

Egyptian Unaccompanied Migrant Children

A case study on irregular migration



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

المنظمة الدولية للهجرة

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ABOUT IOM EGYPT

Established in 1951, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the principal intergovernmental organization in the field of migration. Egypt became an IOM Member State in 1991 and is since represented at the annual Council, actively contributing to the Organization's global policies and programmes, as well as approving its activities, accounts and expenditures. Egypt's financial contribution to IOM exceeds USD 900,000. IOM's Mission to Egypt ensures that all activities are in line with national government priorities to assist Egyptian, as well as foreign migrants. As of 2016, IOM Egypt organizes its interventions under the following thematic areas: (a) labour mobility and human development; (b) migration health; (c) migrant assistance (including immigration and border management); and (d) resettlement and movement management. These interventions are undertaken in close coordination with national counterparts, United Nations country team and relevant national stakeholders.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
BID	Best Interest Determination
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NCCM	National Council for Childhood and Motherhood
NCCPIM	National Coordinating Committee on Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration
NCCTIP	National Coordinating Committee on Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Persons
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UMC	Unaccompanied migrant children
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNTOC	United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a comprehensive assessment of the phenomenon of irregular Egyptian child migration to Europe. Addressing the significant information gap on the issue, and based on IOM counselling interviews in Egypt and Greece, this report first provides insight into the modus operandi and characteristics of smuggling networks operating from Egypt, and highlights the vulnerabilities of children using the respective smuggling services to reach Europe. Subsequently, the driving forces for irregular child migration from Egypt are analysed, before elaborating on vulnerabilities of unaccompanied migrant children (UMCs) and protection gaps upon arrival in the destination country, with particular reference to the field assessment conducted in Greece.

The report concludes by providing recommendations for policy and programming to address the special protection concerns of UMCs based on the analysis of migratory dynamics and vulnerability assessments. These recommendations cover services and activities in the areas of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership for the development of an integrated multidisciplinary response to address irregular migration of UMCs in a holistic manner.

INTRODUCTION

The world is currently witnessing an era of human mobility not seen since the end of the Second World War. In particular, flows through the Middle East and North Africa towards Europe have increased dramatically following the Arab Spring in 2011 and more recently due to violence and political instability in Libya, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, coupled with movements along the North-eastern African Migration Route.¹ The irregularity of such movements, together with new opportunities for abuse, renders mixed migratory flows ever more vulnerable.²

Arrivals of migrants and refugees to Europe by sea alone surpassed 1,000,000 in 2015, a figure that amounts to four times the total for all of 2014. During the same period, 3,695 migrants and refugees died in the Mediterranean Sea, surpassing the total number of migrant deaths in 2014.³ Travelling along the migratory flows without their parents or an adult guardian, children under the age of 18 migrate for reasons similar to those of adults.⁴ Some are asylum-seekers fleeing war or persecution in their countries of origin, or victims of trafficking for forced labour or slavery. Yet others migrate in search of a better life and enhanced economic opportunities, better education, to reunite with their families abroad, or to flee marginalized living conditions in their home countries. The scale of irregular child migration is unprecedented, as more than one in five migrants arriving in Europe are children.⁵

¹ Originating in the Horn of Africa and crossing Egypt's southern border with Sudan, the North-eastern African Migratory Route extends through Egypt and Libya towards the Northern Mediterranean.

² Mixed migratory flows are defined as "Complex migratory population movements that include refugees, asylum-seekers, economic migrants and other migrants, as opposed to migratory population movements that consist entirely of one category of migrants" (R. Perruchoud and J. Redpath-Cross (eds.), *Glossary on Migration*, International Migration Law No 25, IOM, Geneva, 2011, p. 63).

³ Arrival figures refer to maritime arrivals only in 2015. Please see IOM's Missing Migrants project for more information (IOM, "IOM Counts 3,771 Migrant Fatalities in Mediterranean in 2015", 5 January 2016. Available from www.iom.int/news/iom-counts-3771-migrant-fatalities-mediterranean-2015).

⁴ This is corroborated by S. Farid and R. El-Batrawy (eds.), *Egypt Household International Migration Survey 2013: Main Findings and Key Indicators* (Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, Cairo, Egypt).

⁵ For more updated numbers of irregular child arrivals to Europe, see <http://missingmigrants.iom.int/iom-unicef-data-brief-migration-children-europe>.

Unaccompanied migrant children (UMCs) arrive clandestinely, using the services of smuggling networks, being hidden by traffickers, or enter through formal border crossing points and present false documents to officials.⁶ In any scenario, children are substantially more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse when they rely on the services of smugglers and their networks to reach Europe. In addition, it is recognized that smuggled and trafficked children are particularly exposed to risk factors – malnutrition, maltreatment including sexual exploitation, traumatization and others – that demand immediate attention by relevant authorities in an integrated multidisciplinary response. Wherever global migration is flowing, children require special protection.

Irregular migration of UMCs has thus always been part of global migratory flows. Over the past five years, however, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Egypt observed a successively increasing trend of Egyptian UMCs migrating to Europe. Since 2011, Egypt holds the highest ratio of UMCs among adult irregular migrants reaching Europe. In 2014, 2,007 (49%) of the 4,095 Egyptians arriving irregularly in Italy were unaccompanied children in comparison to only 28 per cent in 2011. This upward trend continued in 2015, when 1,711 out of 2,610 Egyptian irregular migrants were UMCs (66%).

When on 26 August 2015 a single boat carrying 132 Egyptian UMCs was rescued south of the island of Crete in Greece, IOM Egypt immediately deployed a team of experts to meet with these UMCs, assess their vulnerabilities and listen to their experiences along the journey towards Europe. The counselling interviews in Greece uncovered key patterns, such as the specific geographic and demographic characteristics of UMCs, their motivations for irregular migration towards Europe, as well as their vulnerabilities and needs upon arrival. Importantly, the respective interviews also indicated that smuggling networks are altering their modus operandi, with several Egyptian UMCs reporting that smugglers pre-arranged work in the destination country as a payment method for smuggling services. In light of the current developments and the increasing trend of Egyptian UMCs migrating irregularly to Europe, a changing modus operandi has significant vulnerability implications for UMCs.

⁶ The term “unaccompanied migrant children” is defined as “[p]ersons under the age of majority in a country other than that of their nationality who are not accompanied by a parent, guardian, or other adult, who by law or custom is responsible for them” (Perruchoud and Redpath-Cross (eds.), 2011).

Addressing the significant information gap on irregular migration of UMCs, and based on IOM counselling interviews in Egypt and Greece, the first section of this research paper describes applied data collection methodologies before introducing the specific case study outlined above. The second section elaborates the *modus operandi* and characteristics of smuggling networks operating from Egypt, and highlights potential risks in the framework of a crime-terror nexus. Throughout the section, the analysis highlights the vulnerabilities of children using the respective smuggling services. The third section then provides an understanding of irregular migration of UMCs, first outlining the international legal framework that guides their protection before illuminating the driving forces for irregular child migration from Egypt. Subsequently, the fourth section highlights vulnerabilities of UMCs and protection gaps upon arrival, with particular reference to the field assessment conducted in Greece. Finally, recommendations for policy and programming are presented to address the special protection concerns of this vulnerable group, as well as develop an integrated multidisciplinary response for relevant actors to address irregular migration of unaccompanied migrant children in a holistic manner.

CASE STUDY ON IRREGULAR MIGRATION OF EGYPTIAN UMCs

I.1. Methodology

The study relies on extensive desk research, informant interviews, as well as semi-structured face-to-face interviews of IOM beneficiaries. On the one hand, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were carried out with Egyptian UMCs in Greece ($n = 34$) from 13 to 18 September 2015 across six temporary protective shelters for children in Athens, Volos and Thessaloniki.⁷ Information was also collected from shelter staff through unstructured face-to-face interviews with the aim of gaining additional insights from their work with the children and conversations with law enforcement officials in Greece. The study further relies on data collection from semi-structured phone interviews with Egyptian minors in Egypt who received IOM post-arrival reintegration assistance ($n = 38$), as well as information gathered informally through interviews with Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) beneficiaries.

