

Ilse Derluyn  
Centre for the Social Study of Migration and Refugees  
Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy  
Ghent University - Belgium

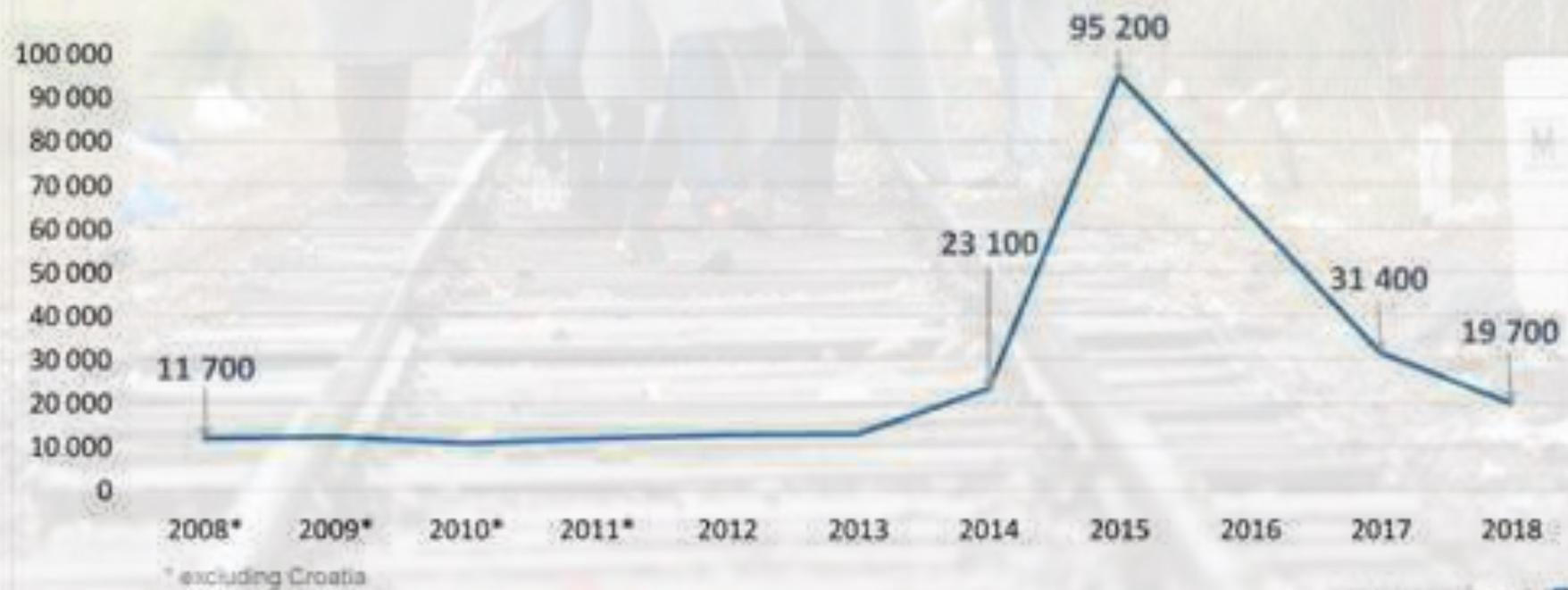


# CHILDMOVE

**The impact of flight experiences  
on the psychological wellbeing of unaccompanied refugee minors**



### Asylum applicants considered to be unaccompanied minors in the EU (2008-2018)



# KEY FACTORS

The image features three black, dome-shaped spotlights hanging from the ceiling against a light-colored brick wall. Each spotlight is directed downwards, creating a bright, conical beam of light that illuminates the text below it. The beams of light are white and semi-transparent, allowing the brick wall to be seen through them. The overall scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source being the three spotlights.

**PRE-FLIGHT  
EXPERIENCES**

**FLIGHT  
EXPERIENCES**

**POST-FLIGHT  
EXPERIENCES**

# MAIN OBJECTIVE

**To increase knowledge about the impact of experiences occurring *during* the flight on the psychological wellbeing of unaccompanied refugee minors, in relation to the impact of past traumatic experiences in the home country and to daily material and social stressors in the host country**

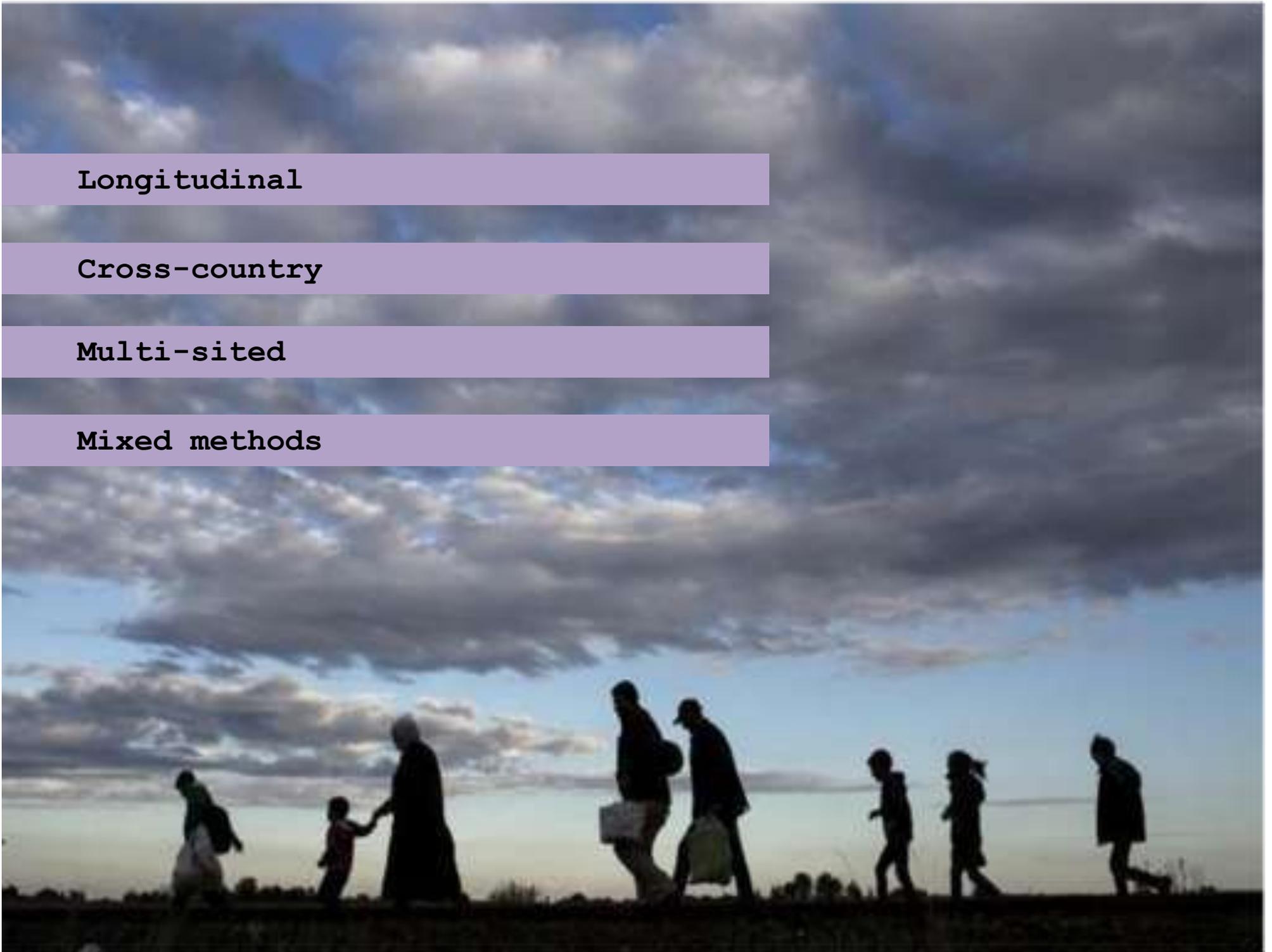
- 1 Which flight experiences?**
- 2 Psychological impact of flight experiences & impact of racism, detention, reception conditions**
- 3 Differentiation past trauma (home) – flight experiences – current stressors (host country)? Theoretical alternative? (Herman 1992; Miller & Rasmussen 2010; V. Turner 1967; S. Turner 2015)**
- 4 Beneficial types of care & support?**

