Ministry of Interior, Daily statistics, 23 August 2017.

⁴ Sigona, Nando and Rachel Humphris (2017) Child Mobility in the EU's Refugee Crisis: What are the Data Gaps and Why do they Matter?, 23 January 2017.

⁵ Author's own calculation based on data from the Ministry of Interior, Daily statistics, 23 August 2017.

⁶ For the purposes of this study, the expression "political issues" embraces: (i) the erosion of the rule of law, with consequent arbitrary violations of political and/or civil rights; and/or (ii) political stability and presence of armed violence, measured as the "likelihood that the government will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means" as per the World Bank.

⁷ In this study, the expression "security conditions" refers to situations of generalised violence due to ongoing conflicts, civil war, terrorist threats, armed groups, bandits, etc.

⁸ MMP (2017) Separated Families, who stays, who goes and why? April 2017.

The amount of economic and social resources secured at the moment of departure influences the possible fragmentation of the journey and the vulnerability of young people to risks along the way. The majority of young people from East Africa and the Middle East⁹ generally possessed more economic and social capital¹⁰ from the start of their journey compared to people from West Africa. For young people from West Africa a lack of economic resources implied higher vulnerability to job exploitation along the journey. For young East Africans, this **translated into increased risk of suffering from long periods of detention**, characterised by episodes of violence and torture¹¹ in Libya. Respondents from the Middle East presented overall higher economic resources during their journeys compared to respondents from the other two regions.

Social capital often reportedly compensated for the limited economic resources available to respondents regardless of their region of origin, and reduced their vulnerability to torture and detention. When re-defining trajectories along the migration route, expected access to services was never reported as a key factor shaping young people's decisions along the journey. The actors of the migration "industry"¹² were often described as the main service providers, facilitating young people's mobility.

The migration "industry" differs greatly across the various regions of origin. In West Africa, a greater number of stakeholders play roles in the migration process. Drivers, labour recruiters, housing providers, smugglers and other intermediaries offer a variety of services within specific locations. Compared to West Africans, **the journey of young people from East Africa seemed to be more organised**, with smugglers taking care of transportation, accommodation - usually in warehouses - and providing food to their clients.

Almost all children and youth originating from East Africa reported having been asked to pay only once they arrived in Libya. Smugglers defer the payment in order to (i) increase the price, (ii) encourage people who declare not being able to afford the cost of the service to agree on their services, and (iii) increase their negotiation power. Once in Libya, people who initially acted as smugglers, through detention, violence and torture force their victims to hand over all their savings and to mobilise their network of friends and family to pay the ransom.

On the West African routes, drivers working at the border between Niger and Libya have reportedly started to employ the same practice of deferring payment until Libya in collusion with armed groups and Libyan-based smugglers.

The line between smuggling¹³ and trafficking¹⁴ is often blurred. In the shift from the former to the latter, the person becomes a traded commodity rather than a

⁹ In this study, the one Afghani respondent has been included among Middle Eastern respondents, as Afghanistan is covered by MMP activities in the Middle East (as a country in a secondary region).

¹⁰ Defined as "social relation itself, and the resources accessible through those social relations" in Bourdieu, Pierre (1986) *The forms of capital*, Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education. Ed J Richardson. New York: Greenwood Press.

¹¹ Art. 1 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment defines states: "For the purposes of this Convention, the term "torture" means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions."

¹² The migration "industry" is defined as "the clusters and networks of travel agents, lawyers, bankers, labour recruiters, brokers, interpreters and housing agents, as well as human smugglers and traffickers, which have an interest in and tend to facilitate the continuation of migration" de Haas (2010) "The Internal Dynamics of Migration Processes: A Theoretical Inquiry" in *The Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol 36(10), 29 June 2010.

¹³ Smuggling is defined as 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." in Article 3 of the Smuggling of Migrants Protocol of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, GA/RES/55/25 of 15 November 2000.

¹⁴ Trafficking in Persons is defined as "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

client.¹⁵ Awareness of being trafficked varied across respondents, with the variation largely due to differing perceptions of individual freedom. As such, respondents subjected to the same limitations in terms of freedom of movement demonstrated very different levels of awareness about their risk of being trafficked. Similarly, they described their counterparts as facilitators even when several elements usually linked to trafficking could be identified in the respondent's story.

the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation" as of Article 3, paragraph (a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, GA/RES/53/111 of 9 December 1998.

¹⁵ MHub (2015) Conditions and Risks of Mixed Migration In North East Africa, Study 2, November 2015.

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List of acronyms

DCIM: Department for Combating Illegal Migration
DFID: Department for International Development
ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States
EU: European Union
IDP: Internally Displaced Person
IOM: International Organization for Migration
MHub: Mixed Migration Hub
MMP: Mixed Migration Platform
NGO: Non governmental Organization
UASC: Unaccompanied and Separated Child
UN: United Nations
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USA: United States of America

Introduction

Since March 2016, more than 260,000 refugees and migrants have arrived on Italian shores.¹⁶ The majority of them are young people,¹⁷ with UASC accounting for up to 15% of all arrivals.¹⁸ The vast majority of them entered Europe irregularly through the two main gateways to the continent: Italy, using the Central Mediterranean route, or Greece, using the Eastern Mediterranean route via Turkey. While increased awareness of child-specific concerns has emerged in public debates and the policy discourse in Italy,¹⁹ limited attention has been devoted to understanding the reality of young people's journeys and the key factors determining their decision-making before and during travel. A better understanding of the experiences and decisions made by young people on the way to Italy is needed to inform policy-makers and humanitarian actors' responses in countries of transit and destination.

This study was conducted between July and August 2017. The study was designed to explore: (i) decisions about migration, (ii) preparedness to leave, and (iii) the mechanisms shaping the trajectories and expectations of young people, aged 15 to 24, who arrived in Italy after March 2016. The post-March 2016 arrival period is focused on as it follows the signature of the European Union (EU) -Turkey Statement.²⁰

The study builds on the findings from the assessment "*Children on the move in Italy and in Greece*" conducted by REACH in partnership with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), on the profiles and experiences of children who recently arrived in Italy and Greece.²¹ Using a qualitative approach, this study uses three main findings from the previous assessment as starting points: (i) the length of the journey, (ii) the individual or joint nature of decisions made and (iii) young people's pre-departure awareness of the risks they would face during the journey. First, REACH found that children travelled for one year and two months, on average, before they reached Italy. This study aimed to dig deeper into the factors affecting the length of the journey. Second, while a growing literature recognises the role of individual decision-making in migration processes,²² very few studies have tried to explore how children and young adults specifically decide on migration, where they go and how they reach their destination. This assessment seeks to do just that. Thirdly, this study further investigates the REACH finding that less than half (43%) of the children interviewed in Italy had considered the risks of the journey before leaving their countries of origin.²³

The report is structured in two main parts. The first chapter focuses on what happens to young people prior to departure: when and how young make migration decisions, and what resources young people access to mitigate the expected risks and costs of migration. The second chapter looks into the design of the journey: what mechanisms facilitate or undermine young people's mobility and what types of services, resources and information they come across and access on the way to Italy.

¹⁶ Author's own calculation based on data from the Ministry of Interior, Daily statistics, 23 August 2017.

¹⁷ Sigona, Nando and Rachel Humphris (2017) Child Mobility in the EU's Refugee Crisis: What are the Data Gaps and Why do they Matter?, 23 January 2017.

¹⁸ Author's own calculation based on data from the Ministry of Interior, Daily statistics, 23 August 2017.

¹⁹ UNICEF (2017) UNICEF hails new Italian law to protect unaccompanied refugee and migrant children as model for Europe, 29 March 2017.

²⁰ The post-March 2016 arrival period is emphasised to capture all movements after the signature of the EU-Turkey Statement in March 2016.

²¹ REACH (2017) Children on the Move in Italy and Greece, June 2017.

²² See for instance: de Haas, Hein (2014) Migration theory: Quo vadis?, International Migration Institute, Working Paper 100 / DEMIG Project Paper No. 24, November 2014, and Hagen-Zanker, Jessica and Richard Mallet (2016) Journeys to Europe: The role of policy in migrant decision-making, ODI Insights, February 2016.

²³ REACH (2017) Children on the Move in Italy and Greece, June 2017.

Analytical Framework

Migration is often misunderstood as being a linear movement of people between an origin and a destination. There is a growing literature to support the contention that people involved in mixed migratory movements change their initial destinations depending on the information and conditions encountered en route.²⁴ The complexity of current migration flows shows that further investigation is needed to explore the dynamics of different journeys.

Europe has recently experienced a large inflow of such movements, characterised by a large number of UASC who make their way to Europe through often hazardous routes. According to a recently released report by REACH and UNICEF, many UASC leave home with the idea of reaching a destination, and then redefine their migration plan in response to constraints they face along the way.²⁵

With a view to address the complexities of young people's migratory experiences, the analytical framework used in this report draws on different theories and approaches that recognise the ability of people on the move to make choices in migration processes, instead of considering them as objects merely affected by push-pull factors.²⁶ This involves taking into account the personal characteristics, the capabilities²⁷ and the resources shaping people's decisions about migration, while considering the broader dynamics of social change and development in which they are immersed.²⁸ By looking into the journeys of people on the move, this study explores how expectations, perceptions of risk and actual constraints influence people's plans as their journeys unfold.

The theories and concepts outlined below guided the identification of research questions, indicators and analysis of findings with a view to explore: (i) how young people on the move make decisions regarding migration, (ii) how they prepare to leave and (iii) if and to what extent preparedness and expectations shape young people's trajectories. For each of these sections, a different concept or approach was used.

1. Young people's decisions on migration

To shed light on the decision-making of young people on the move, this study builds on Hagen-Zanker and Mallet's application of the threshold approach²⁹ to migration to analyse how young people on the move choose their first intended destination³⁰ and following secondary movements.

The threshold approach considers that, for migration to occur, three thresholds must be crossed:

- (i) The indifference threshold; which is understood as the cognitive stage where people on the move consider the idea of migrating. It can last many years and involve people changing their minds several times, until the idea of migrating is seen as a feasible option;

²⁴ See for instance Hagen-Zanker, Jessica and Richard Mallet (2016) Journeys to Europe: The role of policy in migrant decision-making, ODI Insights, February 2016.

²⁵ REACH (2017) Children on the Move in Italy and Greece, June 2017.

²⁶ This derives from the "rational choice theory" conceptualising individuals as rational actors making logical choices to maximise their income or utility. Functionalist approaches to migration theory focus on such cornerstone assumption to explain migration as a utility-maximising strategy.

²⁷ Drawing on Amartya Sen's work, human capability is defined as "the ability (or freedom) of human beings to lead the lives they have reason to value and to enhance the substantive choices they have".

²⁸ Castles, Stephen (2010) Understanding Global Migration: A Social Transformation Perspective, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, vol. 36(10), 23 June 2010.

²⁹ Hagen-Zanker, Jessica and Richard Mallet (2016) Journeys to Europe. The role of policy in migrant decision-making, ODI Insights, February 2016, building on the threshold approach developed by van der Velde, Martin and Ton van Naerssen (2011) People, borders, trajectories: An approach to cross-border mobility and immobility in and to the European Union; van der Velde, Martin and Ton van Naerssen (Eds.) (2015) Mobility and migration choices: Thresholds to crossing borders, Farnham: Ashgate.