In all interviews conducted by IOM, the best interest of the child was not only upheld but the primary consideration. In line with this, the primary goal of all interviews is to assess the vulnerabilities and needs of the respective children. Regarding children interviewed in Greece, questions also covered the irregular migration journey from Egypt and their experiences upon arrival. Potential emotional harm that could result from conversations about the migration journey was mitigated through only minimal data collection, and with the guidance of a psychosocial expert for children who mitigated the risks of re-traumatization and enabled child-friendly responses to signs of distress.

⁷ The group arrived on 26 August 2015 in Crete, Greece, after attempting to enter Europe irregularly via the Mediterranean Sea and being rescued from distress.

All interviewed children were informed about the nature of the interviews and the use of information gathered to avoid creating unrealistic expectations. Children were briefed that participation in the interviews was voluntary, and that shared information would be treated as confidential and anonymous. The consents of both the child and the guardian or shelter authorities were obtained before the interviews.

Possible limitations to data collection stem from the fact that UMCs interviewed in Greece and as part of IOM post-arrival reintegration assistance arrived on the same boats, and thus used the services of either the same network or cooperating smuggling networks. This does not however limit the findings regarding hardships faced by UMCs but rather the payment methods employed by smugglers. Regarding information on the demographics of the sample, several UMCs appeared to be younger than the age they provided. The interviewers, however, had to rely on information provided by the children with no possibility for triangulation given the time. It is thus probable that the mean age of this study's sample is shifted upward.

The sample interviewed in Greece could not be randomized as increasing numbers of UMCs left their shelters before interviewers were able to access them. Out of the 132 UMCs who arrived in Greece on 26 August 2015, 45 children already left after one week and more continued to follow for onward migration towards Macedonia to eventually enter a European Union Member State via the Western Balkans.

1.2. Case study

In mid-August 2015, a group of migrants and refugees departed by boat from Balteem, Kafr el-Sheikh governorate, in Egypt with the intention to arrive in Italy. Out of the 240 migrants on board, 183 were Egyptian, out of which 132 (73%) were UMCs. Over the course of the journey, the group of migrants boarded a total of four boats of different sizes. Upon boarding of the fourth and unseaworthy vessel, the boat's hull was already leaking. The boat eventually got into distress at sea, and an SOS signal was sent by satellite phone. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) received the SOS signal and communicated that it would take the organization two days to reach the migrant boat since it was too far out on international waters. A nearby commercial ship coming from Suez instead responded to the distress signal, and handed the rescued migrants to Greek authorities on the island of Crete.

Upon arrival in Crete, ICRC received the group of UMCs at Palaia's Ilektrikis Stadium before transferring them to protective custody in an immigration detention facility. The 133 UMCs were registered and identified by Greek law enforcement. Thereupon, the UMCs were transferred to different shelters across the country. One week after arrival in the shelter, the team deployed by IOM Egypt accessed the children and conducted vulnerability assessments through interviews. The assessment was also facilitated by the excellent relations IOM Greece enjoys with the Greek authorities. The findings of the assessment are incorporated in the ensuing analysis, which sheds light on various aspects of the phenomenon of irregular migration of Egyptian children.⁸

⁸ The terms *children* and *minors* will be used interchangeably throughout this report.

SMUGGLING NETWORKS

The scale of irregular migration across the Mediterranean Sea towards Europe gained unprecedented momentum. In 2015 alone, over 1,000,000 migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers took their chances to cross the Mediterranean with smugglers in an attempt to reach a better, more safe and secure life. Migrant fatalities have reached levels of a humanitarian emergency, with 3,771 migrants dying during maritime migration.⁹ Children are among the most at-risk of migrants and refugees, not only due to their particular exposure to risk factors, such as maltreatment, exploitation and others. More than 30 per cent of all recorded migrant deaths in the Aegean Sea were children in 2015.

Two major gateways exist for irregular entry into Europe. The Aegean crossing is the predominant irregular entry point into Europe as of 2015. Migrants follow routes that bundle in Turkey and cross the Aegean to Greece for onward movement across European land borders. The majority of individuals using this route come from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syrian Arab Republic, and to a lesser extent, Bangladesh, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan.¹⁰ Over the past decade, however, the vast majority of departures were conducted from North Africa towards Italy and Europe, in particular via Libyan and Egyptian territory. Although Libya continues to be the primary departure point, Egypt's geographic location makes it a central part of the human smuggling business. Syrians used this route in earlier phases of their migration, but the majority of people now crossing via this route originate from West, East and the Horn of Africa.¹¹ This is also due to visa requirements for Syrians imposed by the Government of Egypt since 2013.

⁹ Arrival figures refer to maritime arrivals only in 2015. Please see IOM's Missing Migrants project for more information at www.iom.int/news/iom-counts-3771-migrant-fatalities-mediterranean-2015.

¹⁰ T. Reitano and P. Tinti (2015), "Survive and advance: The economics of smuggling refugees and migrants into Europe", *Institute for Security Studies Paper*, 289:1–31.

¹¹ Ibid.; N. Abdel Aziz, P. Monzini and F. Pastore, *The Changing Dynamics of Cross-border Human Smuggling and Trafficking in the Mediterranean* (Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome, 2015). Available from www.iai.it/sites/default/files/newmed_monzini.pdf.

In order to reach Europe, migrants have to rely on the services of smugglers to overcome sociopolitical and physical barriers that constrain individual movements. The relationship between migrants and smugglers is therefore largely consensual and similar to those of other business transactions, terminating upon exchange of service for money. While often mixed in everyday and professional jargon, human trafficking and smuggling of migrants are distinct crimes and each awarded with a separate protocol in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC).¹² Therein, the smuggling of migrants 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”.¹³

Human trafficking, on the contrary, involves an element of exploitation and may or may not make use of smuggling to move individuals into foreign territory. According to UNTOC, trafficking in person is defined as the “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, of fraud or deception”.¹⁴ The Palermo Protocol further accounts for the particular vulnerabilities of minors and defines child trafficking without an element of coercion as “exploitation regardless of the use of illicit means, either within or outside a country”.¹⁵

¹² Reitano and Tinti, 2015.

¹³ UN General Assembly, *Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, 15 November 2000. Available from www.refworld.org/docid/479dee062.html.

¹⁴ UN General Assembly, *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, 15 November 2000. Available from www.refworld.org/docid/4720706c0.html.

¹⁵ According to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000), child trafficking is defined as the “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation” regardless of whether the child has given consent or even if none of the following illicit means have been employed: “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”.

The capacity to move large numbers of migrants across land and sea borders suggests a minimum level of coordination within and sophistication of networks involved in the smuggling of migrants. As migratory flows cross multiple transit points and countries, the required level of organization increases. Groups involved in the trade require contacts throughout transit countries, temporary safe houses to shelter individuals en route, different means of transport, as well as links to officials controlling neuralgic points along the journey. In the case of trafficking in persons, the irregular movement of migrants is conducted for the purpose of exploitation, requiring contacts or presence in destination countries to exploit migrants and enforce debt repayment.

The level of political attention and resources dedicated to smuggling networks is tremendous to the extent that the European Union and Frontex launched several search-and-rescue and border security operations at European external borders. Operation Triton is a border security operation conducted by Frontex in front of Italy and successor of the Italian-led Operation Mare Nostrum, which ended in October 2014.¹⁶ Frontex also initiated the Poseidon Rapid Intervention in the Aegean Sea to strengthen Greece's border surveillance, registration and identification capacities.¹⁷ The operational budget stands at EUR 38 million for Triton and EUR 18 million for Poseidon in 2015. Finally, a European Union Naval Force operation was launched in 2015 to disrupt the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks through its naval operation Sophia. The operation's budget is approximately EUR 12 million 2015 in addition to military assets and personnel provided by Member States.¹⁸

While the prevalent discourse and State responses treat migrant smuggling as a transitional criminal activity of highly organized cartels, little evidence points in this direction. Instead, operations from and within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) involve groups embodying flexible, locally based networks with

¹⁶ Triton deploys 3 airplanes, 6 offshore patrol vessels, 12 patrol boats, 2 helicopters, 9 debriefing and 6 screening teams during peak seasons. For more information, see <http://frontex.europa.eu/news/frontex-expands-its-joint-operation-triton-udpbHP>.

¹⁷ Poseidon deploys 293 officers and 15 vessels to the Greek islands, which will gradually increase to over 400 officers, as well as additional vessels, vehicles and other technical equipment. For more information, see <http://frontex.europa.eu/news/frontex-launches-rapid-operational-assistance-in-greece-u3rqPy>.