**Longitudinal**

**Cross-country**

**Multi-sited**

**Mixed methods**



STUDY CONTEXTS

Libya

Greece

Italy

Belgium

Belgium



## STUDY CONTEXTS

Libya

Detention centres

Greece

Centres URM

Detention centre

Italy

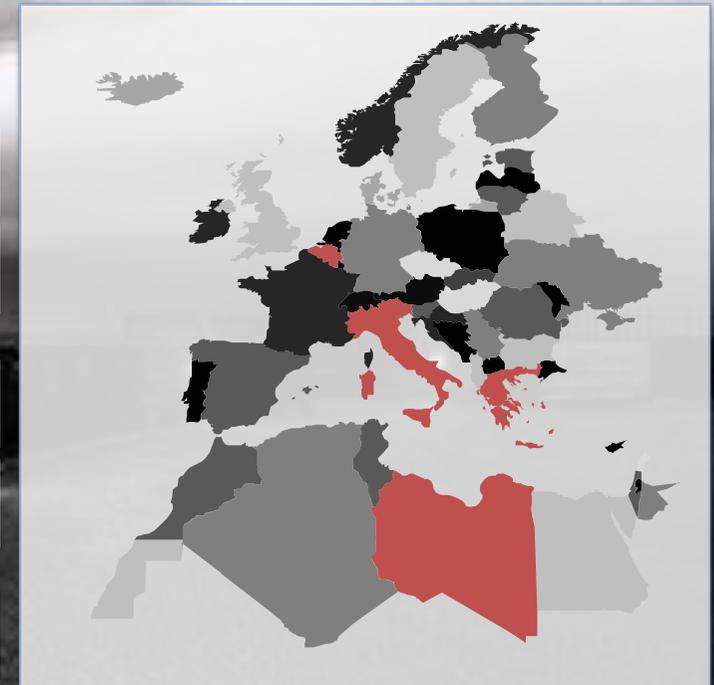
Centres URM

Informal setting

Belgium

Centres URM

Police station (graffiti)



## STUDY 1

Libya

Detention centre

Participant observations  
 Visual ethnography  
*Graffiti analysis* Derluyn et al 2014

Greece

Detention centre

Centres URM

50-80 URM in each  
 country  
 (>14 years of age) (n=300)

Italy

Centres URM

Informal setting

In-depth interviews  
*Complex and multiple experiences*  
*Past, present, future*  
*Interpretors*

Belgium

Centres URM

Police station

Belgium

## STUDY 1

Libya

Detention centre

Participant observations  
 Visual ethnography  
*Graffiti analysis* Derluyn et al 2014

Greece

Detention centre

Centres URM

50-80 URM/country ( $n=300$ )  
 In-depth interviews  
*Experiences past, present, future*

Italy

Centres URM

Informal setting

Self-report  
 questionnaires (Bean,  
 Derluyn et al 2006, 2007)

*Mental health, coping,  
 social support, past  
 trauma, current stressors*

Belgium

Centres URM

Police station

Own language; interpreters

## STUDY 1

Libya

Detention centre

Participant observations  
 Visual ethnography  
*Graffiti analysis* Derluyn et al 2014

Greece

Detention centre

Centres URM

50-80 URM/country (*n=300*)  
 In-depth interviews  
*Experiences past, present, future*

Italy

Centres URM

Informal setting

Self-report questionnaires  
Bean, Derluyn et al 2006, 2007  
*Mental health, coping, social support, trauma, stressors*

Belgium

Centres URM

Police station

**Ethics** Vervliet, Derluyn et al 2015  
*Interpretors; referral network; informed consent*

STUDY 2

Greece

Centres URM

Detention centre

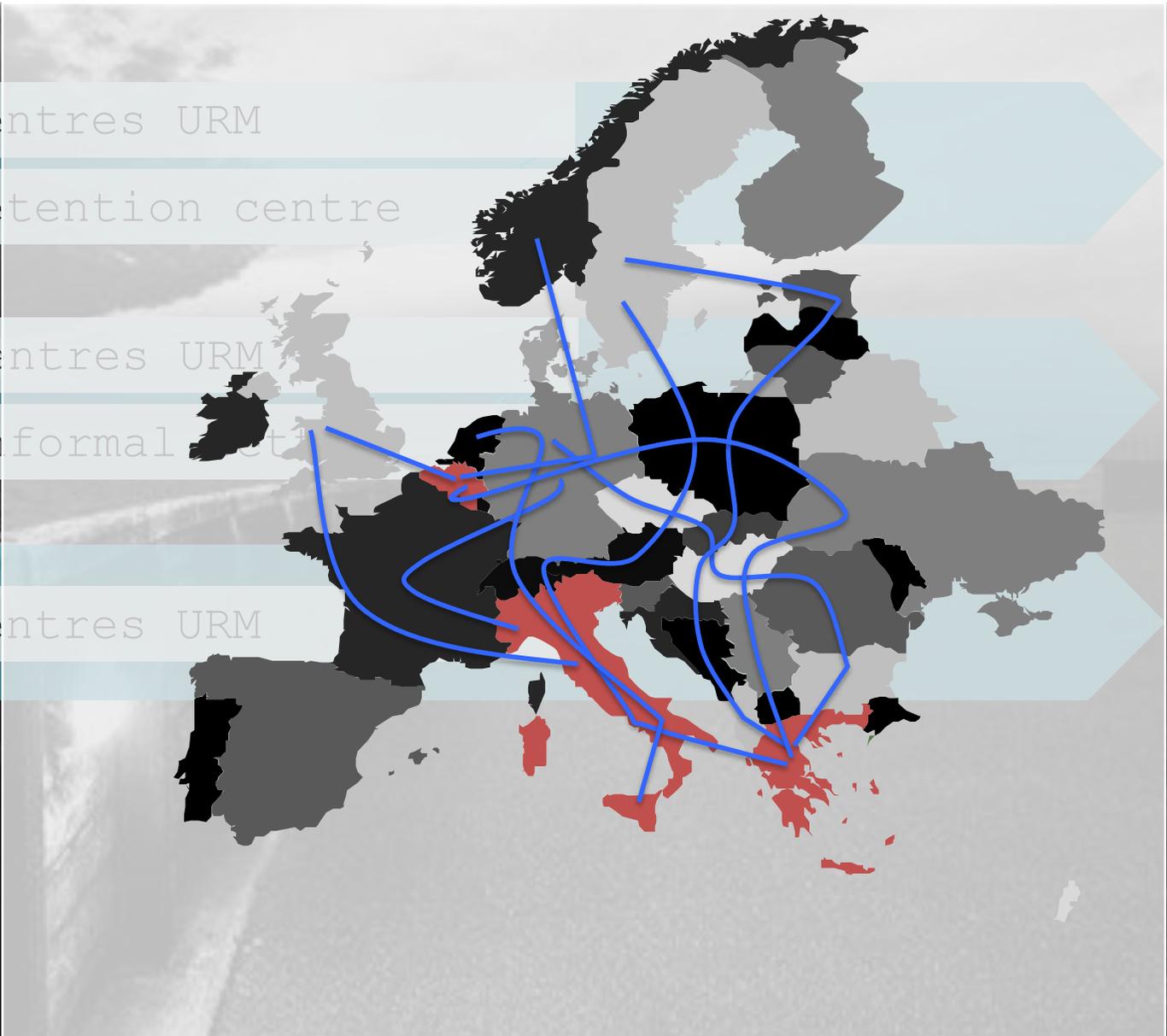
Italy

Centres URM

Informal centres

Belgium

Centres URM



## STUDY 2

Greece

Detention centre

Centres URM

Italy

Centres URM

Informal setting

Belgium

Centres URM

In-depth  
interviews

Questionnaires

1

2

3

4

T<sub>1</sub>T<sub>2</sub>T<sub>3</sub>T<sub>4</sub>T<sub>5</sub>T<sub>6</sub>

C

C

C

C

C

T<sub>x</sub>: measurement moment

C: in-between contact

Aims

Methods

Context

Impact

STUDY 1

STUDY 2

STUDY 3

Libya  
*(Post-doc)*

Detention centre

Integration of data

Greece  
*(PhD)*

Centres URM

Complementation with  
other databases

Detention centre

Theoretical  
advancement  
*Advisory Board (n=3)*

Italy  
*(PhD)*

Centres URM

Informal setting

Stakeholders &  
Implementation  
workshops (*n=10*)