³⁰ In this report, the expression "first intended destination" is used to refer to the preferred destination at departure, as opposed to newer destination(s) considered during secondary movements.

- (ii) The location threshold; which concerns the choice of the first intended destination and possible others during secondary mobility;
- (iii) The trajectory threshold; or the route imagined to reach a destination.

Within this framework, the study captures how young people on the move choose where and how to go, not only at the moment of selecting their first intended destination but also during their secondary movements, as the journey unfolds.

2. Assessing preparedness to migrate

People's ability to mobilise certain resources affects the decisions they are able to make about where to live, and their well-being during the journey.³¹ Through the lens of the capabilities approach, as developed by de Haas³² and Bonfanti,³³ this study assesses people's preparedness to migrate in terms of ability to access a wide range of resources necessary to mitigate the risks and costs of migration. In particular, this approach allows the study to shed light on: (i) how age, gender and educational level can influence people's ability to negotiate over access to resources and prepare for the journey; and (ii) to what extent different degrees of access to financial (income, assets and debts),³⁴ human (educational attainment) and social capital (intended as the "social relation itself, and the resources accessible through those social relations")³⁵ translate into the mitigation of risks and psychological, social and economic costs of migration. As social capital can sometimes compensate for limited human and financial capital of people on the move,³⁶ the assessment recognises its crucial role in influencing young people's decisions over destinations and trajectories. Within this framework, people's ability to mobilise resources creates a hierarchy of destinations, but as one form of capital can be converted into another, people endowed with limited financial assets but extensive social and informational capital can get as far as those with more consistent financial resources.³⁷

By looking at the economic, informational and social resources young people on the move access before and during the journey, this assessment captures how these endowments affect migration patterns across age groups and regions of origin.

3. Exploring routes, channels, destinations and expectations of young people on the move

People move to one destination with a set of expectations and reconfigure their trajectory when expectations are unmet. Trajectories are not set in motion automatically: plans of people on the move and of people intending to move, decisions and expectations are continuously shaped by "flows and counter-flows of people, goods, services and information"³⁸ that can facilitate or undermine their movement.

This study looks into the explanatory role of endogenous feedback mechanisms, such as networks, actors of the migration "industry" (including smugglers,³⁹

³¹ de Haas, Hein (2014) Migration theory: Quo vadis? International Migration Institute, Working Paper 100 / DEMIG Project Paper No. 24, November 2014.

³² Ibid.

³³ Bonfanti, Sara (2014) Towards a Migrant-Centred Perspective on International Migration: The Contribution of Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, *Social Work & Society*, vol. 12(2) 2014.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Bourdieu, Pierre (1986), *The forms of capital*, Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education. Ed J Richardson. New York: Greenwood Press.

³⁶ van Hear, Nicholas (2006) *I Went as Far as My Money Would Take Me: Conflict, Forced Migration and Class in Cr peau, Fran ois et al. eds. (2006) Forced Migration and Global Processes: A View from Forced Migration*, Lanham: Lexington Books.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Mabogunje, Akin L. (1970) *Systems Approach to a Theory of Rural-Urban Migration*, *Geographical Analysis* vol. 2(1), January 1970.

³⁹ Smuggling is defined as 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." in Article 3 of the Smuggling of Migrants Protocol of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, GA/RES/55/25 of 15 November 2000.

traffickers,⁴⁰ drivers), chance encounters acting as support mechanisms, and ideas and information on the decisions about locations, trajectories and services accessed. Such mechanisms can facilitate or undermine people's movement and contextually affect the migration processes over time by, for example, fostering a culture of migration⁴¹ that can later influence expectations and aspirations of prospective people on the move.

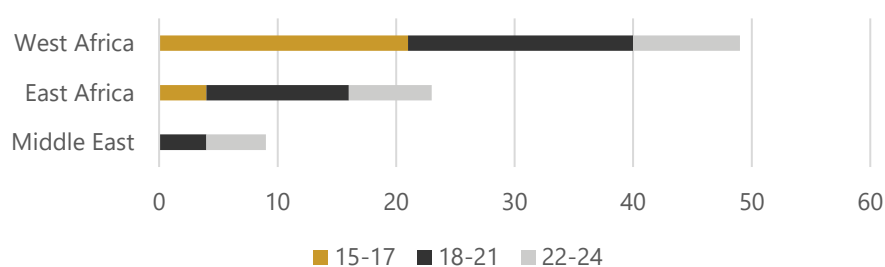
What is more, the assessment looks at how such mechanisms affect young people's expectations about the journey and to which extent such expectations can affect their well-being or vulnerability along the way.

Methodology

Data collection methodology

This study used qualitative research methods for the collection and analysis of primary and secondary data. Findings draw on primary data collected through 81 semi-structured interviews conducted by enumerators⁴² in English, French and Arabic. To identify respondents, a purposive sampling strategy was used based on age and preselected criteria, including nationality and date of arrival in Italy.

Figure 1: Number of respondents per region of origin and age group



Note: the sample includes 49 respondents from West Africa (21 aged between 15 and 17, 19 aged between 18 and 21, and 9 between 22 and 24 years old), 23 respondents from East Africa (4 aged between 15 and 17, 12 aged between 18 and 21, and 7 between 22 and 24) and 9 respondents from the Middle East (4 aged between 18 and 21, and 5 aged between 22 and 24 years old).

Drawing on the UNESCO's definition of youth, the target population for this study was comprised of children and young adults aged 15 to 24 who arrived in Italy after March 2016.⁴³ This broad definition is meant to allow the exploration of differences between the experiences of children who migrate between the ages of 14 and 17 years and young adults who migrate between the ages of 18 and 24 in terms of access to resources, expectations, and perceptions of costs and risks.

Respondents were divided into three age groups (15-17; 18-21 and 22-24 years old). Age stratification allowed for the examination of differences between those who: (i) were children throughout their journey; (ii) young adults who left as children and turned 18 on the way to Italy or upon immediate arrival in Italy

⁴⁰ Trafficking in Persons is defined as "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 of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation" as of Article 3, paragraph (a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, GA/RES/53/111 of 9 December 1998.

⁴¹ The expression "culture of migration" refers to the phenomenon where "As migration grows in prevalence within a community, it changes values and cultural perceptions in ways that increase the probability of future migration" in Massey, Douglas S. et al. (1993) Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal, in Population and Development Review, Vol. 19(3), September 1993.

⁴² Enumerators were trained, *inter alia*, on: data collection with children; interacting with children; ethical considerations in data collection with children; referral mechanisms and how to identify signs of distress.

⁴³ The date was chosen to capture all movement after the adoption the European Union-Turkey Statement.

(people aged 18-21), and (iii) those who likely began their journey as adults (respondents aged 22-24).

Beyond age groups, respondents were also sampled based on their region of origin and date of arrival in Italy. Respondents came from: Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Gambia, Guinea, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan and Syria.

Data saturation was reached for all age groups of respondents originating from West Africa and East Africa, and for the Middle East respondents in the 18-21 and 22-24 age groups. No respondents could be found in the 15-17 age group from the Middle East during the data collection phase at the sites covered by this assessment.

Respondents participated in interviews on a voluntary basis and were sampled purposively to allow for comparison across age groups and regions of origin.

Data collection took place from 13 July to 12 August 2017. Enumerators from REACH and MHub were deployed in Latium, Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna and Sicily in Italy. These regions were selected because they are among the regions hosting the highest proportion of children and young people on the move in Italy (13%, 9%, 9% and 7% respectively).⁴⁷

Box 1: Children and young adults from West African countries

The large number of respondents from West Africa is due to their overrepresentation within the statistics on arrivals. The year 2016 witnessed a significant spike in the number of arrivals of people originating from West Africa, as compared to other nationalities that in previous years had accounted for the majority of arrivals on Italian coasts (e.g. Syrians). Between March 2016 and July 2017,⁴⁴ Nigerians (50,252 arrivals), Guineans (20,410 arrivals), Ivorians (18,755 arrivals) and Gambians (15,050 arrivals) have led the statistics of arrivals in Italy.

The number of UASC from West Africa has also been steadily increasing since 2016. In the first half of 2017, Guineans (1,732), Ivorians (1,404), Gambians (1,350) and Nigerians (1,170) featured among the top 5 nationalities in terms of UASC arrivals.⁴⁵

In addition, the large share of respondents in the 15-17 age group was due to the need to account for potential bias in age reporting. As participants were selected based on the self-reported age declared within reception facilities, it is possible that some respondents might have reported to be younger than their actual age, hoping to access the child protection system at arrival.⁴⁶ As a mitigation strategy, constant emphasis was put upon anonymity and the fact that the interview would by no means impact the respondent's legal status in Italy.

Data collection sites included official reception centres for UASC, regional hubs⁴⁸ and informal gathering sites. Data collection procedures ensured full compliance with the Italian legislation on children's participation in research activities. While the interviews were completely anonymous, expression of informed assent by underage respondents and legal consent by their legal guardians, or provision of legal consent by adults, were systematically collected prior to interviews. In line with the Italian legislation, only UASC hosted in official reception facilities were interviewed.

A secondary data review informed research questions and identified relevant indicators.

⁴⁴ Author's own calculation based on data from Frontex, Detections of Illegal Border Crossings Statistics (Apr-Dec 2016), and from the Ministry of Interior, Daily statistics, July 2017.