¹⁸ For more information, see European Union External Action Brief, available from www.eeas.europa.eu/csdp/missions-and-operations/eunavfor-med/pdf/factsheet_eunavfor_med_en.pdf.

flat horizontal hierarchies and loose nodes.¹⁹ Thus, and besides quantifying the phenomenon, qualitative information is required to understand the local features and economy of cross-border smuggling in North Africa in order to direct effective law enforcement engagement.²⁰ In light thereof, the following section outlines the *modus operandi* and specificities of the Egyptian smuggling economy, and contextualizes it against the backdrop of child migration and organized crime.

2.1. Modus operandi of smuggling networks and vulnerabilities for child migrants

A multitude of methods exist to establish contact with smuggling networks. In rural Egypt, and as corroborated by IOM counselling interviews, a broker (*semsar*) facilitates irregular migration. This person is usually well known by the community, and prospective irregular migrants either directly establish contact with the broker or are referred by friends and relatives. In Egyptian cities including coastal hubs, such as Alexandria or Balteem, brokers openly approach children and adults to offer trips towards Italy. In addition, brokers publicize their contact details, prices and schedules on social media platforms to reach out to potential customers.²¹

The business model of migrant smuggling benefits from economies of scale and therefore perpetuates the conditions from which it benefits – the mass movement of people.²² With unprecedented mixed flows crossing the Mediterranean, the market size for clandestine services is substantial, and prices for smuggling services have decreased substantially. At present, prices for irregular entry into Europe and Italy range from USD 3,000 to USD 5,000 and an average of approximately USD 3,500 for Egyptian children. The amount

¹⁹ F. Pastore, P. Monzini and G. Sciortino (2006). “Schengen’s soft underbelly? Irregular migration and human smuggling across land and sea borders to Italy”, *International Migration Journal*, 44(4):95–119; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *The role of organized crime in the smuggling of migrants from West Africa to the European Union* (UNODC, Vienna, 2011). Available from www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Migrant-Smuggling/Report_SOM_West_Africa_EU.pdf.

²⁰ R. Tailby (2001), “Organised crime and people smuggling/trafficking to Australia”, *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, 208 (Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra).

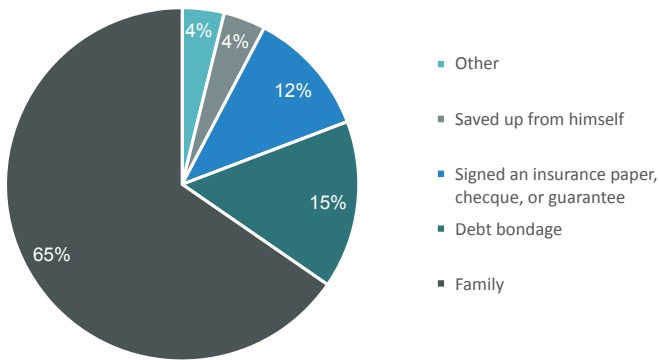
²¹ P. Kingsley, “People smugglers using Facebook to lure migrants into ‘Italy trips’”, *The Guardian*, 8 May 2015. Available from www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/08/people-smugglers-using-facebook-to-lure-migrants-into-italy-trips.

²² Reitano and Tinti, 2015.

each individual pays not only depends on age, but also on the network of the migrant, the individual's location in Egypt, and whether he or she knows the broker. With a saturated market for trips towards Europe, smugglers make up for the shortfall in profit by increasing the number of passengers on each boat, augmenting the risks of irregular sea migration. Contrary to past trends and predictions, Mediterranean crossings in 2015 continued unabated during winter months when navigation with wooden boats is particularly dangerous and migrants have to take higher risks.

While adult migrants pay brokers in advance, IOM counselling interviews with UMCs in Greece indicate a shift in the modus operandi of smuggling networks with regard to child migrants. The majority of UMCs interviewed in Greece (65%) reported that parents or relatives make arrangements to pay for smuggling services upon the safe arrival of the child. However, smugglers also appear to adopt alternative methods of payment, with 15 per cent of minors reporting pre-arranged work upon arrival in Italy (Figure 1). As part of this debt bondage arrangement, the minors agree to pay parts of their monthly salaries to repay for the use of smuggling services to Europe. Although the children are not coerced into working upon arrival in Europe, they are by definition victims of trafficking as per UNTOC.

Figure 1: Payment arrangements made by IOM-interviewed UMCs



Migrants pay the broker upon settlement of the deal. The broker who manages the clientele maintains necessary contacts with different local and transnational networks, which enter into arrangements based on ad hoc agreements.²³ These flexible coalitions facilitate geographical shifts in response to countermeasures adopted by law enforcement, and allow responses to shifts in demand. These networks either directly recruit a fisherman or a prospective migrant to navigate the boats in exchange for free passage. The individual navigating the boat has the most exposed role in the business, as law enforcement can easily identify him when caught driving the vessel or by interviewing migrants on board.

2.2. Egypt's smuggling economy

In November 2014, reports surfaced that smuggling networks in Egypt and Libya exploit children to navigate migrant boats across the Mediterranean Sea. Egyptian minors coming from areas with boat tourism are particularly targeted by smuggling networks. The children are skilled in repairing and navigating boats, and willing to drive boats in exchange for free passage to Italy. According to Italian lawyers working with migrant children, increasing numbers of Egyptian minors are indeed apprehended by law enforcement. These minors are charged with aiding and abetting illegal migration and criminal association with international trafficking networks, facing up to 15 years' imprisonment and fines of hundreds of thousands of USD.²⁴

More systematic than the use of children, however, is the recruitment of Egyptian fishermen by smuggling networks, whose involvement is linked to the striking socioeconomic degradation of the country's fishing sector. Between 200,000 and 300,000 people are employed in Egypt's fishing industry, which has witnessed a dramatic decrease in fish catch since the 1990s.²⁵ Between 2008 and 2009 alone, fish catch in Egypt decreased by 10 per cent due to overfishing of major income-generating species. While the Government of Egypt responded by imposing fishing quotas, no alternative livelihood sources were provided to fishermen communities. While some fishermen fell back

²³ Abdel Aziz, Monzini and Pastore, 2015.

²⁴ L. Muzi, "Traffickers turn to teenagers to drive migrant boats across Mediterranean", The Guardian, 18 November 2014. Available from www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/nov/18/people-trafficking-teenagers-migrant-boats-mediterranean.

²⁵ Figures from Co-operative Association for Water Resources and Social Fund for Development.

on catching fish in the territorial waters of Libya and Tunisia, others opted to switch to more profitable smuggling activities.²⁶

Smuggling networks depend on the cooperation of fishermen and their communities to facilitate activities, but also on the availability of ships. Wooden boats are bought from local fishermen and smugglers are reported to purchase old fishing vessels for as little as 100 and up to several thousand USD. With a limited supply of boats across North Africa, and as vessels sink or are impounded amid continuously increasing demand, the supply of “seaworthy” ships continues to decrease at increasing price levels. This requires the use of increasingly unseaworthy vessels within the smuggling industry, putting migrants at increased risk.

The availability of skilled fishermen in need of employment along Egypt’s North Coast and relatively low costs for buying a wooden boat simplifies entry into the smuggling market. Individuals in need of income may sell their apartment, purchase a boat and then organize a trip towards Europe. Returns for each trip are high enough to offset entry costs within one or two successfully organized trips. Consequently, structured criminal networks operate alongside individual smugglers who can cooperate if deemed in their best interest. This contributes to the informality of networks, which by some accounts emerge, morph and fade by the week.²⁷

²⁶ UNODC, *Transnational Organized Crime in the Fishing Industry. Focus on: Trafficking in Persons, Smuggling of Migrants, Illicit Drugs Trafficking* (UNODC, Vienna, 2011). Available from www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Issue_Paper_-_TOC_in_the_Fishing_Industry.pdf.

²⁷ P. Kingsley, “Libya’s people smugglers: inside the trade that sells refugees hopes of a better life, The Guardian, 24 April 2015. Available from www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/24/libyas-people-smugglers-how-will-they-catch-us-theyll-soon-move-on.