Belgium  
*(PhD + PI)*

Centres URM

Police station

*(Post-doc + PI)*



Research  
team

CESSMIR  
UGent

European  
networks

Advisory  
Board

Expertise in collaboration

# Unaccompanied refugee minors and the impact of experiences before, during and after flight on their psychological well-being

June 2019

National Consultancy, Italy

Marina Rota

Center for the Social Study of Refugees and Migration  
(CESSMIR)



Childmove  
Project  
Greece

# Overview

1. Starting the project
2. Context information about unaccompanied minors in Greece
3. Places of recruitment of the minors, field visits/timing of field work
4. Overview of the sample (numbers, nationalities, gender, age)
5. Challenges encountered
6. Initial outcomes

# Starting the project

- ❖ Regional Consultancy with all actors involved, Athens – 3/7/2017
- ❖ Visits shelters Athens
- ❖ Clearance from Data Protection Authority
- ❖ Ethical Clearance from Athens School of Social Work
- ❖ Communication with Authorities & NGOs running the places of interest
- ❖ Communication with interpreters
- ❖ Recruitment of participants
- ❖ Starting date: 16/10/2017



## Situation Update: Unaccompanied Children (UAC) in Greece 15 October 2017



**2,950** Estimated number of UAC currently in Greece based on analysis from referrals to EKKΑ (as of 15 October 2017)

**1,114** Total number of places available in UAC shelters (filled, pending assigned cases as of 15 October, including 20 vacant places)

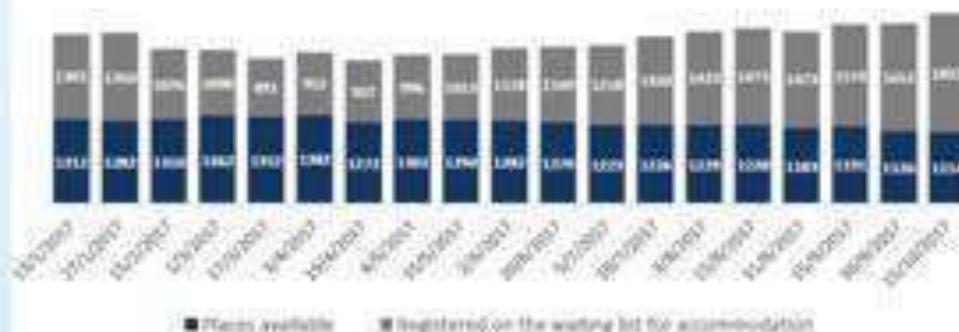
**1,822** Total number of UAC on waiting list for shelter (as of 15 October 2017) including:  
**•287** in Reception and Identification Centers  
**•116** in protective custody

Waiting list does not include referrals of unknown location carried out during pre-registration exercise.  
 Waiting list includes also separated children.

**9,295** Total number of UAC referrals to EKKΑ from 1 Jan 2016 to 15 October 2017.  
 Out of the total:  
**•8,670** boys (93%)  
**•625** girls (7%)  
**•550** <14 years old (6%)

Figures dynamically change and may be updated based on verification by EKKΑ.

Number of places available in UAC shelters (filled, pending assigned cases) vs. Numbers of additional requests for placement on waiting list (1 January 2017 - 15 October 2017)



Number of UAC placed in Reception and Identification Centers/Protective Custody (1 January 2017 - 15 October 2017 (based on requests by referral agents))

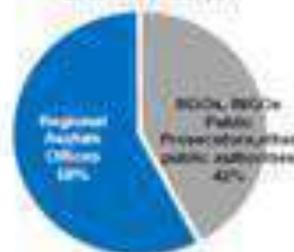


Number of UAC on the waiting list by location (Safe spaces, Police Stations, RCs, Temporary accommodation sites) as of 15 October 2017 (based on requests by referral agents\*)



\*Referrals from open facilities are carried out by referral agents including Asylum Service, NGOs, INGOs, Public Prosecutors.  
 The actual number of UAC in the RCs as of 15 October is higher than the referrals received by EKKΑ. In addition to the above 228 extra referrals are pending submission to EKKΑ.

Other referrals by referral agent as of 15 October 2017



With support from:



## Locations

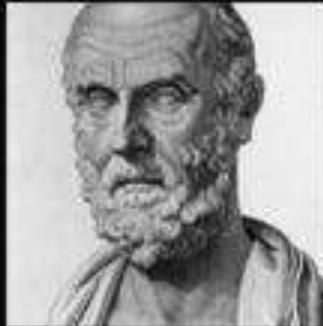
Athens – The Home Project,  
MedIN, Iliaktida

Hellenic Police: Directorate of  
Migration Management,  
Amygdaleza pre-removal centre

Samos – First Reception Service -  
Vathi Centre for reception and  
identification, MSF, MedIn,  
PRAKSIS

Thessaloniki – Oraiakastro, ARSIS

Patras–PRAKSIS' Day Centre,  
Port.

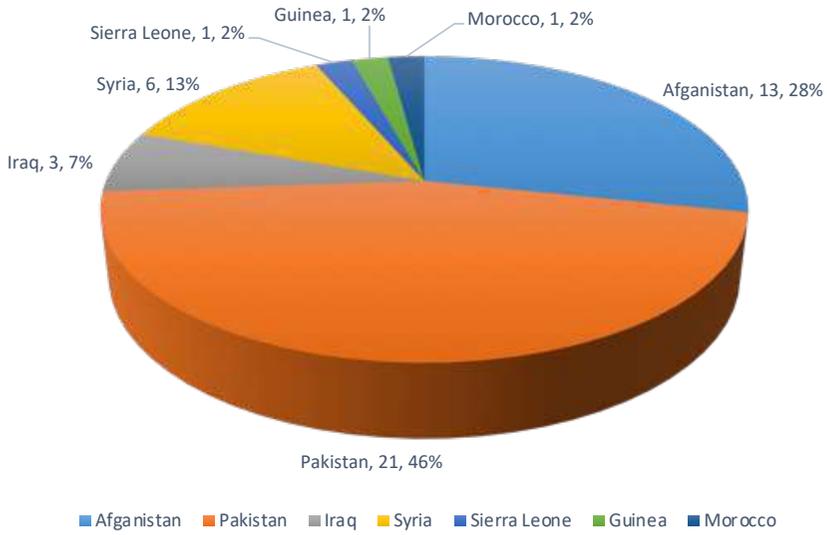


Make a habit of two things: to help; or at least to do no harm.

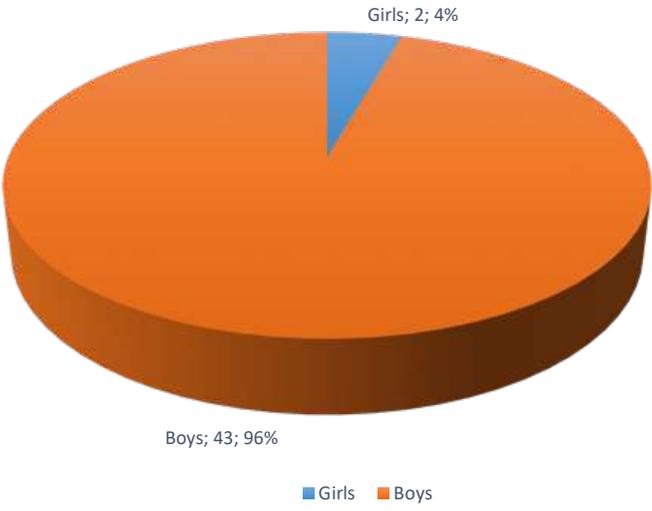
- Hippocrates

Initial interviews  
45 Minors

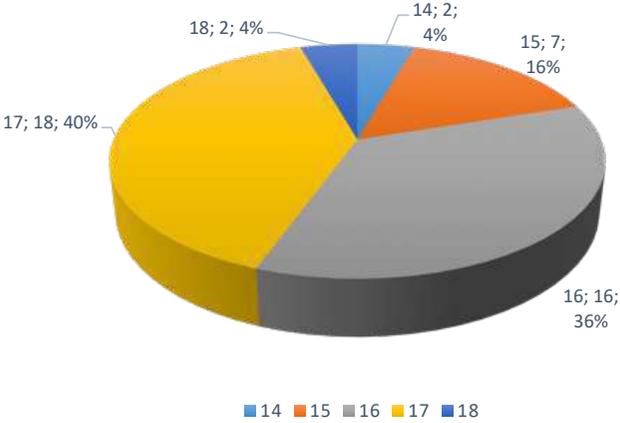
COUNTRIES



GENDER



AGE



# Challenges

- Access to the shelters/camps. Acquire permission for formal settings, and safe passage to informal ones, securing privacy for the interviews
- Language barriers, access to skilled interpreters/cultural mediators
- Limitations as to the level of support we can provide to the participants.
- Frustration, feeling of powerlessness on our part as well as on children's and their caretakers'
- Distance – lack of regular contact with the minors
- Dropping out – children changing their mind on doing an interview, or disappearing from our view