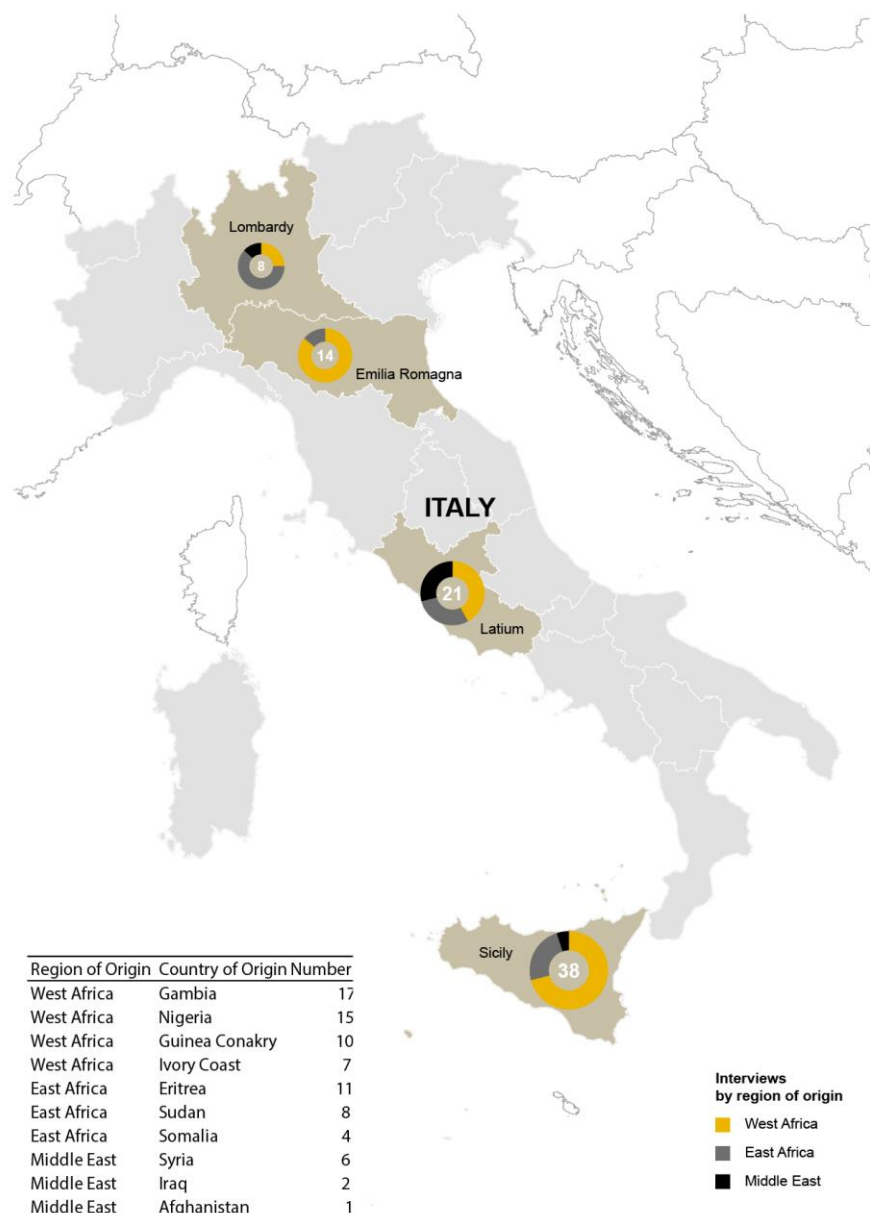
⁴⁵ UNHCR, Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) Dashboard (Jan-Dec 2016) & (Jan-Jul 2017).

⁴⁶ On the incentives that could derive from underreporting actual age, see for instance: Foreign Policy, When 'Underage' Refugees Look Anything But (Jan 2016) which discusses the case of Sweden, where high presence of UASC is also found.

⁴⁷ Ministry of Interior (2017) Daily Statistics, 26 July 2017.

⁴⁸ According to the Italian Roadmap, Regional Hubs are transit centres dedicated to the temporary accommodation of citizens of third countries during the identification of the most appropriate legal pathway and, potentially, reception centres.

Figure 2: Location of interviews, by country and region of origin



Challenges and limitations

1. As this study used qualitative research methods, results are indicative only and cannot be generalised for the entire population of young people on the move in Italy.
2. The purposive selection of participants belonging to the selected regions of origin and age groups implies the possibility of a selection bias. To mitigate this potential bias, enumerators attempted to interview respondents from a range of geographic locations and ethnic backgrounds.
3. Given that participants were discussing events in the past, sometimes up to six years ago, there is a possibility of recall bias. To control for this risk, questionnaires were constructed to ensure double checking of the information provided.

4. The study focuses on young people who arrived in Italy between April 2016 and June 2017, and left their countries of origin between 2011 and 2016. Their experiences are specific to this particular time period.
5. As young people from the Middle East represented a small share of total arrivals in Italy in the selected timeframe, fewer respondents could be found from this region of origin. The sample is not completely balanced, which has limited the ability to draw meaningful comparisons across regions of origin for all indicators. As such, while comparisons between respondents from East and West Africa were systematically drawn, indicators on decision-making processes over the country of destination and the trajectories chosen could not always be disaggregated by region of origin.
6. UASC represent 92% of the total number of children who arrived in Italy in 2016.⁴⁹ As such, they represent the great majority of respondents in this age group.
7. Children below 15 and particular vulnerable groups have been excluded from the assessment, due to protection concerns. As such their views are not represented.
8. Despite the fact that female youth represented 12.8% of the total arrivals between April 2016 and June 2017,⁵⁰ no interviews with female youth were conducted. This decision was taken for protection reasons. This means that the study does not address gender-specific drivers and factors affecting the migratory experience of female youth.
9. To comply with legal requirements, only children hosted within the official reception system could be interviewed. The situation of children outside the system may hence not be represented.
10. Due to operational constraints, only participants whose language skills allowed fluency in either English, French or Arabic could take part in the study. As such, the situation of children and young people with limited language skills in English, French or Arabic may not be represented.
11. Respondents were selected based on self-reported age. A possible age bias may have led to the inclusion of older or younger respondents in each of the selected age groups.
12. Not all respondents answered all questions. When data visualisations are used to illustrate findings, the relevant sample size is noted below each graph.

⁴⁹ UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM, Refugee and Migrant Children- Including Unaccompanied and Separated Children - in the EU. Overview of Trends in 2016.

⁵⁰ Author's own calculations based on UNHCR, Europe - Refugee and Migrant arrivals data, July 2017.

Findings

This study analyses the key factors affecting the migration experience of young people on the move to Italy, before and during the journey. The first chapter focuses on young people's decision-making process and preparedness level before the journey. The second chapter looks into the mechanisms that facilitate or undermine young people's mobility and the type of access to services, resources and information they have along the journey.

Respondents' profiles

All respondents were male. For protection reasons, no interviews were conducted with female respondents within the framework of this study. The 81 respondents who participated in this study originated from three different regions: West Africa, East Africa and the Middle East. All of the 25 respondents under the age of 18 arrived in Italy as UASC. In two cases, respondents (both from the Middle East) reported having left their country of origin under the age of 18 accompanied by a family member, but having arrived in Italy alone.

In our sample, respondents from the Middle East and East Africa were, on average, older than respondents from West Africa. When the interviews were conducted, all respondents from the Middle East and 83% of respondents from East Africa were older than 18. For West Africans, the sample was more diverse, with 43% of respondents aged 15 to 17, 39% aged 18 to 21 and 18% aged 22 to 24 years old.

Respondents across the three regions demonstrated high literacy levels and mixed educational backgrounds. West Africans presented the highest rate of self-reported illiteracy, with 18% having never attended school. However, 33% attended lower secondary school and 24% attended primary school only. Respondents from the Middle East were the most educated, with 44% having received lower secondary education, followed by 22% with upper secondary education and 22% who accessed tertiary education. For East Africa, 48% of respondents reached lower secondary school, 22% accessed upper secondary education and 17% attended only primary school.

Although in a few cases respondents and their families jointly discussed respondents' decision to migrate before the journey, in all but two cases (both from the Middle East), respondents from the three regions migrated alone.

While looking at the trajectories of young people who recently arrived in Italy, 96% of respondents crossed the sea from Libya, while the remaining 4% arrived in Europe via the Turkish-Bulgarian border before March 2016, and later travelled to Italy. All Syrian respondents had already been in Libya or Egypt since 2011 or 2012.

Young people's decision-making and preparedness to migrate

Children and young people's perspectives are rarely captured in migration studies. There is indeed a tendency to depict children and young people who migrate before the age of 18 as unequivocally vulnerable or passive actors in the process.⁵¹ Conversely, this chapter investigates young people's ability to influence their own lives through migration. The first section explores how age and context of origin affect how young people start thinking about migration, and how they eventually decide whether to stay or to go. The second section explores young people's ability to gather social, economic and informational resources to mitigate the expected

⁵¹ Hashim, Iman M. and Dorte Thorsen (2011) *Child Migration in Africa*. London & Uppsala: Zed Books & Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

costs of their journey, how their expectations about the journey are shaped, and how young people prepare themselves to face them.

1. Young people's decision to migrate

When and how young people start thinking about migration

Political issues⁵² and security concerns,⁵³ including conflicts, and a lack of economic opportunities were reported as the most common reasons inducing young people to consider migration. Political and security conditions were often intertwined with economic concerns. Such interlinking can drive young people to migrate even when they have not personally been affected by persecution.⁵⁴ Respondents from countries ravaged by years of violent conflicts and insecurity - mostly from East Africa and the Middle East - reported how political and security issues dismantled the economic system of their countries of origin, severely affecting young people's opportunities. Security concerns were often indicated as the primary, yet indirect factor, reducing young people's economic opportunities in their countries of origin. The interconnection between a difficult economic situation and a culture of fear, persecution, and the absence of rule of law in protecting young people's rights, was also put forward by a smaller number of respondents from West Africa, especially from Nigeria and the Gambia.

"In 2014, I began to think about leaving. The militias came home every month asking for money. I paid until I could [not pay anymore]. I had so many relatives around the world, and I started thinking that I could have done like they did. I left my country because I didn't want to do military service. Being a military is very bad. They give you very little money. You can't help your family and you can also die."⁵⁵

Deciding to migrate can take many years, and often builds on strong cultures of migration. In contexts characterised by consistent mobility patterns, the example of people on the move can increase awareness of lifestyles and opportunities elsewhere. It can also produce a stratification of norms and attitudes, which, over time, affect people's identity, ideas, behaviours and aspirations for the "good life".⁵⁶ With the exception of when a decision to migrate was taken in response to an abrupt event, most respondents reported having started to think about migration months, and often a year before their actual departure. On the other hand, for many respondents, mostly from East and West Africa, migration had been a recognised option since the age of 10 or 12, being themselves part of transnational families or having close acquaintances on the move or who had migrated in the past.

Specific events such as personal or household issues and human rights violations were reported as triggers for young people to move. While young people from the three regions of origin covered by the study were all concerned with the need to find better economic and living conditions, some regional specificities were found. Young people from West Africa mostly reported that what triggered their departure was the death of a family member, the emergence of "problems" within the household, as well as "problems" of a legal nature outside the household. For young people from East Africa and the Middle East, violations of

⁵² For the purposes of this study, the expression "political issues" embraces: (i) the erosion of the rule of law, with consequent arbitrary violations of political and/or civil rights; and/or (ii) political stability and presence of armed violence, measured as the "likelihood that the government will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means" as per the World Bank

⁵³ In this study, the expression "security conditions" refers to situations of generalised violence due to ongoing conflicts, civil war, terrorist threats, armed groups, bandits, etc.

⁵⁴ Embiricos, Alexandra (2016) The back way to Europe: Gambia's forgotten refugees, Open Democracy, 19 May 2016.

⁵⁵ E_2224_04, Eritrean, male, 23 years old.

⁵⁶ Massey, Douglas S. et al. (1993) Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal, in Population and Development Review, Vol. 19(3), September 1993.

their political or civil rights, the threat of military conscription – mainly for Eritreans – or any threat to their physical integrity emerged as catalysts for their departure.⁵⁷

“I began thinking about leaving when I was 10 years old, because I heard about the good life in Europe. Some old friends had already travelled to Europe and they were telling me about Europe, so I liked the idea.”⁵⁸

In cases where young people migrated alone, such specific events had to affect respondents personally to push them to migrate. For example, some respondents had already witnessed the arbitrary violation of relatives’ or acquaintances’ human rights, but it was when the threat to their own freedom or physical integrity became apparent, that they decided to move.