2.3. Crime-terror nexus

Significant evidence suggests criminal contagion, or the involvement of smuggling networks in other types of criminal activities. The theoretical underpinnings for this phenomenon were first developed by Tamara Makarenko and coined in the term “crime-terror nexus”.²⁸ Accordingly, the post-cold war security environment offered criminal and terrorist organizations eased access to advanced technology, diaspora communities, while weak States and civil war provided geographical safe havens. As both activities ripe with the respective conditions, a crime-terror nexus consolidated. Since the 1990s, organized crime then became a major source of revenue for terrorism worldwide, and criminal activities flourished in the shadow of violence and weak State control. Twenty-first century security, thus, needs to be analysed, taking into consideration the interaction and, at times, conversion of traditional and emerging threats to State and human security.²⁹

Organized crime and terrorism, two traditionally separate phenomena, developed many operational and organizational similarities around the globe. In this regard, ad hoc and temporary alliances are formed between criminal groups and terrorist organizations for mutual benefit. This is well documented through extensive policy and academic research. A study commissioned by the European Parliament in 2012 highlights the various linkages between crime networks and terrorist groups across Europe and MENA.³⁰ In this regard, terrorist organizations trade in drugs for surplus arms in Central Asia³¹ are involved in the narcotics trade in South America and the Middle East,³² while organized crime maintain linkages to terrorist organizations for recruitment, as well as political and economic control.³³

²⁸ T. Makarenko (2004), “The Crime–Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism”, *Global Crime*, 6(1):129–145.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ European Parliament, *Europe’s Crime-Terror Nexus: Links between terrorist and organised crime groups in the European Union* (European Parliament, Brussels, 2012). Available from www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201211/20121127ATT56707/20121127ATT56707EN.pdf.

³¹ UNODC, *The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment* (UNODC, Vienna, 2010). Available from www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tocta/TOCTA_Report_2010_low_res.pdf.

³² M. Braun, *Drug Trafficking and Middle Eastern Terrorist Groups: A Growing Nexus?*, 25 July 2008 (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington, D.C.). Available from www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/drug-trafficking-and-middle-eastern-terrorist-groups-a-growing-nexus.

³³ European Parliament, 2012.

Importantly, Europol's Organised Crime Threat Assessment indicates that "channels for illegal immigration will be used increasingly by those seeking to engage in terrorist activity in the EU [European Union]". Information gathered through IOM counselling interviews and institutional sources suggests that human smuggling networks have indeed incorporated the smuggling of goods into their activities, using covert operations to transport both humans and contraband. This is particularly concerning in view of the fall of Libya's Ghaddafi regime, which left the country's vast weapons deposits unsecured. According to official United Nations investigations and law enforcement information, weapons are being smuggled from the northern coast of Libya through Egypt towards the State of Palestine and beyond.³⁴

The respective evidence strongly suggests that networks operating across the Mediterranean may be increasingly linked with terrorist groups operating in MENA. Increasing linkages between smuggling networks and terrorist entities then requires a reassessment of law enforcement responses towards the two phenomena. Rather than analysing and responding independently, efforts need to be bundled to dismantle networks while ensuring that smuggled migrants are protected from harm. However, it is questionable whether classic counter-terrorism strategies would be effective in weakening smuggling networks. As outlined above, smuggling is anchored in the socioeconomic realities of the region, and networks do not have strict vertical hierarchies with a clear chain of command nor easily identifiable assets.³⁵ Thus, employing military means to counter smuggling networks would have limited effectiveness.

Unless migrants are discouraged from undertaking the irregular migration journey, smuggling networks will continue to flourish in the current migration crisis. In order to mitigate risks arising from contagion among criminal and terrorist networks, State policy needs to address the root causes of migration,

³⁴ D. Kirkpatrick, "Egypt's arrests of smugglers show threat of Libya arms", *New York Times*, 13 October 2011. Available from www.nytimes.com/2011/10/14/world/middleeast/egypt-arrests-groups-smuggling-weapons-from-libya.html?_r=0; M. Nichols, "Libya arms fueling conflicts in Syria, Mali and beyond: U.N. experts", *Reuters*, 9 April 2013. Available from www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-arms-un-idUSBRE93814Y20130409.

³⁵ P. Kingsley, "Libya's people smugglers: military action won't stop this multifaceted trade", *The Guardian*, 10 May 2015. Available from www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/10/libya-people-smuggle-military-action-not-stop-multifaceted-trade.

including children.³⁶ Based on this, the driving forces for irregular migration of Egyptian UMCs, their vulnerabilities and needs should be understood in order to facilitate the development of integrated multidisciplinary response.

³⁶ P. Kingsley, “Italian coastguards: military action will not solve Mediterranean migrant crisis”, The Guardian, 19 May 2015. Available from www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/19/italian-coastguards-military-action-will-not-solve-mediterranean-migrant-crisis.

IRREGULAR MIGRATION OF UMCs

Children use the same clandestine services as adult migrants. However, children are substantially more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse as they rely on the services of smugglers and their networks to reach Europe. In addition, smuggled children are particularly exposed to risk factors, including malnutrition, maltreatment, traumatization and exploitation. In the following, the legal framework safeguarding children's rights are outlined, before analysing the motivations, vulnerabilities and needs along the entire migration journey.

3.1. Legal frameworks

Adopted in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the main and most comprehensive international legal instrument on human rights of children.³⁷ The Government of Egypt has ratified the CRC and all of its protocols, creating legal obligations and providing concrete expression to the universality of rights stipulated within the Convention.³⁸ In addition, the Government promulgated the Egyptian Child Law 12/1996 and amended it through Law 126/2008 to guarantee the rights of the child as per the CRC and other ratified covenants.³⁹

³⁷ The CRC also includes the following: (a) Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2002); and (b) Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2002) (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General Comment No. 6: Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside their Country of Origin*, 1 September 2005, CRC/GC/2005/6. Available from www.refworld.org/docid/42dd174b4.html).

³⁸ The Government of Egypt also ratified other conventions – including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Convention against Torture, the Convention for Migrant Workers, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women – which stipulate provisions that safeguard children's rights.

³⁹ The Official Journal issue no. 13, supplement of 28 March 1996; amended by Law no. 126 of 2008, Official Journal issue no. 24-bis of 15 June 2008, and issue no. 28 of 10 July 2008.

CRC General Comment No.6 (2005) interprets the Convention on the Rights of the Child as regards the treatment of unaccompanied and separated children.⁴⁰ The General Comment acknowledges that unaccompanied and separated children face greater risks of, inter alia, sexual exploitation and abuse, detention and others. Children are often denied access to food, shelter and housing, education, health and other services. Girls in particular are vulnerable to gender-based violence, including domestic violence. Importantly, the General Comment clarifies that “State obligations under the Convention apply within the borders of a State, including with respect to those children who come under the State’s jurisdiction while attempting to enter the country’s territory. Therefore, the enjoyment of rights stipulated in the Convention is not limited to children who are citizens of a State party and must therefore, if not explicitly stated otherwise in the Convention, also be available to all children – including asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children – irrespective of their nationality, immigration status or Statelessness”.⁴¹

State parties to the Convention are obliged to pass national legislation, administrative structures, research and data collection, as well as capacity-building activities to support training on such measures. Accordingly, State obligations are negative and positive as they require States to prevent measures that infringe children’s rights while taking measures that ensure the enjoyment of their rights without discrimination.⁴²

Non-discrimination is a fundamental principle of the CRC (Article 2), and applies to all dealings with children. The principle prohibits discrimination on the basis of a child’s status as being unaccompanied, a migrant, refugee or asylum-seeker. General Comment no.6 underlines that the principle may indeed call for differentiation on the basis of protection needs as deriving from age and/or gender.⁴³

⁴⁰ CRC/GC/2005/6 “applies to unaccompanied and separated children who find themselves outside their country of nationality (consistent with article 7) or, if stateless, outside their country of habitual residence” (p. 6). While the General Comment specifically applies to unaccompanied and separated children, this overview will refer to unaccompanied children in particular for the purpose of subsequent analysis.

⁴¹ CRC/GC/2005/6 c. 12, p. 7.

⁴² CRC/GC/2005/6 c. 13, p. 7.

⁴³ CRC/GC/2005/6 c. 18, p. 8.

Pursuant to Article 3 of the CRC, the “best interest of the child” is the guiding principle in all actions concerning children. The article stipulates a “best interest determination” or comprehensive assessment to determine what is in the child’s best interest, taking into consideration “nationality, upbringing, ethnic, cultural and linguistic background, particular vulnerabilities and protection needs”.⁴⁴ The article further stipulates the swift appointment of a guardian, as well as a legal representative, to ensure that a child’s best interest is respected.