# Initial observations

- The situation at the border camps and informal settings is desperate, even dangerous: living conditions are hard and there is no protection for minors.
- Working conditions for staff are poor leading to burnout and dropping out.
- Child protection policies theoretically in place but not always implemented in practice. These often clash with –and are rendered useless by– migration control policies e.g. “protective custody”
- Lack of information and high level of uncertainty. Children feel like they are in a perennial limbo, a “temporary” situation with no way to go forward or backward. This exacerbates feelings of resignation and depression.
- Age assessment procedures and the consequences of turning 18 are a source of further anxiety.
- Family reunification procedures are long and often lead to the children reuniting after turned 18.



Photo: M. Rota, Vathi, Samos 2017



Photo: O. Uzureau Vathi, Samos 2019

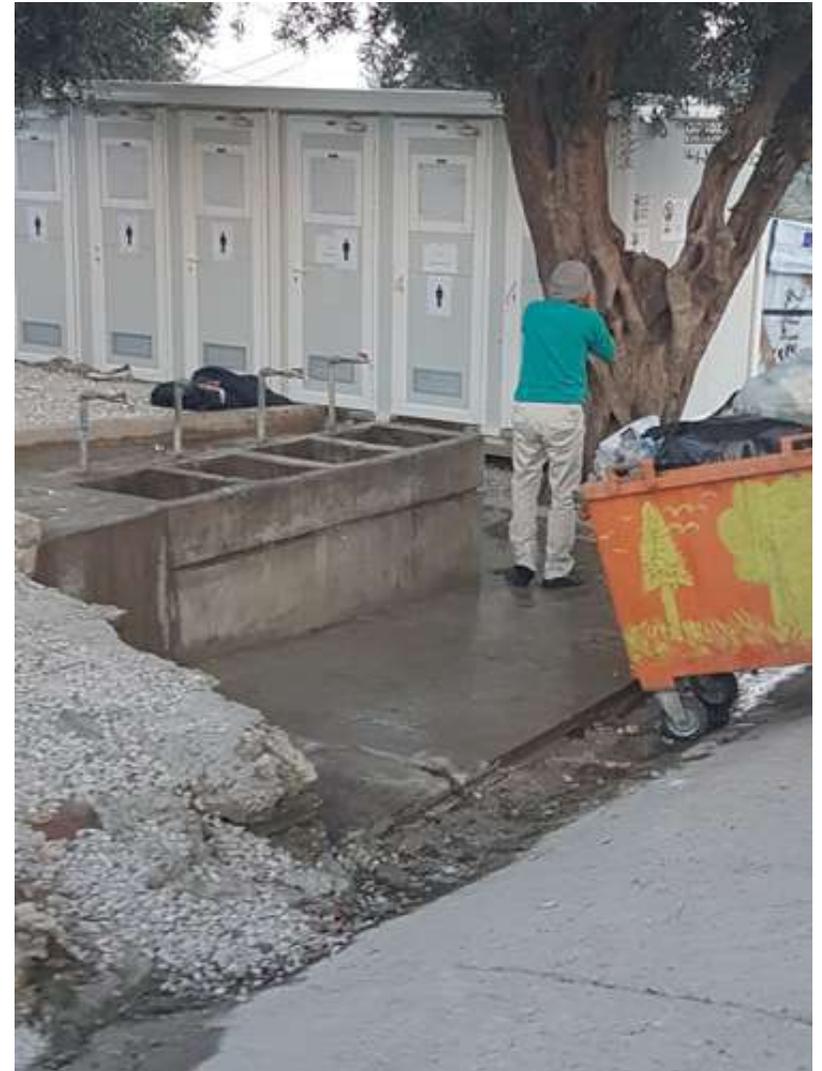


Photo: M. Rota, Moria, Lesvos 2019



Photo: MSF Greece, Moria, Lesvos 2019



Photo: MSF Greece, Moria, Lesvos 2019

## 106 UaMs in “Protective Custody”

**“Is it ever acceptable for children to be detained in dark and dirty police cells? Greek authorities appear to think the answer is yes.”**

— Myrto Tilianaki, Human Rights Watch



Photo: M. Rota, Amygdaleza detention centre, 2018

# Best interest of each child

- Physical contact (a hug, a pat on the back) plays significant role for many kids.
- Being normal – go on excursions, on Fun Parks or just for street food makes kids feel like normal people.
- Need of rules and boundaries.
- Feeling that someone is looking after them.
- Being treated as individuals and not as part of the pack.
- Need of attention.
- Making staff proud of them.
- Feeling of belonging.



Photo: M. Rota, February 2018

## Daily stressors

### Instructions:

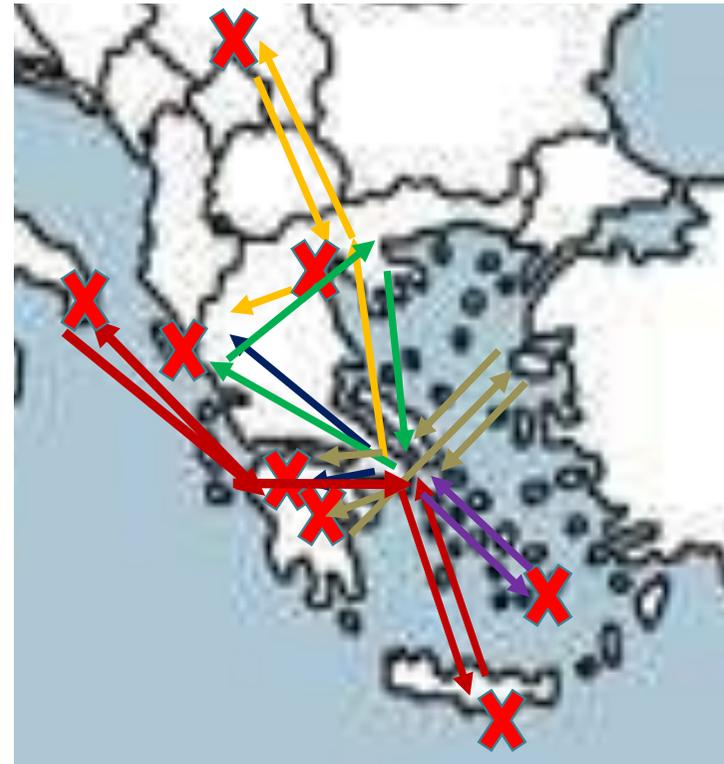
Underneath you can find a list of difficulties that people can experience in their daily lives (feelings, events, living conditions, ...). Please read the questions carefully. Read every sentence and think if you have experienced any of these difficulties *during the last month*. Then, please tell us how often you experienced them by marking the box that most applies to your experiences with a cross. If you experienced something that is not on this list, you can write this down below under number 20.