The analysis of primary data across age groups and contexts shed further light on the motivations leading young people to migrate. **Unless the choice to migrate was triggered by abrupt events, respondents tended to leave before turning 18 to pursue their aspirations, as a step into their trajectory to adulthood.**⁵⁹ The majority of people who migrated after the age of 18 tended to have left from the Middle East and East Africa, where political or security concerns were predominantly reported as the main reasons behind migration. By contrast, most respondents from West Africa left before turning 18. Research in West Africa by Whitehead et al. describes a large phenomenon of child migration that is not framed in terms of vulnerability, passivity or forced mechanisms, but as a move towards the realisation of children’s own interests and aspirations. This can be explained if one looks at how social considerations in contexts of origin and generational hierarchies shape expectations on children’s self-reliance or contribution to household support that are different from the legal divide between childhood and adulthood.⁶⁰

“In 2014, my father, little brother and little sister were killed at home by a commando of Al-Shabab: they came to my house and killed them all. [...] After this happened, my mother decided we had to leave the country, but I didn’t want to go. [...] At a certain moment, Al-Shabab threatened to kill me unless I stopped working for this [international] organization. [...] After that, I worked in a hotel until the end of 2014, when it was bombed. At that point, I decided to leave.”⁶¹

Taking into account respondents’ contexts of origin brings further clarity to these findings. Indeed, in areas with long histories of mobility, cultures of migration affect young people’s perceptions of migration as a feasible and “normal” strategy to pursue their interests and aspirations. Cultures of migration can also affect social expectations about young people’s ability to take control of their lives through migration.⁶²

⁵⁷ Authors purposely decided to use the original formulation “problems”, as respondents were often reluctant to further elaborate on the sensitive nature of these issues. Based on findings from the REACH and UNICEF assessment “Children on the move in Italy and Greece”, it is only possible to assume some of these “problems” included domestic violence or family disputes.

⁵⁸ SU_1821_01, Sudanese, Male, 19 years old.

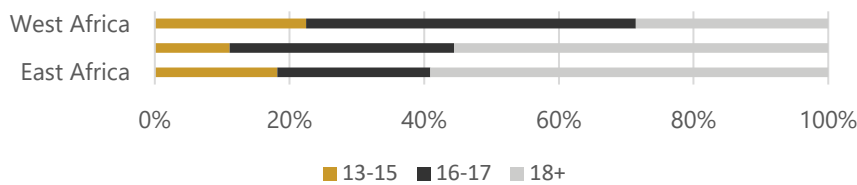
⁵⁹ Whitehead, Ann et al. (2005) Child migration, Child Agency and Intergenerational Relations in Africa and South Asia, Paper presented to the conference: “Children and Youth in Emerging and Transforming Societies”, 29 June-3 July 2005: Oslo.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ SO_18-21_03, Somali, Male, 18 years old.

⁶² Hashim, Iman and Dorte Thorsen (2011) Child Migration in Africa. London & Uppsala: Zed Books & Nordiska Afrikainstitutet

Figure 3: Age of respondents at departure



Note: Proportions are based on data from 49 respondents from West Africa, 23 respondents from East Africa and 9 from the Middle East.

“My parents are still living in Côte d’Ivoire. They do some small jobs or part-time work. I did not need money and I did not leave my country due to economic reasons; my family was able to cover my basic [needs] but I wanted to take charge of my life. I did not inform my parents about the decision to leave.”⁶³

How young people decide about their first destination

Most young people on the move decided on their first intended destination after gathering some information about the place and the ways to reach it.

Information received directly through interpersonal communication with family members or acquaintances who had completed the journey or who were still on the move – and through traditional media and online platforms – contributed to building expectations about what respondents would find along the way and at the destination.

Young people from West Africa mostly intended to migrate to Italy, to neighbouring countries or to North Africa – in the latter case, mostly to Libya or Algeria. Most of those who went to Libya to work reported not being aware of the dire political and security situation they would face. In cases when young people moved in response to friends or acquaintances’ assurance that Libya offered many job opportunities in particular, informants tended to neglect or understate the level of insecurity in the country. Neighbouring countries such as Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso and Senegal were first intended destinations for some respondents in search of better work opportunities.

People from East Africa indicated unspecified European countries as countries of first destination. Italy and France followed as countries of first choice. Europe was associated with the ideals of freedom and respect for human rights, as well as better security conditions.

“I wanted to reach Europe, this was my dream. Since I was a kid people were talking about Europe, describing how much safer it was there. Later on, in Khartoum, I had the chance to see some programmes [about it on] the television.”⁶⁴

On the other hand, the possibility of reuniting with a relative abroad, or the ability to speak the language of the country of destination, were also reported as having an impact on young people’s choice of country of destination. This was especially the case for French-speaking young people from West Africa moving to Algeria or wishing to reach France.

⁶³ IC_1517_01, Ivorian, Male, 16 years old.

⁶⁴ SU_1821_04, Sudanese, Male, 21 years old.

Four respondents also highlighted how the choice of their country of destination had been influenced by expected policy incentives. For example, Ethiopia⁶⁵ and Uganda⁶⁶ were reportedly chosen due to their national refugee policies.

“I didn’t want to go away from Ethiopia but my friends did. So, I went with them [...]. Our aim was to reach Uganda where it is easier to stay as a refugee. Some of our friends on Facebook gave us this information.”⁶⁷

While also indicating countries in Europe as their first destinations, young people from the Middle East were mostly influenced by assumptions of policy incentives and better economic conditions. Europe, and more specifically Germany and Finland, were mentioned as places where respondents expected to have good chances of being granted asylum and to enjoy high standards of living. In the remaining cases, Libya was identified as the country of first destination because respondents had already lived there or had family who could support them in the search for better working conditions.

2. Assessing preparedness: mobilising resources before the journey

What young people on the move bring with them and *why*

The study found that the majority of young people across the three regions of origin prepared economic and material resources to bring on their journeys. The nature of these resources depended on young people’s expectations about the journey and their economic situation back home. Across all regions covered in the study, the majority of respondents tried to gather the economic resources expected to cover at least the transportation costs until the first stopover, mostly on the basis of estimates made by consulting smugglers or friends who had previously made the same journey. Almost all of the respondents from East and West Africa reported having brought a small bag containing a few clothes, and, in a couple of cases, a pair of strong shoes to walk and a phone. Some respondents reported having taken no items with them, as they had none. Only in a very few cases respondents carried food and water, as most expected to find these en route.

“I had already an idea of how much it would cost me to reach Italy. [...] I knew this through friends I had who had smugglers among their acquaintances and so I saved money through my previous job in masonry.”⁶⁸

The amount of economic and social resources secured at the moment of departure influences the possible fragmentation of the journey and the vulnerability of young people to risks along the way. When the decision to migrate allowed some time for planning, young people from West and East Africa worked to save some money, and/or sold their most valuable belongings such as phones and laptops, when available. **Respondents from West Africa were often aware that they would need to stop along the way, in order to work and save enough money to continue their journey, or that they could work in Libya to repay their journey.** In the latter case, respondents indicated that they had almost no awareness of the severe human rights violations they would suffer. Those who left with no economic resources reported, instead, their intention to pass unnoticed

⁶⁵ Xinhua (2017) Ethiopia reaffirms its open-door refugee policy, 31 August 2017.

⁶⁶ Tendai, Marima (2016) New life for South Sudan refugees in Nyumanzi, Uganda, Al Jazeera, 7 December 2016.

⁶⁷ E_2224_02, Male, 23 years old.

⁶⁸ SU_2224_03, Sudanese, Male, 23 years old.

or the impossibility to prepare due to the abruptness of their migration decision. Young people from the Middle East were found to have more economic resources at departure compared to respondents from the other regions, which translated into the ability to access safer migration channels and means of transportation.

“For the journey to Libya, the man I met at the station in Niger told me I could repay the [cost of the] journey while working in Libya. In Sabratha, I had to work for the Arab man to pay [for] the journey to Italy.”⁶⁹

Some young people knew before departing on their journey that their family and community networks could support them with economic resources along the way. Half of the respondents from East Africa reported that they could rely on the economic contributions of friends and family before leaving. When they could not pay in advance, respondents often left with an agreement from their smuggler that they would pay once they arrived in Libya, with the help of their network of family members and friends back home or abroad, thus exposing themselves to severe risks of detention and other human rights violations. Belloni⁷⁰ explains that relatives might at first be reluctant to help young people on the move before the journey, either due to their limited economic resources or because they are aware that the journey will be too risky. When young people still decide to undertake such a high-risk journey, they are often aware that community and family networks will eventually provide some financial support in case of extreme need.

Similarly, young people from the Middle East could often count on contributions from their communities of origin, households and extended family to pay for their journeys. In the cases of children who left with at least one of their parents, the journey was fully paid for by their parents.

Some respondents from West Africa also reported that their family provided them with economic support, although in fewer cases than respondents from East Africa and the Middle East. While a higher proportion of young people from West Africa tended to make the decision to migrate individually compared to young people from the other two regions,⁷¹ a couple of respondents received moral or economic support before the journey or when severe obstacles were encountered along the way.

“I knew that the money I had from selling my phone would be enough to get only to Niamey. So once in Niamey, I called my mother. She was not happy, she initially told me there was no money she could send me. Then after two weeks, my mother finally sent some money.”⁷²

In addition to offering financial support, family and friends can provide moral support to young people upon departure, and as they endure challenges throughout their journeys. Such support back home and companionship⁷³ of friends and acquaintances along the journey can indeed influence young people’s well-being by buffering them from stressful events, and providing “*stability and a sense of self-worth*”.⁷⁴ This emerges from the data in many different ways: most respondents left or tried to leave with one or more friends, or aimed to join someone at their

⁶⁹ GC_1517_02, Guinean, Male, 17 years old.

⁷⁰ Belloni, Milena (2016) My Uncle can’t say no if I reach Libya. Unpacking the social dynamics of border-crossing among Eritreans heading to Europe, in Human Geography, Vol 9(2).

⁷¹ REACH (2017) Children on the Move in Italy and Greece, June 2017.

⁷² G_18-21_06, Gambian, Male, 16 years old.

⁷³ Many respondents reported having left or leaving with friends.

⁷⁴ Mels C, Derluyn and Broekaert E. (2008), Social support in unaccompanied asylum-seeking boys: a case study, in Child: Care, Health and Development, Vol 34 (6).

destination. Others communicated with their families throughout their journey to Italy.

“While my family could support me materially at the beginning, afterwards they were mainly my source of psychological support.”⁷⁵

Box 2: Before the journey. A Gambian child preparing for the long journey to Italy

Leaving home to reach a new continent is often a complex process. The excerpts below, extracted from the interview of a 19-year-old Gambian respondent who left at the age of 15, show the many material and psychological considerations that young people take into account before leaving.

“I planned the journey before leaving: I decided [to] which countries I wanted to go and collected information on how much money I needed to go from one place to another. I knew I would have to work along the way to reach the different places. I decided I would leave each country when I had enough money to travel to the next one, plus a little extra money for food. [...] My final destination was Italy, but I knew I would have to stop in the different countries on the way to work and pay for transportation. I stopped in Senegal, Mauritania, Algeria, and Libya and then I crossed the sea to Italy.”

The respondent not only tried to gather all possible information and material resources needed to be able to cover the first part of the journey, but he also mentally prepared for the possible risks he would meet and drew upon his network of friends to mitigate the expected material and psychological costs from the journey.