With regards to the free expression of opinion and wishes, Article 12 stipulates that children should be provided with all relevant information concerning legal and administrative procedures and the situation in their country of origin. Information is to be provided in an age-appropriate manner and, where necessary, interpreters should facilitate reliable communication to ensure participation.⁴⁵

Children who are deprived of their family environment, whether temporarily or permanently, are entitled to special protection and assistance by State authorities as per Article 20 of the CRC.⁴⁶ States must also assess and address the particular vulnerabilities of children resulting from different degrees of trauma, disruption and violence. As per Article 24, thus, States are obliged to implement the child’s “right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health and facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health”.⁴⁷ In addition, Article 6 safeguards a child’s right to life, survival and development.⁴⁸

The African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights also stipulates in Article 18(3) that “[t]he State shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women and also censure the protection of the rights of the woman and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions”.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ CRC/GC/2005/6 c. 20, p. 9.

⁴⁵ CRC/GC/2005/6 c. 25, p. 10.

⁴⁶ CRC/GC/2005/6 c. 39, p. 13.

⁴⁷ CRC/GC/2005/6 c. 46, p. 15.

⁴⁸ CRC/GC/2005/6 c. 23, p. 9.

⁴⁹ Organization of African Unity, *African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (“Banjul Charter”)*, 27 June 1981, CAB/LEG/67/3 rev. 5, 21 I.L.M. 58 (1982). Available from www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3630.html, p. 3.

Article 23(1) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child also underscores that States should take measures ensuring that children seeking refugee status or who are considered refugees, whether unaccompanied or accompanied, receive protection and humanitarian assistance. Article 23(2) further stipulates that “States Parties shall undertake to cooperate with existing international organizations which protect and assist refugees in their efforts to protect and assist such a child and to trace the parents or other close relatives or an unaccompanied refugee child in order to obtain information necessary for reunification with the family.” Finally, Article 23(4) underlines that all of the above also applies *mutatis mutandis* to internally displaced children.^{50,51}

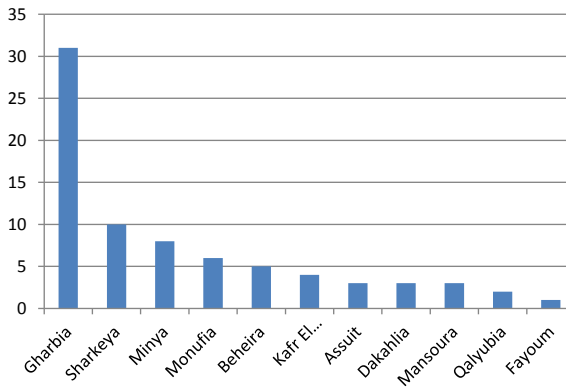
3.2. Irregular migration drivers

The motivations for Egyptian minors to emigrate irregularly towards Europe are varied and overlapping, and strict economic explanations fail to appreciate why predominantly male children emigrate. Irregular migration of Egyptian children is strongly situated in the age group of from 14 to 17 years between childhood and adulthood. All children interviewed by IOM originate from the south-western and northern parts of Egypt, in particular Gharbia (31) and followed by Sharkeya (10), Minya (8), Monufia (5), Beheira (5) and others (Figure 2). Irregular migration of Egyptian minors is therefore mainly related to *shabab* or young men who come from rural areas where social mobility is weak.

⁵⁰ Organization of African Unity (1999), *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*, 11 July 1990, CAB/LEG/24.9/49 (1990). Available from www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b38c18.html.

⁵¹ Other sources within the UN system of conventions include the following: (a) Article 24 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; (b) Article 10 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; (c) Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 17 on the rights of the child (Article 24); (d) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (2000); (e) Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999); (f) Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (1993); and (g) UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951).

Figure 2: Number of interviewed UMCs per governorate of origin (n = 76)



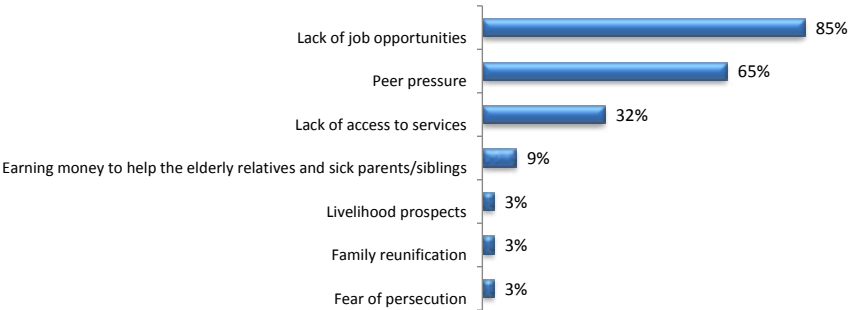
The status of a *shabab*, or young man, is linked to one's ability to support the subsistence of his family rather than reaching legal adulthood. IOM counselling interviews revealed that minors migrating irregularly wish to financially support their family in Egypt by sending remittances. Some UMCs also cited that they would use their income to support the marriage of a family member or sibling(s), highlighting sociocultural variables in the decision to migrate.

Delimitation of the *shabab* group is fluid and based on the social status of the child rather than his age. Given the poor and marginalized economic background of children from the respective governorates of origin, many children are forced to drop out of school to support the subsistence of their families. In this regard, over 9 per cent of Egyptian children are involved in child labour, and many children from rural areas perceive themselves as "breadwinners" for their families.⁵² Among the sample interviewed in Greece, 85 per cent of all UMCs cited job opportunities as a driving force for irregular migration to Europe.

⁵² International Labour Organization (ILO) and Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), *Working Children in Egypt: Results of the 2010 National Child Labour Survey* (ILO and CAPMAS, Cairo, 2012). Available from www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/download.do?type=document&id=21017; United States Department of Labor, Findings on the worst forms of child labor – Egypt (2014). Available from www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labor/findings/2014TDA/egypt.pdf.

The quality of Egypt’s education system is another influencing factor in a child’s decision to migrate. Children migrating from rural areas regularly report overcrowded classrooms and outdated teacher-centred teaching methods as characteristic of Egypt’s education system. Limited access to education then inhibits employment prospects outside the agricultural sector and blue-collar work. Migration to Europe is thus perceived to provide Egyptian children with the opportunity to receive additional and higher-quality secondary education, and 32 per cent of interviewed UMCs stated lack of access to education services as a specific reason to migrate (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Factors that motivate UMCs to leave Egypt⁵³

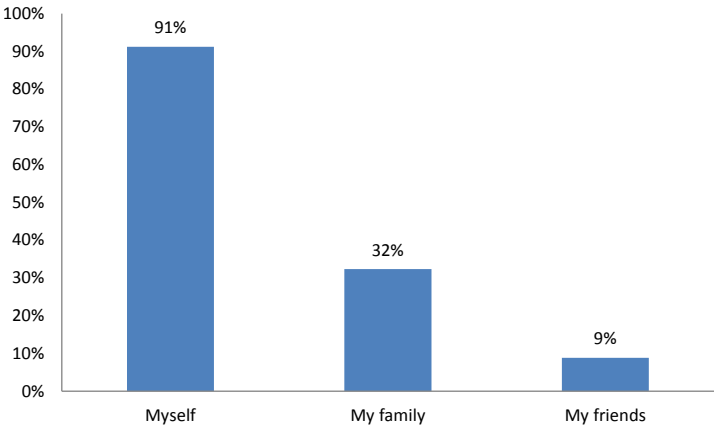


As described above, the ability to financially support one’s family is a crucial aspect for a child’s decision to migrate irregularly and oftentimes taken in consultation with their parents and relatives. While children’s decision to migrate is commonly depicted in terms of household pressure, the vast majority of interviewed children (91%) stated they have taken the decision to migrate by themselves. Only 32 per cent stated that their decision was taken or influenced by their families, and 9 per cent by friends. The large degree of perceived individual choice is however informed by peers who have successfully migrated to Europe, as reflected by the 65 per cent of UMCs who reported peer pressure as a migratory driver. Through social media, children can observe how their peers’ standard of living has improved, serving as role models who have fully realized their dreams. In addition, migration successes