How often did you experience...?		Never	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know/ don't want to answer
1.	Not enough food	0	0	0	0	0
2.	Not enough clothing	0	0	0	0	0
3.	Not enough money	0	0	0	0	0
4.	Not enough housing	0	0	0	0	0
5.	Not enough medical care	0	0	0	0	0
6.	Not enough education	0	0	0	0	0
7.	Lack of information (on procedures, rights etc.)	0	0	0	0	0
8.	Feelings of unsafety	0	0	0	0	0
9.	Difficulties in making new friends	0	0	0	0	0
10.	Worrying about my family at home	0	0	0	0	0
11.	Difficulties in obtaining legal documents	0	0	0	0	0
12.	Difficulties related to the age-assessment procedures	0	0	0	0	0
13.	Difficulties to communicate with others due to the foreign language	0	0	0	0	0
14.	Being forcibly and repeatedly moved	0	0	0	0	0
15.	Feeling bored	0	0	0	0	0
16.	Feeling uncertain about the future	0	0	0	0	0
17.	Hear people say bad things about myself	0	0	0	0	0
18.	Feeling of being treated unfairly compared to others	0	0	0	0	0
19.	Feeling that others have prejudices about myself or people of my country/culture	0	0	0	0	0
20.	Other difficulty that I experienced last month: _____	0	0	0	0	0

# Daily stressors

- Not enough money
- Not enough food
- Not enough clothes
- Lack of information on procedures
- Difficulties in obtaining legal documents
- Feeling uncertain about the future
- Feeling bored
- Not enough education
- Difficulties to communicate with others due to the foreign language.
- Medical care
- Lack of guardian

# On the move...



## Measurement moment 2 – Initial observations

### FOLLOW UP 18/25, PENDING 2 MISSING 5

- Children feeling stranded in Greece are growing more restless or despaired
- Others are busy integrating in Greek society while waiting for their documents
- Lack of guardians, even for children who initially had ones
- Children become adults but caregivers are reluctant to let them go as they are still in vulnerable situations
- Caregivers feel powerless because they cannot meet the children's daily needs. Lack of funding.
- Difficulties in obtaining documents for children who have reached their destinations in other EU countries
- Many experience homesickness



Photo: M.Rota, PRAKSIS Day Centre, March 2018

*"I want to become a policewoman, to help people..."*

Girl, 17 y/o

*"I want to become a chef..."*

Boy 16 y/o

*"I want to become a doctor..."*

Boy 15 y/o

*"I want to be a professional boxer..."*

Boy 16 y/o

*"I want to become an engineer..."*

Boy 16 y/o

*"I want to be the next president of my country..."*

Boy 17 y/o

*"I want to become an IT expert..."*

Boy 18 y/o

*"I want to become a biologist ..."*

Boy 17 y/o

*"I want to become a footballer..."*

Boy 17 y/o

*"I want to become a teacher..."*

Boy 16 y/o

*"I want to play professional cricket ..."*

Boy 16 y/o

*"I want to become a film maker..."*

Boy 16 y/o

Photo: Brian, 2018



Photo: M. Rota, ARSIS' shelter for UaM, Thessaloniki, November 2017

“Human beings are  
members of a whole  
In creation of one essence  
and soul  
If one member is afflicted  
with pain  
Other members uneasy will  
remain  
If you have no sympathy for  
human pain  
The name of human you  
cannot retain”

Saadi, گلستان سعدی

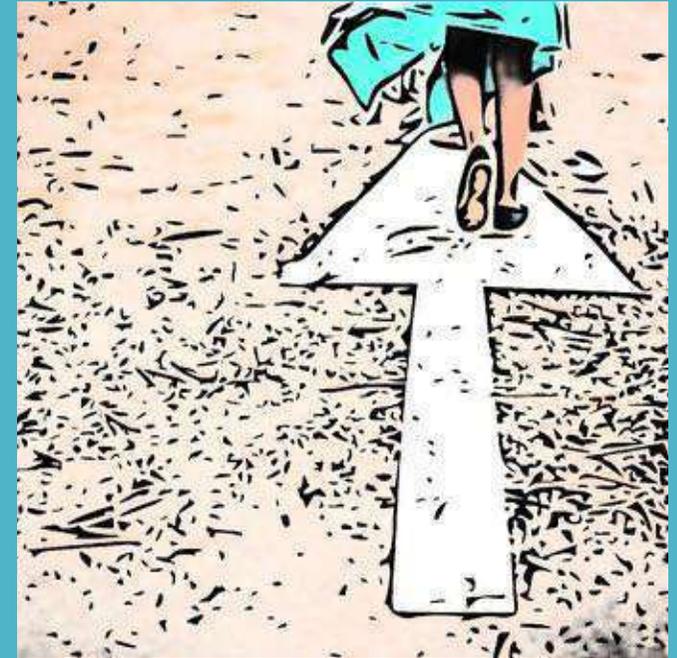
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION  
GRAZIE PER L'ATTENZIONE

Marina Rota  
Researcher

Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy  
Center for the Social Study of Refugees and Migration (CESSMIR)

e-mail: [marina.rota@ugent.be](mailto:marina.rota@ugent.be)  
mobile: +32 478 923 864

[www.facebook.com/childmove](http://www.facebook.com/childmove)



# References

Crawley, H., Düvell, F., Jones, K., McMahon, S. and Sigona, N. (2016) 'Destination Europe?

Understanding the dynamics and drivers of Mediterranean migration in 2015', MEDMIG Final Report

[www.medmig.info/research-brief-destination-europe.pdf](http://www.medmig.info/research-brief-destination-europe.pdf)

Derluyn, I. & Broekaert, E. (2008). Unaccompanied refugee children and adolescents: The glaring contrast between a legal and a psychological perspective. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 31, 319–330.

Derluyn, I., Mels, C., & Broekaert, E. (2009). Mental health problems in separated refugee adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 44(3), 291-297.

Human Rights Watch – “Why are you keeping me here?” Unaccompanied Children Detained in Greece 2016

Vervliet, M. (2013). The trajectories of unaccompanied refugee minors: Aspirations, agency and psychosocial well-being.

<https://www.e-pronoia.gr/content/epikairopoiimena-statistika-stoiheia-gia-tin-katastasi-ton-asynodeyton-anilikon-sti-hora-2>

Unicef – Reach project – children on the move in Italy and Greece [http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/reach\\_ita\\_grc\\_report\\_children\\_on\\_the\\_move\\_in\\_italy\\_and\\_greece\\_june\\_2017.pdf](http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/reach_ita_grc_report_children_on_the_move_in_italy_and_greece_june_2017.pdf)

# Unaccompanied refugee minors and the impact of experiences before, during and after flight on their psychological well-being

Malte Behrendt

Center for the Social Study of Refugees and Migration  
(CESSMIR)

Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy

National Consultancy, Italy, June 2019



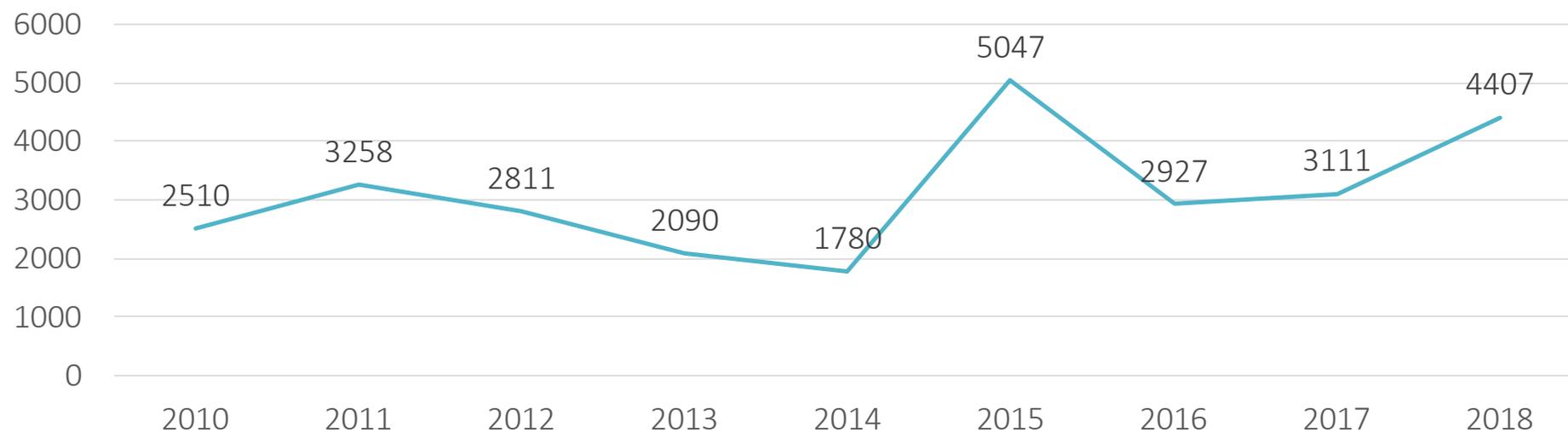
Childmove  
Project  
Belgium

# Overview

1. Unaccompanied minors in Belgium
2. Belgian reception system
3. Field work
4. First results and coping strategies
5. Questions