“The day before leaving I relaxed because I knew the journey was going to be very hard. I packed a bag, I only put in it one t-shirt, one pair of trousers, the money for the bus and my birth certificate, since you do not have any other form of identification document in Gambia until you turn 18. I left with someone [else] so I could stay with them, share the rent and food expenses. I knew before getting to Algeria that it was going to be a difficult time. My friends had told me before I got there. [...] I had seen news on TV about Libya, in Gambia and in the other countries I had crossed, and I also knew from my friends. I knew Libya was going to be very difficult.”

How young people gather information before leaving

Young people on the move interviewed for this study did not struggle to find information about the migration process. However, the information received was often general and not always fully representative of the difficulties that young people could encounter along the way. When respondents were informed about possible risks, they were either related to specific locations (e.g. the border between Mali and Algeria, Morocco and Spain, or specific cities in Libya) or not actually representative of the overall level of hardship of the journey. Awareness of the risks of the journey, however general, was never an element of deterrence. The urgency to leave and the perception of “having no other choice” prevailed.

Friends, family members or other acquaintances who had completed their own migration journeys or who were still on the move, were reported as being among the most trusted sources of information accessed before leaving. However, information spread through interpersonal network is rarely verified, which makes young people particularly vulnerable to rumours and misinformation.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ SU_1821_03, Sudanese, Male, 20 years old.

⁷⁶ Foran, Rose and Anahi Ayala Iacucci (2017), Lost in translation, Internews, May 2017.

Some respondents also reported that traditional media, such as radio and TV, or online platforms, were consulted to inform further consideration of their decision regarding the selected destination, and to understand the conditions and risks of the journey. Others based their decision on information provided by people in their neighbourhood or remote acquaintances (word of mouth). Besides traditional news outlets and social media, friends and smugglers reportedly proved to be valuable sources of information to estimate the costs and the trajectories to reach their destinations both before their migration and once young people were on the move.

A friend of mine from Nigeria told me to go to Algeria where I could work and save money to support my university education in the European Union or in the United States. [...] I told him about my situation and that I was thinking of leaving, and he told me to go with him. He told me I could work just for a year and gain enough money to go to university, and that there was a lot of work, which I found out was not true.”⁷⁷

Figure 4: Top five sources of information and type of decision they were used for (before the journey)

The darker the colour, the higher the frequency

	Choice to migrate	Destination	Journey
Family or friends (abroad or on the move)			
Traditional media			
Word of mouth			
Family or friends (home)			
Internet and social media			

Note: Frequency based on the total number of times that sources were mentioned by respondents, for whom data was available: family or friends abroad or on the move (39 times), traditional media (19 times), word of mouth (17 times), family or friends at home (16 times), internet and social media (8 times).

Young people’s literacy level or educational background may impact their ability to choose between possible trajectories to reach their first destination.

Two respondents with high-level educational backgrounds explicitly mentioned how their knowledge, especially in geography and politics, influenced the choice of their preferred route.

“I went to Chad, because it’s the closest border to Libya. I knew it from school because I studied borders of Sudan and I knew that Chad is the closest way.”⁷⁸

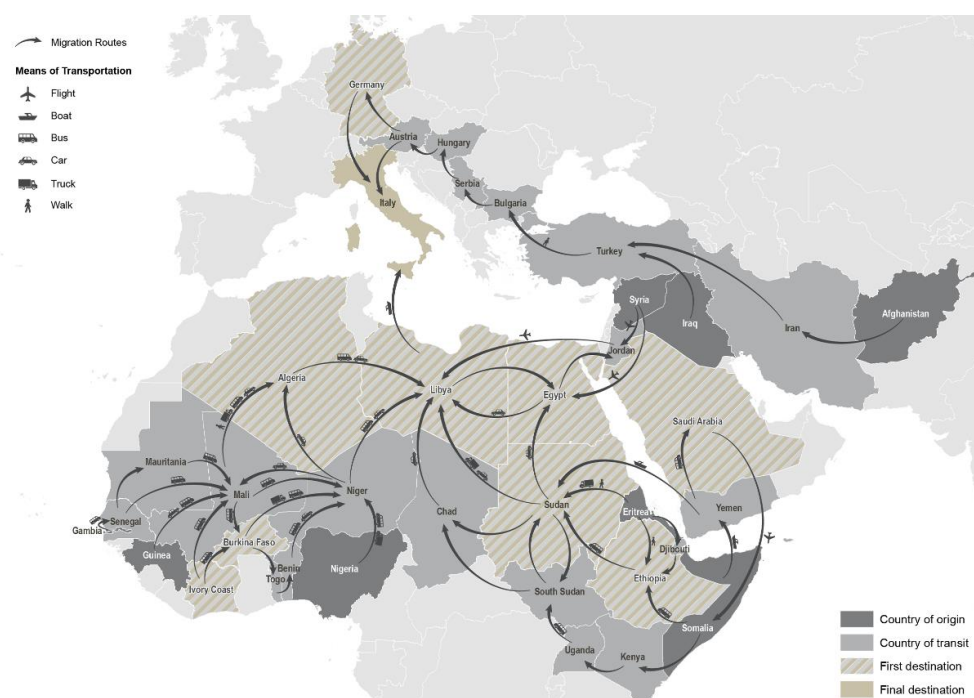
Resources and factors shaping young people’s trajectories

Economic and social capital, as well as the capability to access key information may greatly affect the migration experience. This chapter investigates how economic, social and informational resources shape young people’s journeys, by defining their trajectories and speed. Furthermore, the section analyses the key factors that have reportedly facilitated or undermined young people’s mobility.

⁷⁷ N_2224_01, Nigerian, Male, 24 years old.
⁷⁸ SU_1821_02, Sudanese, Male, 19 years old.

Young people on the move to Italy often experienced long and fragmented journeys. Across the three regions of origin, young people on the move who arrived in Italy after March 2016 experienced long journeys ranging between a minimum of four months to a maximum of five years. The length of the journey was reportedly primarily affected by (i) the need to collect the necessary economic resources to move ahead, (ii) the length of time young people were kept in detention (either in official or non-official detention centres), and to a lesser extent, (iii) the limited access to information or to the smuggling network.

Figure 5: Map of respondents' journeys



Note: the map displays the journeys undertaken by 80 of the 81 respondents. Transportation means used are indicated when information is available.

1. Young people's mobility: investigating decision-making along the journey

How young people access information along the journey

Once the decision to leave is made, young people start organising their journeys, and collect information about best routes, transportation means, resources needed and challenges expected. While no significant difference could be found across age groups, the transfer of information seemed particularly influenced by the region of origin of the selected participants. Despite some similarities in the route taken (97% of respondents transited through Libya), respondents presented significant differences in terms of type and timing of access to information along the journey across the three regions of origin. As previously discussed, **young people on the move showed a relatively limited level of awareness of the hardships of the journey**, with the exception of Eritreans, who reportedly gathered information on online platforms about desert and sea crossing.

Respondents from West Africa reported having left their country of origin with the expectation of obtaining the necessary information about the journey at the closest stopover, or in a few cases, checking information about bus schedules online. However, practical arrangements, transportation means and trajectories were defined as the journey unfolded.

During secondary movements, and when in countries of transit, **young people on the move from West Africa reportedly relied most on actors of the migration “industry”⁷⁹ to collect information along the journey. Bus stations in cities in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger were described as the main information hubs for West African respondents.** Drivers, *coxeurs*⁸⁰ and intermediaries from the migration “industry” reportedly acted as the main information sources for young people originating from West African countries.

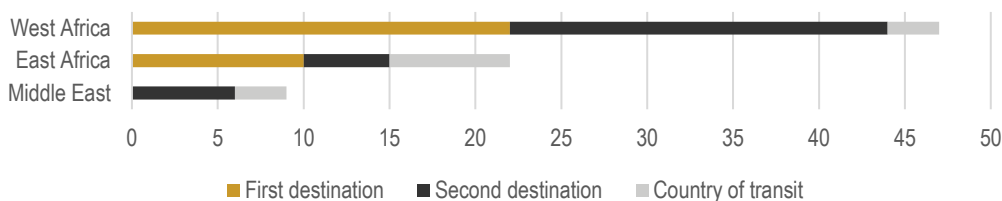
“In Senegal, at the bus stop there are people that are directing people on the move, helping them to find the next transportation means to continue their journey.”⁸¹

Smugglers contacted through family members served as the main source of information for young people from East Africa and the Middle East. Furthermore, young people from the Middle East who had to decide on their secondary movements once in Europe, indicated **friends’ advice as the most trustworthy information source.**

What informs young people’s decisions along the journey

In a large number of cases, the decision to move to Italy was secondary, and was made months or even years after the first decision to leave the country of origin. As recently underlined by other reports and studies,⁸² a large number of people arrived in Europe after having spent one year or more in a country different from the country of origin.

Figure 6: Italy as a country of transit, first or secondary destination, by region of origin



Note: 32 respondents reported having left their country of origin with the aim of reaching Italy (22 from West Africa and 10 from East Africa), for 33 respondents (22 from West Africa, 6 from the Middle East and 5 from East Africa) Italy was a country of second destination; 13 respondents still consider Italy as a country of transit (7 from East Africa, 3 from West Africa and 3 from the Middle East). Data was not available for all young people interviewed.

The first country of destination in these cases was either another European state, a North African country (Egypt, Algeria and Libya) or a neighbouring country. As the journey unfolded, young people’s decisions to go to Italy were mainly driven by information about (i) quality of life and opportunities in Italy, (ii) the deterioration of the security situation in North Africa, and (iii) migration policy barriers.

⁷⁹ Migration “industry” is defined as “the clusters and networks of travel agents, lawyers, bankers, labour recruiters, brokers, interpreters and housing agents, as well as human smugglers and traffickers, which have an interest in and tend to facilitate the continuation of migration” in de Haas (2010), The Internal Dynamics of Migration Processes: A Theoretical Inquiry, in The Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, vol. 36(10), 29 June 2010.

⁸⁰ *Coxeurs* are people taking advantage of the migration “industry” who charge fees for information and ticket provision to people in transit.

⁸¹ G_1821_02, Gambian, male, 17 years old.

⁸² See among others: REACH (2017) Children on the Move in Italy and Greece, June 2017 and IOM (2017) Analysis: Flow Monitoring Surveys, July 2017.

Moving from a neighbouring country

The most reported reasons for moving to a neighbouring country were linked to abrupt events or the prospect of conscription (for Eritreans). While no significant difference could be found across age groups in terms of the reasons for initially moving to a neighbouring country, youth added that the decision was linked to the wish to reunite with their families at some point.

The time of residence in the neighbouring country varied widely and the decision to move on to the next stop was prompted by information originating from friends, word of mouth or employers, which built up expectations of a better life and work opportunities in Europe. Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan and Saudi Arabia were reported as first countries of destination by respondents originating from Guinea, Eritrea and Somalia.