⁵³ Interviewed children could provide multiple options regarding their motivations to leave Egypt and for others parts questionnaires analysed below.

are clearly visible in villages of rural Egypt, where families of children who are now living in Europe benefit from the remittances. These families are then able to refurbish their houses and afford a better standard of living. Consequently, the contrast between a lack of perspectives for self-realization in Egypt and the ability to meet personal aspirations in Europe serves as a decision-making factor, and induces children to emigrate irregularly.⁵⁴

Figure 4: Decision-making influencers for UMCs to migrate irregularly



3.3. The journey across the Mediterranean

Economic, social and cultural variables thus oftentimes interlink in a child’s decision to migrate. Once the migration decision is taken, payment arrangements are made with the broker, adult and child migrants wait for the migration journey to commence. Most commonly, the migrant receives a call to gather in a specific location. A vehicle then moves the migrants to a safe house, where groups oftentimes spend several days before being transported to a beach or small port from which the boat debarks. In the majority of

⁵⁴ The respective observation is corroborated by a study on irregular migration from West Africa. See H. De Haas, *The myth of invasion: Irregular migration from West Africa to the Maghreb and the European Union*, International Migration Institute research report (International Migration Institute, Oxford, 2007). Available from <http://heindehaas.com/Publications/de%20Haas%202007%20Irregular%20migration%20from%20West%20Africa%20.pdf>, p. 22.

smuggling operations between North Africa and Europe, inflatable Zodiacs are used to ferry migrants to wooden trawlers anchored several miles out at sea.⁵⁵

Over the course of the navigation, migrants are then forced to change boats several times. With the boarding of each new vessel, the risks for migrants increase. Children are exposed to the will and scrupulous treatment of smugglers, as many reported that of smugglers locking migrants in the board fridge for complaining about boat conditions. Other children were unable to contextualize that smugglers on the boat were under the influence of drugs and described them as animal-like creatures. In addition, children are particularly exposed to risk factors that result from the sea migration journey. Of the UMCs interviewed by IOM in Greece, 59 per cent reported that the supply of water on board was scarce, and only small amounts of edible food were available. Over 60 per cent of children also reported to have experienced verbal and/or physical abuse at the hands of smugglers, while 35 per cent were robbed of some of their belongings. Another 9 per cent witnessed the death of another migrant.

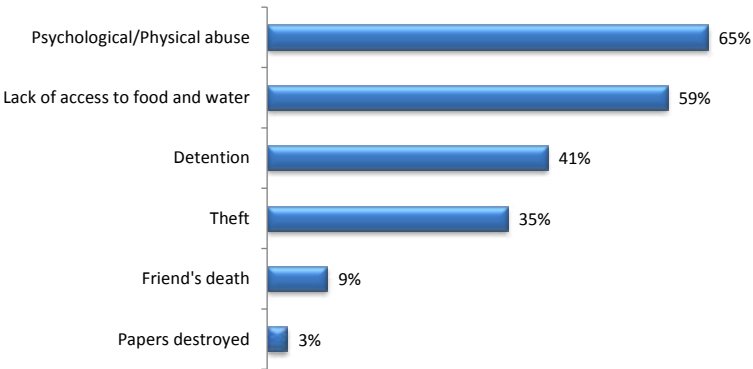
Other risk factors include children's exposure to harsh conditions at sea. Egyptian minors are oftentimes assigned seats on the railing of boats as they pay less for the sea voyage than, for example, Syrian migrants. Accordingly, Syrians are assigned to sheltered areas on board, while minors are exposed to waves and cold temperatures during night hours. As a result, children oftentimes suffer from low body temperature and at times hypothermia, with significant risks for their physical health.

When boats are rescued from distress at sea, risks of traumatization are also particularly concerning for children. According to the account of one child, smugglers allegedly administered sedatives to migrants through tea they served during night hours. The child however realized this and poured the tea away. During that night, the hull of the boat began leaking and as the boat filled with water, some of his peers were at the verge of drowning. The child was able to rescue his friends, and although the boat was eventually rescued

⁵⁵ Satisfying the supply of boats, large amounts of Zodiacs were looted from Libyan storehouses after the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime, or were imported from abroad. The costs for imported Zodiacs have remained at a fairly steady pricing level. For services between Turkey and Greece, Zodiacs are used for the entire passage due to the relatively short distance, as well as calm waters in the Aegean Sea. Larger fishing vessels are less frequently used but instead part of larger smuggling operations.

after two days in distress, anecdotes such as this illuminate the oftentimes unthinkable events children experience during traumatizing journeys.

Figure 5: Hardships faced by UMCs during the irregular migration journey



As a result of the journey across the Mediterranean, traumas are often diverse and complex. As described in Figure 5, children witnessed and/or experienced death, verbal and physical abuse, as well as theft. Additional distress may arise from the experiences upon arrival in Europe.

EGYPTIAN UMCs IN EUROPE

Substantial contrast exists between the situation from which migrant children originate in Egypt, the often traumatic experiences during the journey across the Mediterranean, and life upon arrival in Europe. Children are burdened with traumas and worries about their families that stayed behind. Stress resulting from uncertainty and tensions in reception centres and protective shelters then prevent them from processing traumas.

The following section elaborates the vulnerabilities and needs of Egyptian UMCs upon arrival in Europe. In particular, the section focuses on the information gathered through IOM's vulnerability assessment in Greece, but also draws information from other counselling interviews. Thereby, a comprehensive assessment of children's needs is established with the ultimate aim of informing the development of an integrated response.

4.1. Vulnerabilities upon arrival

The sample interviewed in Greece in September 2015 was rescued from distress at sea. ICRC received the migrants at the Palaia's Ilektrikis Stadium in Chania before transferring them to a Greek immigration detention facility. The respective centre hosts a separate space for the protective custody of children. However, children were de facto detained as their movement was restricted to the facility. Shelter staff interviewed in the course of the assessment shared that some children experienced verbal abuse and xenophobia by law enforcement officers upon reception. Rather than receiving protection, more distress was caused upon arrival.

The 132 UMCs were registered and identified by Greek law enforcement. Once the identity of the children was verified, the group of UMCs was transferred

to different shelters across the country. However, several UMCs remained in protective custody according to shelter staff. Although the process of verifying the identity of some UMCs took longer, shelter staff stated that the non-governmental organization (NGO) Metradrasi – mandated to transfer UMCs to temporary protective shelters for children – is heavily underfunded. The NGO was thus unable to organize the swift transfer of this large group, and children remained in protective custody longer than necessary.

During their stay in protective custody, UMCs were approached by staff members of the Egyptian Embassy in Greece. Children were given promises by embassy staff and law enforcement, including their swift return to Egypt. As promises were not fulfilled, children developed distrust towards officials and civil society workers. In addition, children reported that a man who identified himself as an embassy interpreter asked for identification documents to initiate return procedures to Egypt. One child was in possession of his birth certificate and others of their identification documents, and handed them over to the interpreter who promised to return the next day. However, the children did not receive their documents before being relocated to shelters. This caused substantial distress among the children as they thought that documents were confiscated for security reasons or criminal proceedings.

4.2. Protective shelters in Greece

All shelters visited by IOM were equally underfunded, yet the quality of services provided to children differed greatly between the facilities and crucially depended on the overall management of shelter staff.

The general lack of Arabic interpreters and trained psychologists had the most fundamental impact on the minors. Since their arrival at the different protective shelters, children were unable to communicate their needs, experiences and/or desire to return home to the respective staff members. Similarly, minors were unable to obtain information about their status and possibilities inside Greece. This created different levels of frustration and distress among many of the UMCs depending on the overall management of the shelter.

Despite the lack of interpreters, some shelters managed to create an atmosphere of cooperation. This was the case in shelters where managing

staff members were trained psychologists or social workers with awareness of peer group dynamics among children.⁵⁶ In shelters where staff did not receive relevant training and lacked information on the background of the Egyptian UMCs, intercultural and appropriate nonverbal communication did not take place. In these cases, frustration resulting from the lack of interpreters was augmented by staff members' inability to adequately respond to the children.