# URM in Belgium

## First registrations of URM<sup>1</sup>



1) BELGIAN GUARDIAN SERVICE

# URM in Belgium

Minors off the radar

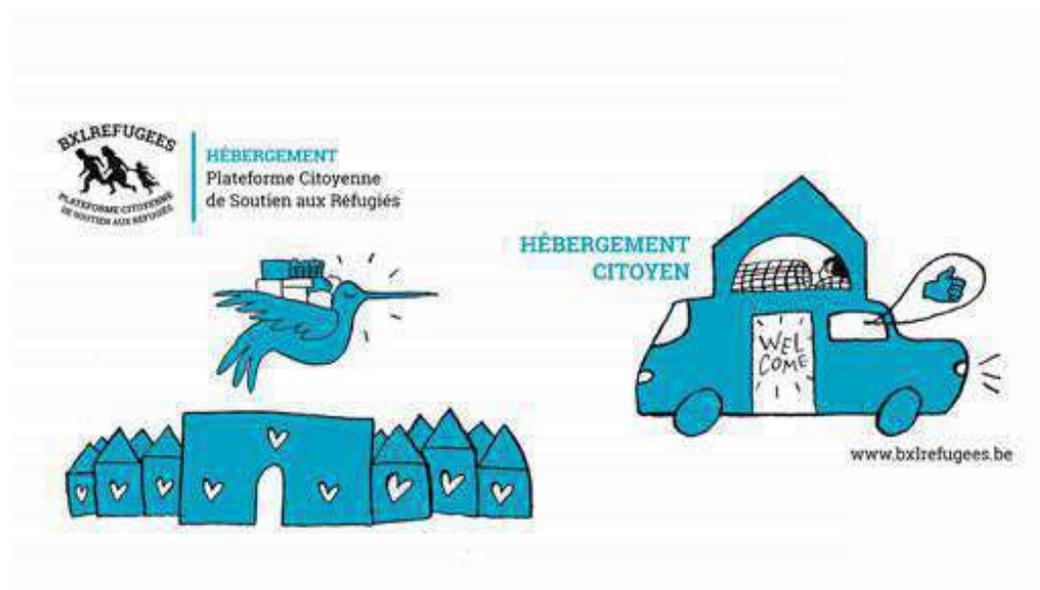
Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia

Maghreb and Egypt

Serbia and Romania

Humanitarian hub

Informal reception networks



# URM in Belgium

Staged reception system with three phases

1. First phase reception centers
  - Average stay of 50 days
  - “Observation and orientation”
2. Transfer to second phase
  - Appointment of guardian, school
  - Usually a big-scale reception facility
  - Stay up to one year and more
3. “Sustainable solution” in a third phase
  - Small-scale, independent living



# Field work

Recruitment in two first phase  
reception centers

Participant observation

79 participants

Follow-up in Belgium, Germany,  
France, Switzerland

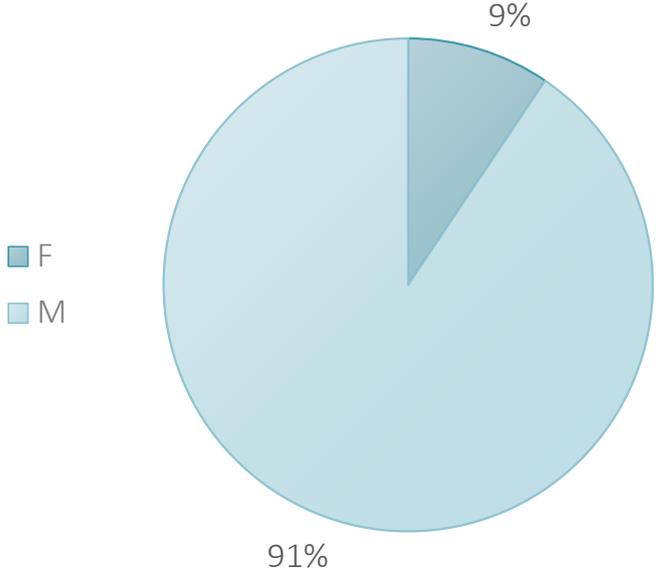
15% left Belgium (age-test,  
Dublin)

53 participants

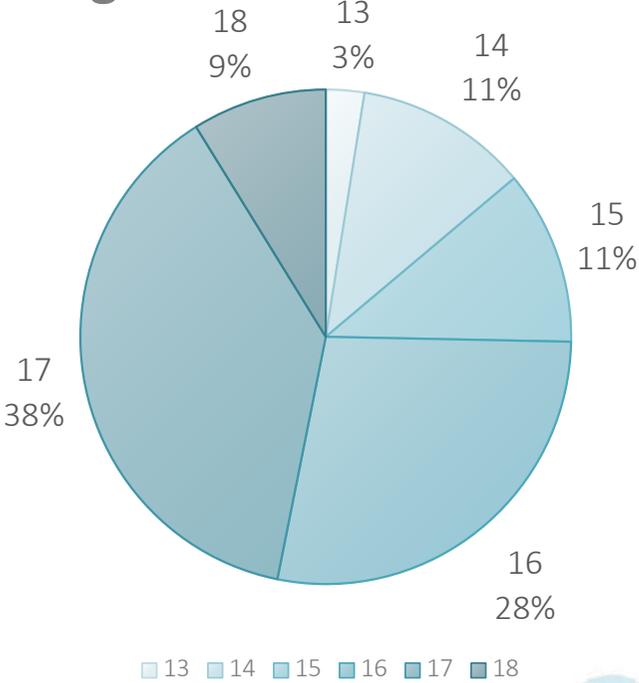


# Research sample

Gender

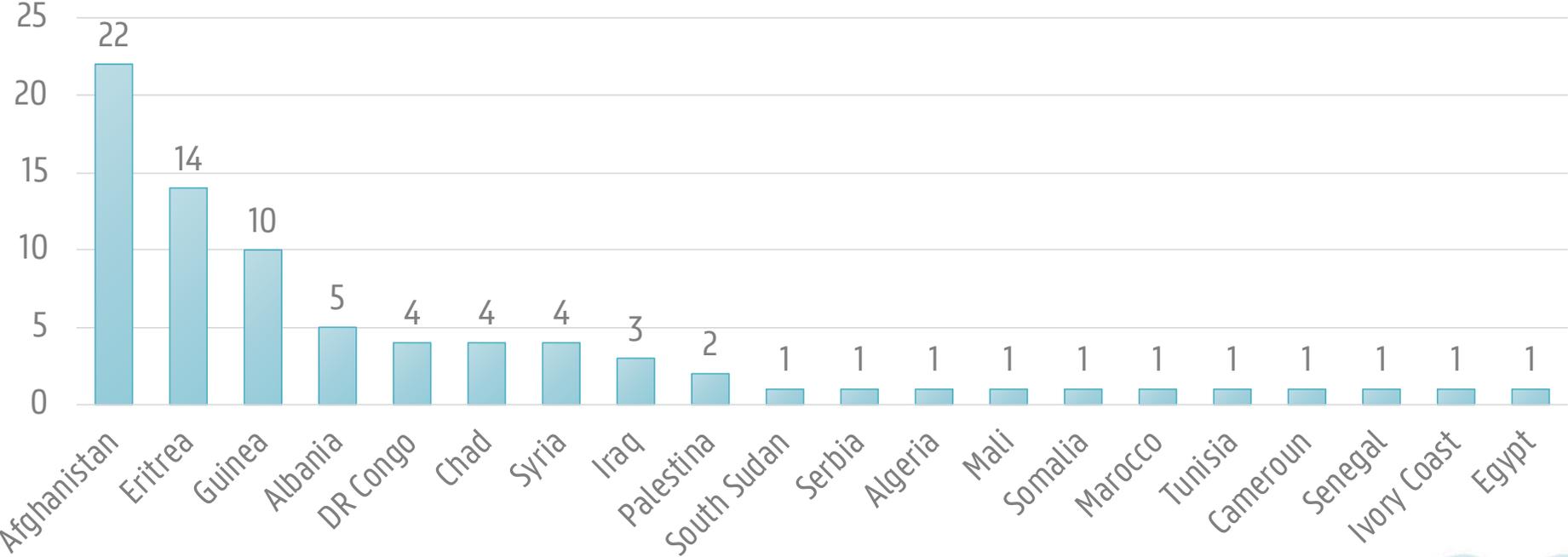


Age



# Research sample

Country of origin



# Perception of Italy (at M1)

## Positive

Life in Italian centers perceived as having more freedom (high level of structure in Belgium)