Figure 7: Primary reported drivers for secondary movement to Italy, by region of origin

	Quality of life and opportunities in Italy	Deterioration of the security situation in North Africa	Migration policy barriers
East Africa			
Middle East			
West Africa			

Note: for 21 respondents, the “deterioration of the security situation in North Africa” was the key factor leading their decision to come to Italy; 16 respondents indicated that they considered “quality of life and opportunity in Italy” as the main driver for their secondary movement; 7 respondents referred to migration policy barriers such as repatriation, visa restrictions and border closure.

Deterioration of the security situation

Young people on the move from West African countries reported having initially chosen to move to Libya because they receive information on greater availability of job opportunities. This finding is confirmed by other recent studies.⁸³ **The situation of widespread violence was reported as generally unexpected by young people of all ages from West Africa** who had decided to move to Libya for work reasons. **When informed about the risks, the general information received by young people on the move did not act as a deterrent.** Information on the situation in Libya mainly covered the risk of being robbed by armed groups. One respondent from West Africa also reported having been informed by his first smuggler about the risk of being kidnapped. In these cases, respondents declared that they had no other choice. Respondents also added that their expectations did not match the hardship of the conditions encountered.

Algeria was reported as a first country of destination by young people on the move originating from francophone West African countries (in our sample, these include Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea). The language ties and related information flows about job opportunities in the country were reported as main incentives to migrate to Algeria. The presence of armed groups, the high-risk nature of available jobs and protection concerns were reported by respondents as the primary reasons causing them to reconsider both Algeria as a destination and continuing to Europe.

Young people from East Africa were more informed than West Africans about the risks of crossing Libya. In three cases, respondents had been informed by friends

⁸³ See among others: REACH (2017) Children on the Move in Italy and Greece and IOM (2017) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), Libya's Migrant Report Round 10, April – May 2017.

who had left before them about the risks of the journey. Egypt was identified as the alternative and safest long stopover on the way to Europe.⁸⁴ Egyptians smugglers, however, were considered by respondents to be more expensive than their Libyan counterparts.⁸⁵

All the Syrians interviewed (six cases) left Syria between 2011 and 2013 and lived in Libya or Egypt for up to five years, before eventually resorting to onward movement towards Italy. While all respondents indicated that Libya was their initial intended destination, such a decision was rarely considered as definitive, and was highly influenced by information provided by a friend or family member already living in either Libya or Egypt about job opportunities and security in the country. In the case of a 20-year-old who left Syria with his family in October 2012,⁸⁶ an uncle hosting them in Egypt had dissuaded the family from continuing the journey to Libya – presumably at a time when the United Nations (UN)-backed government of Libya started enacting tighter border controls following the September attack on the United States (US) Mission in Benghazi.⁸⁷

All Syrian respondents who arrived in Italy after March 2016 passed through Libya. All of them were already in Libya (five cases) or Egypt (one case) since 2011-2012. **The deterioration of the security situation in Libya reportedly drove their decision to go to Italy.**

“I didn’t want to go to Italy at first. I just wanted to go to a safer country, therefore I went to Côte d’Ivoire. But the risk of being repatriated was high, so I crossed Burkina Faso and I arrived in Niger. In Niger, I made friends with a Malian boy who told me to go to Libya.”⁸⁸

Migration policy barriers

Information on policy barriers, such as border controls, repatriation or restrictions coming as a result of migration policies was also mentioned among the factors affecting young people’s trajectories.

At the border between Niger and Libya, where security checks were more stringent, smugglers attempted transiting through alternative, and often more dangerous, routes.⁸⁹

In the case of young people originating from the Middle East in particular, expected policy barriers along the way pushed them to contemplate alternative routes and destinations. **‘Migration policy’ was reported as the main factor driving young people originating from the Middle East who had entered Europe before March 2016 to later come to Italy.** Two Iraqi respondents who had originally planned to move to Northern European countries (notably Germany and Finland) reportedly decided to come to Italy, as their asylum applications were either rejected or delayed in their first intended country of destination.

Among young people from the Middle East, findings confirm a tendency to favour available legal channels of migration.⁹⁰ When regular options were no longer viable, respondents drew upon their trusted interpersonal networks to identify a possible smuggler, in an attempt to mitigate the risks associated with accessing irregular

⁸⁴ Reidy, Eric (2017) Eritrean Children who Cross Borders and Deserts Alone, IRIN News, July 2017.

⁸⁵ SU_1821_02, Sudan, male, 19 years old.

⁸⁶ SY_1821_02, Syrian, male, 20 years old.

⁸⁷ IRIN (2013) Syrians Seeking Refuge in Libya, (May 2013).

⁸⁸ GC_1821_01, Guinea, male, 19 years old.

⁸⁹ IOM (2017) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), Flow Monitoring Report - Niger - Report #2017-4.

⁹⁰ Such a tendency had been observed in other studies. On this point: MMP (2017) Separated Families: Who Stays, Who Goes and Why?, April 2017.

channels. This is well illustrated by the case of Syrians crossing into Libya via Egypt at a time when crossing borders was becoming increasingly difficult.

Box 3: From countries of destination to countries of transit: Libya and Egypt in the experience of young Syrians

All the young Syrians interviewed in this study had been long-term residents in Libya or Egypt, having studied or worked in either country for periods of up to five years. Almost all respondents had indicated Libya (four cases) or Egypt (two cases)⁹¹ as the countries where they thought they would settle either on a temporary or permanent basis. As recently highlighted by other reports,⁹² Syrians enjoy relatively better levels of economic and social capital compared to other communities of foreigners residing in the two North African countries. In comparison to West African respondents who have resided in Libya over the same period of time, Syrians appeared to have accessed a higher level of economic and social capital. These endowments may have increased their resilience to the mounting levels of insecurity in the country, delaying their secondary movement to Italy. Commenting on his life in Libya before the conflict, a 20-year-old Syrian respondent from Aleppo admitted: *“I had enough resources, food and money to live there. I also could send money to my family back home sometimes”*.⁹³ Similarly, good levels of integration within the host community can be gauged from several accounts: *“The owner of the shop was very generous to us and “open minded”. They were a very powerful family. They helped us a lot. I could send some money to my family”*.⁹⁴

Reconsidering migration trajectories

However, the progressive erosion of the sense of security, as well as the growing stagnation of the Libyan economy after 2015, contributed to the consideration of crossing the sea to Italy as an option. This is well illustrated by the case of a 24-year-old Syrian who, having unsuccessfully attempted to cross the Egyptian-Libyan border by regular means, preferred to go to Jordan and request a visa through the help of a friend, instead of resorting to irregular means of transit.

This case illustrates how the decision-making process of secondary mobility goes through several stages and how the location threshold progressively falls. Despite showing reluctance at the idea of leaving again: *“The security situation began to deteriorate progressively since 2013. We could no longer go out at night. We would go straight home from work. We did not bring phones with us when we were going out. Then, between 2015 and 2017, work opportunities started dwindling more and more. Currency fluctuations and inflation were sky-high and people were no longer asking for my services. In 2017, the security situation worsened dramatically. I was still hesitant about leaving though”*.⁹⁵

Catalysts of the final decision

In this case, the departure of the respondent’s friends acted as the catalyst that accelerated a decision long postponed: *“For the sea crossing, I did not pay. What happened is, I had accompanied my Syrian friends to the boat. They had decided to cross, but I was still hesitating, so I was not planning to follow them that day. However, the boat came back, as there were some issues with, I think, the Libyan Coast Guard. So, the smuggler brought the boat back to wait for another favourable moment to cross again. At that point, my friends insisted again that I go with them, so I [snuck] on the boat while the smuggler was distracted and we left again”*.⁹⁶

After the closure of the border between Libya and Egypt in 2013, the young Syrians interviewed reported having resorted to smugglers contacted via their relatives in Libya or Egypt.

⁹¹ In one case, a Syrian lived four years in Egypt before moving to Libya. As such, five Syrian respondents departed from Libya and only one from Egypt as secondary movement towards Italy.

⁹² The relatively better level of integration enjoyed by Syrians within the host community and the fact that many of them could rely on non-casual jobs is also documented elsewhere.

⁹³ SY_1821_01, Syrian, male, 20 years old.

⁹⁴ SY_1821_03, Syrian, male, 20 years old.

⁹⁵ SY_2224_02, Syrian, male, 24 years old.

⁹⁶ SY_2224_02, Syrian, male, 24 years old.

The fear of repatriation shaped the trajectories of a few young people coming from Guinea, convincing them to take big risks in order to quickly re-define their journeys. One Somali reported having been repatriated from Saudi Arabia to Somalia.⁹⁷

2. Resources and services affecting the linearity of the journey

Beyond money: *how* social capital can offset limited economic resources

Economic and social capital emerged as key determinants affecting the linearity of the journey, individual vulnerability and exposure to risks. Young people on the move interviewed in this study presented different levels of access to economic resources along the journey. Respondents from the Middle East generally reported higher levels of economic capital than young people from West and East Africa. When economic resources were lacking or not accessible, respondents reported having sought support from their personal networks, international organizations, faith-based entities and chance encounters.

Access to economic resources was the main determinant of young people's speed of movement along the journey. A large degree of awareness of the impact of endowment in economic capital was found among West African respondents. Young people on the move originating from West Africa often knew before leaving that the length of their journey would primarily depend on their ability to raise money in different countries of transit.

"If you have money you move fast from the starting point to the destination. My final destination was Italy, but I knew I would have to stop in the different countries on the way to work and pay for transportation."⁹⁸

In two cases, access to economic resources also reportedly influenced the chosen trajectory. A young Sudanese person reported having decided to transit through Libya as he could not afford Egyptian smugglers, who were known to be more expensive.⁹⁹

Limited economic capital translated into higher vulnerability rather than reduced mobility, impacting duration of journey and safety. Exposure to different vulnerabilities depended on regions of origin. **While for young people from West Africa a lack of economic resources implied higher vulnerability to job exploitation along the journey, for young East Africans, this translated into the risk of longer periods of detention, characterised by episodes of violence and torture in Libya.** Respondents from the Middle East had access to greater economic resources during their journeys compared to respondents from the other two regions.

"I stayed in Libya for three years because I was arrested three times and I needed to pay for my freedom."¹⁰⁰

Social capital often reportedly compensated for the limited economic resources available to respondents, regardless of their region of origin. Family and friends in countries of origin and destination were important resources for

⁹⁷ SO_1821_01, Somalia, male, 18 years old.

⁹⁸ G_1821_04, Gambia, male, 18 years old.

⁹⁹ SU_1821_02, Sudan, male, 19 years old.

¹⁰⁰ SU_1821_02, Sudan, male, 19 years old.

young people on the move lacking the necessary economic capital either to start or to continue their journeys.

While children mostly relied on family members to cope with the challenges encountered, youth also reported using ties of friendship as a resource. Respondents reported to have benefited from friends' support either to identify a smuggler before the journey or to pay a ransom in detention.

Access to social capital reduced young people's vulnerability to torture and detention. Young people who could not count on this type of capital experienced longer periods of detention and were more exposed to labour exploitation.

"When I was detained and [my] life [was] threatened, [my friend] was really helpful because he collected money [of] his own and from his friends and sent all of [that] money to the smugglers."¹⁰¹

Some young people on the move recognised the supportive role of humanitarian actors along the way: including **the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), faith-based entities and fellow people on the move, who mostly provided material and moral support.**

Along migratory routes, even loose ties such as a shared nationality or language fostered solidarity that mitigated the effects of economic hardships in transit.