All shelters lacked funding to procure basic non-food items. In some shelters, children were only provided with one basic clothing item of poor condition. Minors thus had to wear the same clothes unwashed over a prolonged period of time with implications for the children's hygiene. Similarly, none of the shelters had resources available to pay for phone calls abroad. In one shelter, children had been unable to call their families since arriving in Greece. As children were in contact with their peers in different shelters, they were able to exchange information on their living situation and compare between the services and items provided in different shelters. Those who were not able to contact their families at home in fact believed that their status in Greece was different, creating additional frustration and insecurity, which then also translated into tensions between staff and children.

Other shelters dealt with the lack of resources in creative ways. One shelter in particular approached Vodafone Greece and successfully advocated for the donation of phone vouchers for children to use. In addition, some shelters engaged the local community through fundraising events for donations of clothes and other items.

4.3. IOM counselling interviews

During IOM counselling interviews, children demonstrated different degrees of distress and trauma. As a result of the journey across the Mediterranean, traumas are often diverse and complex. As described above, children witnessed and/or experienced death, verbal and physical abuse, as well as theft. Yet others suffered from the experiences in protective custody upon arrival. All of the

⁵⁶ In one shelter, a previous group of Egyptian UMCs had caused substantial damage to the property by setting items on fire. As the shelter received this group of UMCs, children were divided into separate rooms and mixed with children from different nationalities. The positive impact this had on the relationship between children and staff members was clearly visible in the cooperative atmosphere existed.

above would require immediate psychosocial support upon arrival in Greece. However, neither in protective custody nor in the shelters children received this type of assistance. With regards to the shelters, immediate psychosocial support was prevented due to the lack of interpreters and qualified personnel.

During interviews, children were asked whether they wish to return to Egypt. However, only 36 per cent of the UMCs articulated the desire to return home, and most of them only if their long-term plans in Europe failed. For those children who wish to return home, Best Interest Determination (BID) procedures are time-consuming in the absence of standard operating procedures in countries of origin and destination. During one counselling interview, a child showed signs of distress, cried uncontrollably and reported disturbed sleeping patterns to interviewers. Over the course of the day, he threatened to harm or kill himself unless he is able to return home during the same night.⁵⁷ The request was expedited on an exceptional basis, but in general, the desire to return should be responded to in a swift manner to avoid further distress.

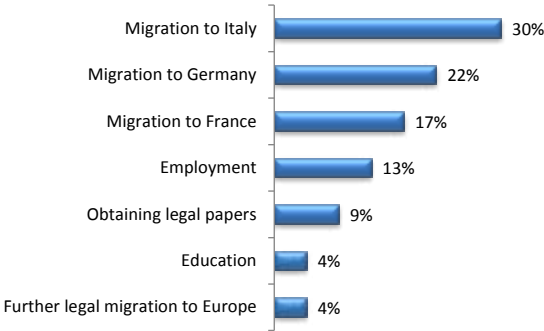
Regarding the group of UMCs who arrived in Greece, 45 out of 132 children left protective shelters already during the first week of their stay. Children reportedly wanted to migrate onward through Macedonia and Serbia towards Italy and Germany. The high numbers of UMCs leaving protective shelters right after arrival can be attributed to peer group dynamics, but also to the lack of interpreters to inform the children of their status and possibilities in Greece. All children reported that they received inconsistent information and fake promises during their journey. This created substantial frustration and distrust upon arrival at the shelters. According to shelter staff, most of the children were in contact with smugglers in Greece, who offered transport to Germany for onward irregular migration. The costs of these services have decreased dramatically, from EUR 2,000–EUR 2,500 in 2014 to as low as EUR 300 in 2015.⁵⁸ Without accurate information on their status and the ability to build up trust with shelter staff, then, many UMCs contacted brokers for onward migration.

⁵⁷ Regarding the case where the child threatened to inflict harm on himself, IOM's psychosocial expert was able to respond to the immediate needs of the child. The Egyptian Embassy in Greece was subsequently contacted to initiate return procedures based on BID.

⁵⁸ Shelter staff reported that a child who previously came from Egypt paid EUR 2,500 to a smuggler to go to Germany, despite staff's advice to use regular migration options. Through an interpreter, the UMC eventually decided to stay in Greece and asked the smuggler to return his money. In fact, the smuggler returned the entire sum to the child.

Regarding the sample interviewed in Greece, the vast majority of children initially envisaged to migrate to Italy (81%), Germany (9%) or France (9%). As the group of UMCs unintentionally reached Greece, many UMCs still planned onward migration to the respective countries (Italy: 30%; Germany: 22%; France: 17%) or elsewhere in Europe (4%). In this regard, some UMCs stated that they now planned to join family members in the respective countries. Others, however, envisaged finding employment, obtaining legal status and/or education in Greece.

Figure 6: Contingency plans of UMCs interviewed in Greece



The preference for Italy is related to the presence of a well-established Egyptian community in the country that developed over the past decades, both through regular and irregular migration.⁵⁹ The majority of Egyptian minors migrate to find work, yet Italian law forbids minors to engage in work unless they reach 16 years of age and have completed 10 years of school. UMCs are entitled to residence permit for minors⁶⁰ and are subject to compulsory school enrolment through a guardian.⁶¹ Upon reaching majority age, minors can apply for a residence permit for study purposes, access to work, and also for health and

⁵⁹ Representing a process of cumulative causation, present migration patterns can be regarded as a continuation of older forms of mobility as they rely on support networks in the destination country.

⁶⁰ Article 18 of Legislative Decree no. 286 of 25 July 1998, “Consolidated Immigration Act.” Available from www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/en/legal-framework/domestic-law/Documents/ENG_DECRETO%20LEGISLATIVO%2025%20luglio%201998_.pdf.

⁶¹ Article 38 of Legislative Decree no. 296 of 25 July 1998, “Consolidated Immigration Act”.

care demands.⁶² In addition, UMCs enjoy special rights and protection as the Italian Immigration Act does not allow for the expulsion of minors,⁶³ unlike other European States.⁶⁴ As such, safeguards under Italian law, the prospect of better quality education and livelihood opportunities are linked. As one child explained: “I wanted to get better education, learn different languages and have access to better job opportunities.”

The fact that 19 per cent of interviewed minors had previously attempted to reach Europe demonstrates that children attempt irregular migration multiple times if they do not succeed. Of the interviewed UMCs, most were caught by Egyptian law enforcement in Alexandria or prevented from accessing Libya. When asked whether their experiences in the Mediterranean changed their perception of irregular migration, however, the vast majority (78%) of interviewed UMCs reported that they would not repeat the Mediterranean crossing, with one child stating that “[he] saw death and will not travel by sea again”. Similarly, 93 per cent of interviewed UMCs would encourage children in their village not to migrate by boat but instead find legal migration means. However, most children themselves admitted that they would have undertaken irregular sea migration even if a peer would have informed them of the dangers of the journey and the hardship they experienced.

⁶² Article 32 of Legislative Decree no. 296 of 25 July 1998, “Consolidated Immigration Act”.

⁶³ Article 19(2) of Legislative Decree no. 296 of 25 July 1998, “Consolidated Immigration Act”. Article 26(6) of the Legislative Decree 25/2008 further prohibits the detention of minors (see www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/europe/italy/introduction.html)

⁶⁴ While following stricter provisions and safeguards than in the case of adults, Germany, for instance, allows for the expulsion of minors with different standards of implementation depending on the State. See B. Parusel, (2009), *Unbegleitete minderjährige Migranten in Deutschland: Aufnahme, Rueckkehr und Integration*, Studie II/2009 im Rahmen des Europäischen Migrationsnetzwerks (EMN).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The preceding analysis illuminates the migratory dynamics and information available on the vulnerabilities and needs of Egyptian UMCs. The analysis highlights the diverse socioeconomic factors that drive irregular migration of UMCs, risk factors that children are exposed to during their migration journey, and the consequent need for an integrated and multidisciplinary response in countries of origin, transit and destination. The needs that derive from this situation warrant immediate attention upon arrival in an integrated multidisciplinary manner.

5.1. Prevention

Preventive interventions are needed to address irregular migration of Egyptian children. Such interventions need to address the economic, social and cultural variables that interlink as driving forces for irregular migration of Egyptian UMCs in a comprehensive manner. As identified above, Egyptian governorates with high sending rates of unaccompanied children need to be the target of tailored interventions that address the drivers of irregular (child) migration.