More pocket money (restricted in phase 1 center)

The weather

Relief after arrival, being safe, gratitude

## Reasons to move on

Lack of perspective (education)

Wish to get further away from Africa

Wish to reach a French-speaking country

Avoiding Dublin regulation/fingerprints

## In Belgium (at M1)

High level of symptoms (anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress)

Most prominent daily stressors:

- Worries about friends and family

- Worries about legal documents, uncertainty

- Language barrier, getting used to food, high level of structure

- Crowded center, noise

Importance of social support

# Coping strategies and resources

Social support on various levels

Interactive continuum (Farwell, 2001)

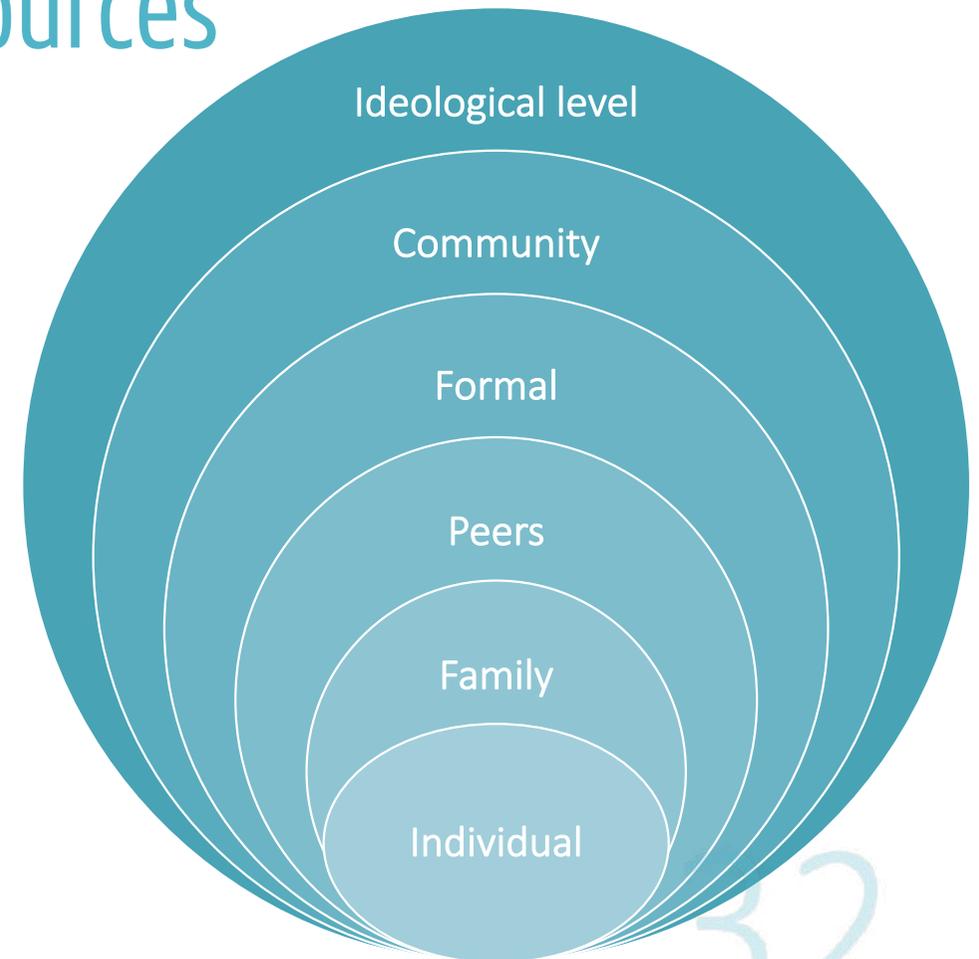
Four themes

Avoidance and distraction

Continuity and coherence

Resourcefulness and autonomy

Positive thinking and belief



# Avoidance and distraction

A strong urge to avoid difficult memories, thoughts and feelings

*“Yes we entertain with our friends. When you are alone, then you don’t want to be alone you just go and entertain with your friends and sometimes we go and play football [...] If you are alone, lonely, then you think about those past experiences but [...] when you’re with your friends then you forget these things.”*

# Continuity

A sense of continuity and coherence

*“I go to friends and we talk about, the past and then some time we talk about politics and we talk about president from Afghanistan called [...] yeah so then we talk about, him so like that so then about our past and about our country we talk so that helps me.”*

*“When I get up early in the morning first I pray.”*



# Resourcefulness and autonomy

A high level of maturity and resourcefulness

*“I need to help myself.”*

*“Yeah. So I usually follow and I see how people are behaving so as not to commit any mistake against anybody.”*

# Positive thinking and belief

Positive thinking and putting things into perspective

*"I think about the future more than about the past."*

*"So I want people to know about Eritrea and especially the people who sacrifice their lives for Eritrea"*

Any questions?

# References

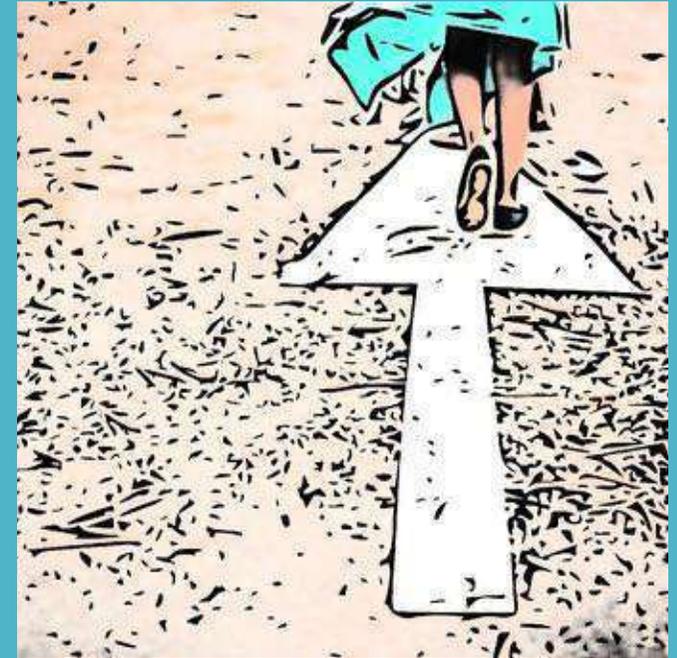
Farwell, N. (2001). 'Onward through strength': Coping and psychological support among refugee youth returning to Eritrea from Sudan. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 14(1), 43-69.