In Libya, UNHCR operates in detention centres managed by the Department for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM), as a partner of the Mixed Migration Working Group.¹⁰² Within the scope of these activities, UNHCR advocates for the release of persons of concern,¹⁰³ including UASC and vulnerable individuals. Children also reported that UNHCR provided them with food and clothes in detention camps in Libya.

Young people on the move originating from East Africa also reported having accessed UNHCR camps for refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Sudan and Ethiopia.

"In prison, I didn't receive much food, almost nothing until the United Nations came to deliver some items and food when negotiating with the authorities. Finally, the UN managed to bring us outside. [...] The UN saved my life because in prison I would have been killed."¹⁰⁴

Service provision along the way: the ambiguous role of the migration "industry"

When redefining trajectories, expected access to services was never reported as a key factor shaping young people's decisions throughout their journeys. The ability to access specific services, including transportation, accommodation and food, was found to be not only influenced by individual endowments in social and economic capital, but also to depend on the service supply structures accessed along the journey. Although access to transportation, accommodation or food provision was

¹⁰¹ E_1821_01, Eritrean, male, 19 years old.

¹⁰² The working group, comprised of UN agencies and NGOs, aims to ensure effective coordination of protection and assistance to migrants and refugees in detention centres, in urban areas, along the mixed migration routes from southern to northern Libya, and in rescue at sea situations.

¹⁰³ The Libyan authorities only recognize the following nationalities and groups as "coming from refugee-producing countries": Oromo Ethiopians, Eritreans, Iraqis, Somalis, Syrians, Palestinians and Sudanese from Darfur. Accordingly, UNHCR is only permitted by the local authorities to register those hailing from these groups or nationalities as refugees. Please see: UNHCR (2017), Expanded Response in Libya 2017: Supplementary Appeal January – December 2017, 8.

¹⁰⁴ G_1517_02, Gambia, male, 17 years old.

reported to be generally dominated by actors from the migration “industry”, the service supply structure differed widely across regions of origin.

With few exceptions, the majority of respondents declared having relied on actors in the migration “industry” to access transportation and accommodation services. In the remaining cases, networks of family and friends or chance encounters provided access to accommodation and food.

The migration “industry” differs widely across respondents’ regions of origin.

Young people from the Middle East reported that the first smuggler they contacted arranged the whole journey, and thus, remained the main point of contact throughout the journey to Europe. Conversely, in East and West Africa, a cluster of travel agents, labour recruiters, intermediaries, housing agents and drivers supported local smugglers in providing incentives and facilitating or undermining (increasing vulnerability risks) young people’s journeys.

In West Africa, a greater number of stakeholders played roles in the migration process. Drivers, labour recruiters, housing providers, smugglers and other intermediaries offered a variety of services in specific locations. As such, while young people on the move from East Africa and the Middle East could reportedly access a set of combined services covering the full journey from the country of origin to the intended destination, respondents from West Africa reportedly needed to resort to different actors to access the services needed at each stopover.

Compared to West Africans, the journey of young people from East Africa seemed to be more organised, with smugglers taking care of accommodation - usually in warehouses - and providing food to their clients. However, access to food and water was reported to be often scarce or lacking, especially at bus stops in countries of transit. In very few cases, all involving children, respondents reported begging for food and water in countries of transit.

While Middle Eastern and East African respondents reported having mostly moved across North and East Africa with private means of transportation, including cars, pick-up trucks and trucks, West Africans relied on public transportation for a section of their journey. Pick-up trucks and trucks reportedly carried between 15 and 80 people per trip. Public transportation was reportedly used to move to and from border cities, to and from capital cities, and across the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).¹⁰⁵ This falls in line with findings from recent data collection exercises conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS).¹⁰⁶

Accommodation along the journey was mostly provided by actors of the migration “industry”. In these cases, respondents reported having either been hosted at the driver’s, smuggler’s or employer’s house or within a “foyer”, “connection house” or “camp”. The number of people hosted in these buildings varied widely. Different levels of personal freedom, hygiene conditions and respect for human dignity were reported by respondents, and so further investigation is needed to draw lines between these accommodation types. This confirms the interconnection among the different actors of the migration “industry”, such as drivers, labour recruiters and employers.¹⁰⁷

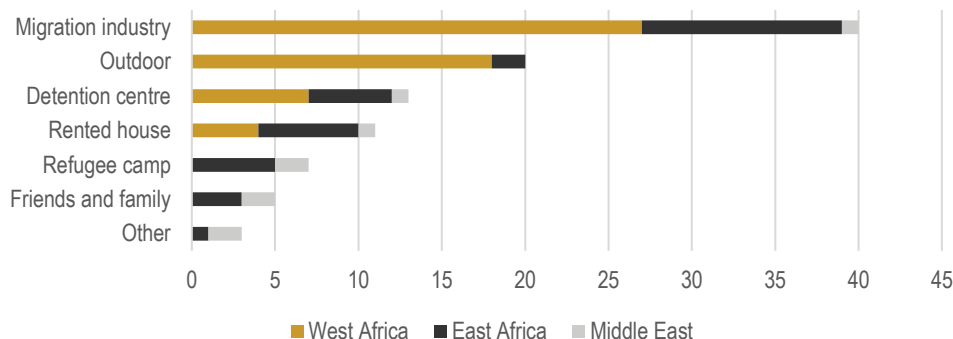
¹⁰⁵ ECOWAS is a regional economic union of fifteen countries located in West Africa, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Since 2000, ECOWAS member States established a common passport, formally known as the ECOWAS travel certificate.

¹⁰⁶ IOM (2017) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), Flow Monitoring Report - Niger - Report #2017-4, and Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (2017), 4MI.

¹⁰⁷ Le Point Afrique (2017) Le voyage d’un migrant guinéen #3 : la vie dans un foyer à Agadez, 30 October 2017.

Finally, 25% of respondents, predominantly from West Africa, reported having slept outdoors, in bus stations, construction sites and bushes or along the streets in cities of transit. Only respondents from East Africa and the Middle East could rely on friends and family for accommodation along the route.

Figure 8: Type of accommodation accessed by region of origin

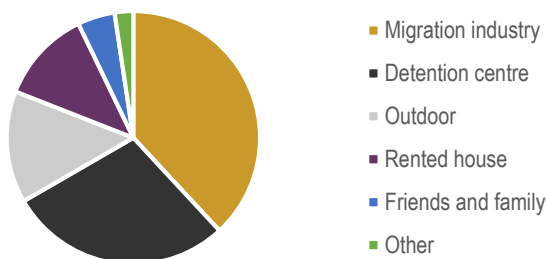


Note: Respondents could indicate more than one option per country of transit.

In Libya, the majority of respondents reported having been provided with accommodation by one actor of the migration “industry”, such as their employer, smuggler or driver. Furthermore, detention centres in Libya were mentioned as the third type of facility where respondents stayed. Detention centres refer to official sites managed by the DCIM and illegal prisons or compounds managed by armed groups. According to a recent report produced by IOM targeting foreigners residing long-term in Libya, the majority are accommodated in self-paid rented house-units, while a notable remaining portion is hosted by their employer.¹⁰⁸ This discrepancy with the accommodation types indicated by young people on the move suggests that there might be discrepancies in the types of accommodation accessed depending on the length of stay in the country.

This facilitating role of the migration “industry”, including smugglers, as service providers consistently emerged across all regions of origin and age groups. At the same time, exploitative and collusive practices were reported in several cases, showing how different actors can undermine young people’s freedom and well-being, reducing their mobility.

Figure 9: Type of accommodation accessed in Libya



Note: 16 respondents reported having resided in accommodation provided by actors of the migration “industry”: 12 stayed in detention centres, 6 stayed outdoors, 5 stayed in rented houses, 2 stayed in accommodation provided by friends and family, and 1 in other types of accommodation.

¹⁰⁸ IOM (2017) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), Libya’s Migrant Report Round 10, April – May 2017.

When the smuggling network of East Africa reached a transnational scope, payment was often deferred to Libya.¹⁰⁹ Almost all children and youth originating from East Africa reported having been asked to pay only once they arrived in Libya. Smugglers defer the payment in order to (i) increase the price, (ii) encourage people who declare not being able to afford the cost of the service to agree on their services, and (iii) increase their negotiation power. Once in Libya, through detention, violence and torture, people who initially acted as smugglers force their victims to hand over all their savings and to mobilise their network of friends and family to pay the ransom.

On the routes from West Africa, drivers working at the border between Niger and Libya have reportedly started to employ the same practice of deferring payment until Libya, in collusion with armed groups and Libyan-based smugglers. West African children reported having been offered a ride for free from Niger to Libya, as the drivers knew that they could force a higher fee from them once in Libya by detaining the child and demanding a ransom from their families.

“In Niger, when I told him I did not have enough money to pay for the entire trip, he replied I did not have to pay immediately, but I could go and work there to raise the money to repay the journey.”¹¹⁰

In West Africa, the roles of smugglers, labour recruiters, drivers and housing providers in the migration “industry” were often blurred, both facilitating and undermining young people’s mobility. In the journeys of some young people who arrived in Italy since March 2016, intermediaries in countries of transit cooperated with labour recruiters in Libya, in order to ensure a stable workforce flow to Libyan employers. In some cases, young people were reportedly sold to Libyan people who exploited them.

Bus stops were reported as the main contact locations in the migration process in West Africa. Labour recruiters, drivers and simple intermediaries gather in the surrounding areas of bus stops or in abandoned buildings where young people on the move may find temporary shelter. The majority of children interviewed reported having slept in the streets or in construction sites, and having felt at risk of being kidnapped (mostly in Algeria and Libya). Intermediaries cannot be defined as proper smugglers, but they act as recruiters and are responsible for gathering the number of people needed for drivers and householders to make the desired profit.¹¹¹

Similarly, once in Libya, labour recruiters suggested that young people travel to Italy and offered to pay the sea crossing fee on their behalf. As the risk of getting robbed in Libya is high, respondents reported having been pleased when their labour recruiter organised their trip to Italy and, at times, even sought this support. In these cases, labour recruiters played an ambiguous role: on the one hand, they facilitated the person’s mobility by providing access to economic resources – and sometimes accommodation – but on the other, they exposed them to the risks associated with the sea crossing.

¹⁰⁹ According to a recent report by the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (2017) and 4Mi, 76% of respondents declared not having paid for the journey prior to departure.

¹¹⁰ GC_1517_04, Guinea, male, 17 years old.

¹¹¹ For further details on the smuggling networks, actors and roles, please refer to: Altai/IMPACT Initiatives (2017), Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges.

“I talked with Mohamed [my employer] and I told him that I did not want to stay in Libya anymore; he said that the best thing to do was to try to cross the sea and reach Italy. He told me not to worry, he would have arranged everything for me. Since there, for every day of work I received only 5 dinars, the rest [15 dinars] was kept by Mohamed to pay [for] the boat.”¹¹²

In several reported cases, labour recruiters arranged the transportation without demanding money from the young person or deducting the money from his salary. In these cases, employers act as recruiters for smugglers controlling subsequent legs of the journey. The smuggling network payment methods suggest the presence of incentives for fuelling the system and ensuring active recruitment of young people on the move along all the stages of the journey.