Enhancing the quality of education, as well as its relevance with regards to local and international labour market needs, is crucial to establish the conditions for upward social mobility and better access to employment opportunities. IOM counselling interviews and analysis provided by this research demonstrate that poor education in rural Egypt drives irregular migration of *shabab*. In order to address this issue, education institutions in rural areas with high irregular emigration rates should be provided with technical support, such as strengthening local capacities to conduct soft skills training, job counselling and matching. In parallel, training and education mobility schemes should be provided to Egyptian children from underserved areas.

Harvesting the fruits of enhanced education in line with real and growing market needs, livelihood opportunities must be supported and prioritized in governorates with high rates of irregular child emigration to alleviate socioeconomic push factors driving their movements. In this regard, employment opportunities need to be increased to provide disincentives for child labour, while establishing alternative livelihood opportunities for young graduates. Interventions in this area, however, are resource intensive, and require substantial resource mobilization from the Government of Egypt, civil society and the international community. Innovative funding mechanism could be explored in this area, including crowdfunding, as well as linking Egyptians abroad with communities at home to promote social projects and local investments. Pressures from the local employment sector could be further relieved by supporting governmental capacities to identify needs of foreign labour markets and tailor demand-driven vocational training to the identified sectors.

Capitalizing on the results of the respective interventions, community-based and peer-to-peer mentoring programmes would provide guidance to youth and young graduates. For this purpose, exemplary youth should receive training on guiding peers to serve as role models within their communities. In parallel, a nationwide awareness-raising campaign needs to be developed in coordination with relevant national ministries as represented in National Coordinating Committee to Combat and Prevent Illegal Migration (NCCPIM). Awareness raising would provide information on the risks of irregular migration and trafficking in persons to discourage children and youth from irregular migration.

The combination of enhancing the quality of and access to education while providing perspectives for positive livelihood alternatives serves a safeguard for the child's right to development, in line with the CRC.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ CRC/GC/2005/6 c. 23, p. 9.

5.2. Protection⁶⁶

Children who are not accompanied by a parent, guardian or other adult in a country other than that of their nationality are entitled to special protection and assistance.⁶⁷ According to Article 24 of the CRC, a child has the “right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health and facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health”.⁶⁸ Therefore, States must swiftly assess and address the particular vulnerabilities of children resulting from different degrees of trauma, disruption and violence. Psychosocial support is vital in this regard to ensure the early recovery of the UMCs upon arrival and return, as well as their (re)integration. For this purpose, reception capacities must be enhanced and a referral mechanism should be institutionalized in countries of origin and destination to provide essential protection services, including psychosocial assistance and shelter.

Importantly, referral procedures must include the provision of durable solutions, including AVRR, to ensure that a child’s desire to return home is swiftly satisfied. In line with the CRC Article 3, durable solutions must be implemented in full consideration of BID procedures and in coordination with relevant government authorities.⁶⁹ For this purpose, and in the case of unaccompanied children, a guardian and legal representative must be swiftly appointed to ensure respect for the best interest of the child. In parallel, relevant authorities need to be capacitated to ensure highest attainable standards in case management and BID.

In the case of AVRR to Egypt, UMCs and their families must receive tailored reintegration assistance, including livelihood support to address factors causing repeated irregular migration of children. IOM maintains long-standing expertise in this field and provides reintegration assistance programmes through a combination of four options – educational support and vocational training, as well as employment or business start-up assistance for youth in employment age. The implementation of reintegration programmes should

⁶⁶ Right to be protected: Child victims are entitled to special protection measures, both as victims and as children, in accordance with their specific rights and needs (CRC art. 20).

⁶⁷ CRC/GC/2005/6 c. 39, p. 13.

⁶⁸ CRC/GC/2005/6 c. 46, p. 15.

⁶⁹ CRC/GC/2005/6 c. 20, p. 9.

be monitored and evaluated through research and community assessment. This would allow for adaptation of programmes based on need, and inform future evidence-based policies and programmes by providing further insight into the following: (a) push factors specific to the phenomena of irregular migration of UMCs; (b) modus operandi of smuggling networks; (c) economic sectors with high employment potential and key value chains to provide local livelihood alternatives; and (d) legal frameworks for the protection of irregular migrants, including migrant children.

5.3. Prosecution

Enhancing prosecution in countries of origin, transit and destination is an indispensable element in the fight against smuggling networks. In Egypt as well as other States in MENA, the State must respond to the risk of criminal contagion between smuggling networks and terrorist organization. For this purpose, States must develop national anti-smuggling legislation in line with international standards. In parallel, legislators must review national laws and policies concerned with migration and child protection vis-à-vis available international and regional instruments and commitments. This would ensure that individuals involved in smuggling activities are penalized, and that the rights and needs of smuggled children and migrants are safeguarded.

Egypt was the first country in the region to have passed a draft anti-smuggling law in November 2015 through its Cabinet of Ministers, which is still pending presidential or parliamentary approval.⁷⁰ However, in order to ensure that legislation is implemented and enforced, a capacity-building programme needs to be institutionalized for all branches of law enforcement. In the meantime, international partners need to provide relevant training, including on specialized investigation techniques.

With regards to investigation of smuggling networks and offenses, proper investigation requires a coordinated approach on behalf of law enforcement. Integrated Border Management enables intra-service cooperation to ensure efficient management of processes, as well as inter-agency cooperation to coordinate activities between relevant national agencies. At the inter-State

⁷⁰ For more information, please see www.iom.int/news/egypt-passes-new-anti-human-smuggling-law.

level, exchange visits law enforcement officials from countries of origin, transit and destination should be facilitated to promote communication and cooperation channels to counter the smuggling of migrants, as well as exchange best practices in child protection.

Effective investigation of smuggling cases also requires court-to-court cooperation on both sides of the Mediterranean. Considering the scale of the phenomenon and importance of bringing smuggling offenders to justice, the national government should set up specialized courts for smuggling investigations. In addition, and in order to establish effective inter-State cooperation, States should formalize mechanisms for information exchange, including for criminal and police records, birth and death records, family registrations, residence information, vehicle and vessel registrations, travel movement records and others. This should be formalized as part of bilateral or multilateral memorandums of understanding or treaties.

5.4. Partnership

In Egypt, IOM established effective partnerships with relevant government bodies to comprehensively address irregular migration of Egyptian UMCs. The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) is the principal government body mandated to ensure the protection of children. NCCM coordinates with and is a member of NCCPIM, as well as the National Coordinating Committee to Combat and Preventing Trafficking in Persons (NCCTIP), to ensure that the areas of child protection and development are streamlined in government efforts to address irregular migration and trafficking in persons.

In cooperation with NCCM, IOM aims at institutionalizing BID and case management procedures to ensure highest attainable standards in the protection of Egyptian and non-Egyptian UMCs. In this regard, IOM is able to benefit from its continuously evolving partnership with NCCM in conducting BID procedures and family assessments for Egyptian UMCs wanting to return home. IOM advocates for the development of a referral mechanism and standard operating procedures for the protection of Egyptian and non-Egyptian UMCs, and to ensure that a child's desire to return home is swiftly satisfied in line with the best interest of the child.

To comprehensively address irregular child migration from and to Egypt, IOM supports governmental efforts to reform the current legal framework to address smuggling of migrants. In March 2014, the Government of Egypt set up the interministerial NCCPIM. The committee acts as the government focal point for policies and efforts in the field of combating and preventing irregular migration. Subsequent to its establishment, IOM provided technical support and training to NCCPIM members and staff to strengthen the committee's legislative and operational capacity in the drafting of Egypt's new anti-smuggling law, as well as the development of a national awareness-raising campaign to inform Egyptian at-risk youth and children of the dangers of irregular migration and trafficking in persons, as well as migration alternatives in Egypt.

IOM supports NCCTIP in combating and preventing trafficking in persons from, to and through Egypt, including on the issue of Egyptian UMCs. This is pursued through a comprehensive approach in line with the 3(+1)P paradigm of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. A milestone of IOM's engagement with the Government of Egypt was the promulgation of Law 64/2010 on Combating Trafficking in Persons, to which IOM provided expert review. Subsequent to the adoption of the law in 2010, NCCTIP assumed its work, comprising 18 different ministries and specialized government institutions that cooperate in the field of combating trafficking in persons in Egypt. IOM provides technical assistance to NCCTIP in formulating its first national strategy to combat and prevent trafficking in persons, creating the foundation for NCCTIP's National Action Plan.

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