The growing awareness of the risk of getting robbed along the journey has also prompted the proliferation of cashiers, people in charge of handling the initial capital and transferring the money needed to pay for each leg upon request. Cashiers are mostly based in countries of origin, and gain the trust of potential people on the move by showing their knowledge of the risks entailed in the journey.

In a few cases, respondents reported having been informed by the smuggler about the possibility of being kidnapped in Algeria. In one case, the smuggler offered to bail the respondent out in the event that he would get kidnapped in Libya. When in detention, participants reported having been threatened with death or organ trafficking, regardless of their age and region of origin.

The migration “industry” emerged as the main service provider, offering a variety of services, which were sometimes combined in order to cover transnational transit routes. The actors of the migration “industry” were, as a result, often described as facilitating young people’s mobility. Nevertheless, the line between smuggling and trafficking is often blurred. In the shift from the former to the latter, the person becomes a traded commodity rather than a client.¹¹³ Perception of the exploitation involved in trafficking did vary across respondents, and was mainly due to differing perceptions of individual freedom.

¹¹² N_18-21_05, Nigerian, male, 19 years old.

¹¹³ MHub (2015) Conditions and Risks of Mixed Migration In North East Africa, Study 2, November 2015.

Conclusions

1. In line with a growing literature recognising young people's agency in migration, this study found that young people on the move are autonomous individuals with a set of interests and aspirations. **What turns young people's concerns of the broader security, political and economic considerations into the actual decision to leave is often a specific event related to personal or household issues (West Africa) or a concrete violation of human rights or threat to their physical integrity (East Africa and the Middle East).**
2. The findings indicate that **young people's levels of preparedness for the journey are mixed.** While most people try to gather enough information and economic resources to cover at least the first part of the journey (mainly the transportation costs), information – mostly provided by interpersonal networks – can be inaccurate and even misleading. Relying on the support of friends and family can mitigate the economic and psychological costs of the journey.
3. **While a great deal of emphasis is placed on economic resources, the findings indicate the multifaceted role of social capital for young people before their journeys.** Firstly, networks of acquaintances and family members play an informative role both directly and indirectly, thus influencing young people's choice to reach one destination over another. Secondly, starting from the preparatory phase of the journey, some young people know that their networks of acquaintances and family members could work as a substitute for scarce economic resources during the journey. Finally, besides providing material support in sharing the costs of the journey, family and friends can alleviate the psychological costs of departure and can represent an important resource in the face of hardships experienced during the journey.
4. **Access to economic resources affects the length and the fragmentation of young people's journeys.** While this is a strong determinant of young people's speed of movement, relying on strong social relations can facilitate access to information and reduce young people's vulnerability.
5. **Expected access to services was not reported as a key factor shaping young people's decisions along the journey.** Service provision differs widely across regions of origin, with **young people from East Africa and the Middle East more easily accessing a set of transnational, combined services.** In West Africa, information and service provision is more fragmented. Practical arrangements, transportation means and trajectories were defined as the journey unfolded.
6. **The wide range of actors of the migration "industry", from drivers to labour employers and accommodation providers play an ambivalent role.** On the one hand, they facilitate young people's mobility by providing them with services to circumvent migration policy barriers; on the other, the line between smuggling and trafficking is often blurred. Young people are often treated as a commodity, and their movement is sometimes influenced by collusion among the different actors benefiting from the sustained flow of people. As drivers turn into kidnappers, labour providers into exploiters, and accommodation providers into jailers, young people see their individual freedom and agency over their mobility restrained.

Recommendations

These recommendations build upon existing sources and literature pertaining to children and youth on the move and are further informed by the findings of the current study.

Advocacy and messaging

- Design advocacy campaigns informed by youth-specific needs and behaviours in information seeking.
- Build a larger evidence base on the situation and needs of children and youth on the move.
- Engage with information and platforms that highlight opportunities available at countries of origin as alternatives to irregular movements.
- Promote, encourage and support dialogue, exchange and information that enable stakeholders to discuss norms, values and attitudes on child and youth rights and development.

Address root causes

- Governments and other stakeholders need to address root causes that lead children and youth to leave home.
- Reduce vulnerability of youth at origin countries through the creation and expansion of safe and regular jobs and opportunities, skills trainings and technical education for youth in countries of origin.
- Create safe and regular channels for migration, including expanded options for family reunification.

Treatment of UASC by transit and destination countries

- The General Comment no. 6 by the Committee on the Rights of the Child: *“Treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin”* should guide the practices of States when dealing with UASC.

Elimination of detention

- Immediately end detention of children for immigration purposes and develop alternatives to detention.
- Alternatives to detention for young adults should be urgently sought and implemented.

Protection of youth from trafficking and other exploitation

- Governments of origin, transit and destination countries need to strengthen their capacities to investigate and successfully prosecute criminal groups involved in the trafficking or smuggling of youth.
- Ensure the protection of youth on the move from prosecution for involvement in irregular movement.
- States should build the capacity of labour inspectors to protect the rights of working children and youth, including by keeping their activities separate from immigration control and enforcement, and by facilitating access to assistance and justice for youth on the move.

Best Interest of the Child

- The best interests of the child should be central to all decisions undertaken in source, transit and destination countries.
- Child rights-based approaches should be mainstreamed into national legislation, programmes, policies and practices.
- Children should be recognised as children first, regardless of their immigration status.

Annex 1: List of respondents

Form ID	Age group	Country of origin	Region of origin	Interview location
A_2224_01	22-24	Afghanistan	Middle East	Lombardy
E_1517_01	15-17	Eritrea	East Africa	Sicily
E_1517_02	15-17	Eritrea	East Africa	Sicily
E_1517_03	15-17	Eritrea	East Africa	Sicily
E_1821_01	18-21	Eritrea	East Africa	Latium
E_1821_02	18-21	Eritrea	East Africa	Lombardy
E_1821_03	18-21	Eritrea	East Africa	Lombardy
E_1821_04	18-21	Eritrea	East Africa	Emilia-Romagna
E_2224_01	22-24	Eritrea	East Africa	Latium
E_2224_02	22-24	Eritrea	East Africa	Latium
E_2224_03	22-24	Eritrea	East Africa	Emilia-Romagna
E_2224_04	22-24	Eritrea	East Africa	Latium
G_1517_01	15-17	Gambia	West Africa	Sicily
G_1517_02	15-17	Gambia	West Africa	Sicily
G_1517_03	15-17	Gambia	West Africa	Sicily
G_1517_04	15-17	Gambia	West Africa	Sicily
G_1517_05	15-17	Gambia	West Africa	Sicily
G_1821_01	18-21	Gambia	West Africa	Sicily
G_1821_02	18-21	Gambia	West Africa	Sicily
G_1821_03	18-21	Gambia	West Africa	Latium
G_1821_04	18-21	Gambia	West Africa	Sicily
G_1821_05	18-21	Gambia	West Africa	Emilia-Romagna
G_1821_06	18-21	Gambia	West Africa	Latium
G_1821_07	18-21	Gambia	West Africa	Emilia-Romagna
G_1821_08	18-21	Gambia	West Africa	Latium
G_2224_01	22-24	Gambia	West Africa	Sicily
G_2224_02	22-24	Gambia	West Africa	Emilia-Romagna
G_2224_03	22-24	Gambia	West Africa	Latium
G_2224_04	22-24	Gambia	West Africa	Emilia-Romagna
GC_1517_01	15-17	Guinea	West Africa	Sicily
GC_1517_02	15-17	Guinea	West Africa	Sicily
GC_1517_03	15-17	Guinea	West Africa	Sicily
GC_1517_04	15-17	Guinea	West Africa	Sicily
GC_1517_05	15-17	Guinea	West Africa	Emilia-Romagna
GC_1821_01	18-21	Guinea	West Africa	Sicily
GC_1821_02	18-21	Guinea	West Africa	Sicily
GC_1821_03	18-21	Guinea	West Africa	Lombardy
GC_2224_01	22-24	Guinea	West Africa	Emilia-Romagna
GC_2224_02	22-24	Guinea	West Africa	Emilia-Romagna
I_1821_01	18-21	Iraq	Middle East	Latium
I_2224_01	22-24	Iraq	Middle East	Latium
IC_1517_01	15-17	Côte d'Ivoire	West Africa	Sicily
IC_1517_02	15-17	Côte d'Ivoire	West Africa	Sicily

Form ID	Age group	Country of origin	Region of origin	Interview location
IC_1517_03	15-17	Côte d'Ivoire	West Africa	Sicily
IC_1517_03	15-17	Côte d'Ivoire	West Africa	Lombardy
IC_1821_01	18-21	Côte d'Ivoire	West Africa	Emilia-Romagna
IC_1821_02	18-21	Côte d'Ivoire	West Africa	Emilia-Romagna
IC_1821_03	18-21	Côte d'Ivoire	West Africa	Sicily
N_1517_01	15-17	Nigeria	West Africa	Sicily
N_1517_02	15-17	Nigeria	West Africa	Sicily
N_1517_03	15-17	Nigeria	West Africa	Sicily
N_1517_04	15-17	Nigeria	West Africa	Sicily
N_1517_05	15-17	Nigeria	West Africa	Sicily
N_1517_06	15-17	Nigeria	West Africa	Latium
N_1517_07	15-17	Nigeria	West Africa	Latium
N_1821_01	18-21	Nigeria	West Africa	Sicily
N_1821_02	18-21	Nigeria	West Africa	Sicily
N_1821_03	18-21	Nigeria	West Africa	Sicily
N_1821_04	18-21	Nigeria	West Africa	Emilia-Romagna
N_1821_05	18-21	Nigeria	West Africa	Latium
N_2224_01	22-24	Nigeria	West Africa	Emilia-Romagna
N_2224_02	22-24	Nigeria	West Africa	Emilia-Romagna
N_2224_03	22-24	Nigeria	West Africa	Latium
SO_1517_01	15-17	Somalia	East Africa	Sicily
SO_1821_01	18-21	Somalia	East Africa	Lombardy
SO_1821_02	18-21	Somalia	East Africa	Lombardy
SO_1821_03	18-21	Somalia	East Africa	Lombardy
SU_1821_01	18-21	Sudan	East Africa	Latium
SU_1821_02	18-21	Sudan	East Africa	Latium
SU_1821_03	18-21	Sudan	East Africa	Sicily
SU_1821_03	18-21	Sudan	East Africa	Sicily
SU_1821_04	18-21	Sudan	East Africa	Sicily
SU_2224_01	22-24	Sudan	East Africa	Latium
SU_2224_02	22-24	Sudan	East Africa	Sicily
SU_2224_03	22-24	Sudan	East Africa	Sicily
SY_1821_01	18-21	Syria	Middle East	Latium
SY_1821_02	18-21	Syria	Middle East	Latium
SY_1821_03	18-21	Syria	Middle East	Latium
SY_2224_01	22-24	Syria	Middle East	Sicily
SY_2224_02	22-24	Syria	Middle East	Sicily
SY_2224_03	22-24	Syria	Middle East	Latium