Malte Behrendt  
PhD student

Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy  
Center for the Social Study of Refugees and  
Migration (CESSMIR)

E malte.behrendt@ugent.be  
T +32 926 462 86  
M +32 478 923 880

[www.facebook.com/childmove](http://www.facebook.com/childmove)



# Unaccompanied refugee minors and the impact of experiences before, during and after flight on their psychological well-being

Océane UZUREAU

Center for the Social Study of Refugees and Migration (CESSMIR)

Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy



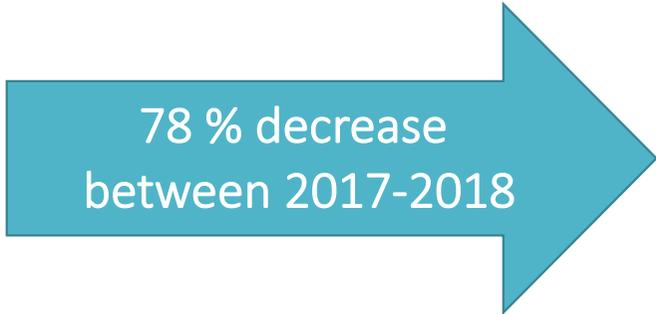
**National  
Consultation  
Childmove Project  
Italy**

## Overview

- Migration routes to Europe: the Central Mediterranean route
- Evolutions of the sea arrivals of UMs in Italy
- Evolutions of the context of reception
- Places of recruitment of the minors
- Ethics of the research
- Key informants of the research
- Sample of participants and current location
- Observations
- Challenges
- Questions

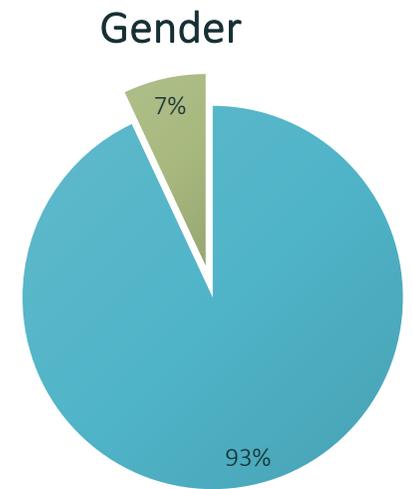
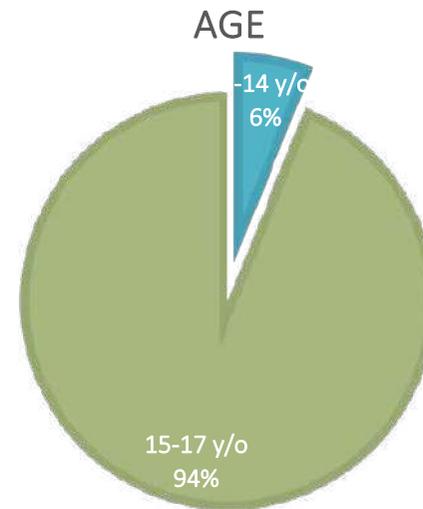
# Evolutions of the sea arrivals of UMs in Italy

2017 : 15,779 UMs



2018: 3,536 UMs

- Adjournment of Search & Rescue operations in the Mediterranean
- Suspension of disembarkation operations in Italy and Malta



■ 5-14 y/o ■ 15-17 y/o

■ Male ■ Female

Source: UNHCR, Unicef, IOM - Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe , Overview of Trends - January - December 2018

# Places of recruitment

- Palermo  
Disembarkation setting  
First Reception Centre for unaccompanied minors only
- Rome  
Transit and settlement setting  
Night transit shelter both for minors and adults
- Ventimiglia  
Transit setting  
Informal and formal transit camps both for minors and adults

City	Palermo	Roma	Ventimiglia
Number of participants recruited	11	4	24



## Ethics of the research

- Informed consent in the mother language when possible
- Confidentiality agreement for interpreters
- Ethical approval from the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche
- Constitution of a referral network in each research setting
- Not to replace the work of the social workers and other actors
- Informal and formal approach of the research

Key words on the field:

HONESTY

FLEXIBILITY

SAFETY

## To give back to the young people

Limited things that we can give back

- Leisure and fun moments together (card games, visits in the city, food)
- Small items (pictures, pens, maps, bracelets)
- Listen to their secrets and hear their stories
- Support and 'Coaching'



Credit : Uzureau. O - 2017

## Key informants of the research

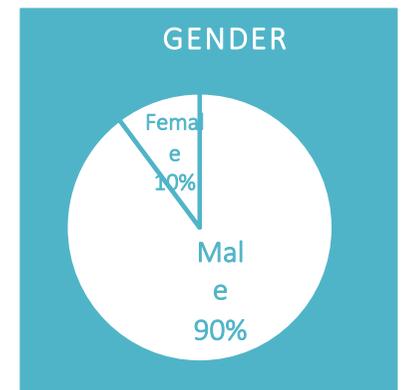
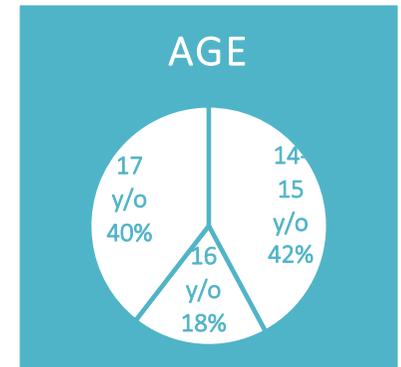
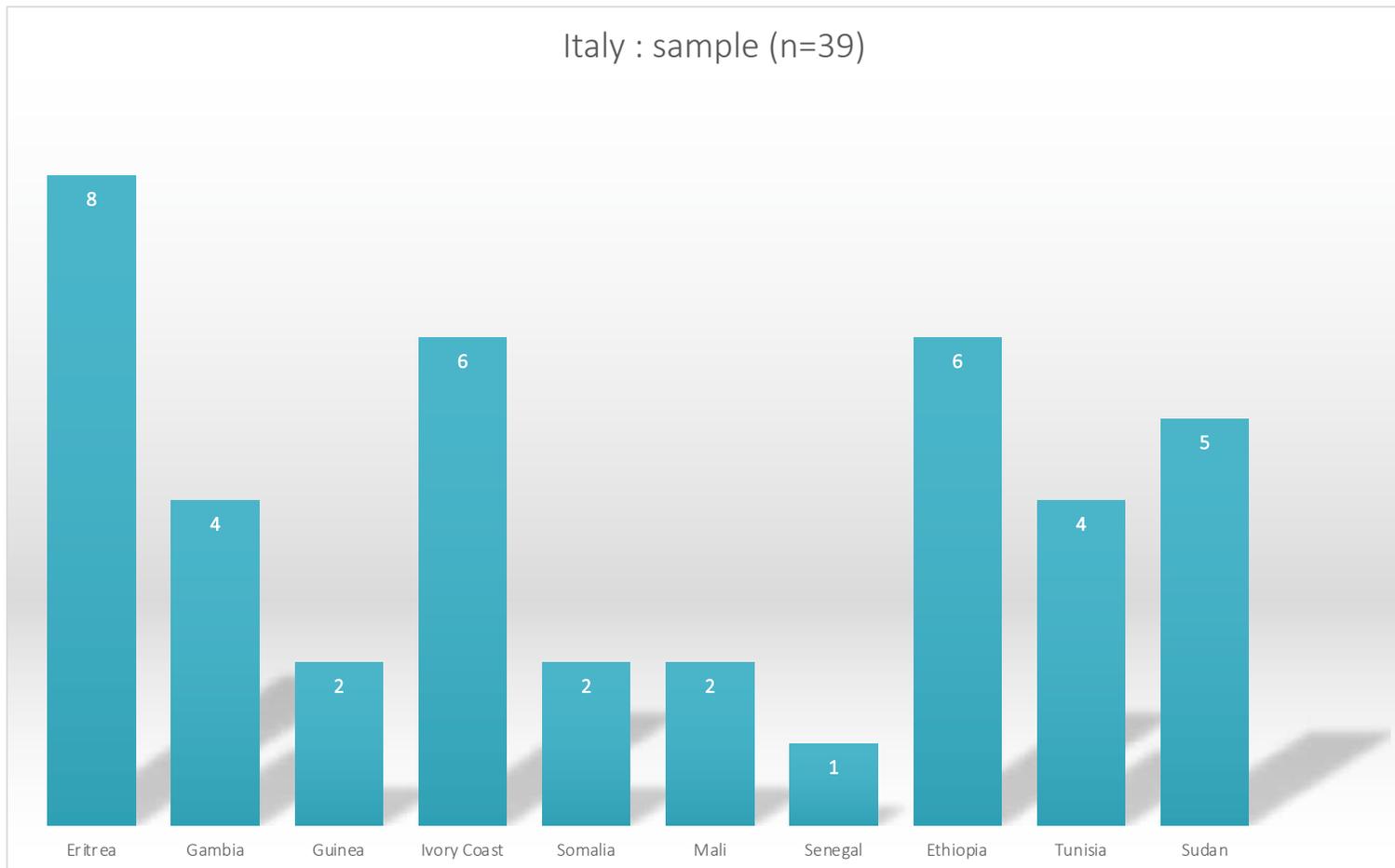
- Knowledge of the local network of NGO's
- Referral network in each research setting

### Help provided:

- Collaboration for translating services with cultural mediators
- Access to research settings
- Access to safe places to conduct interviews



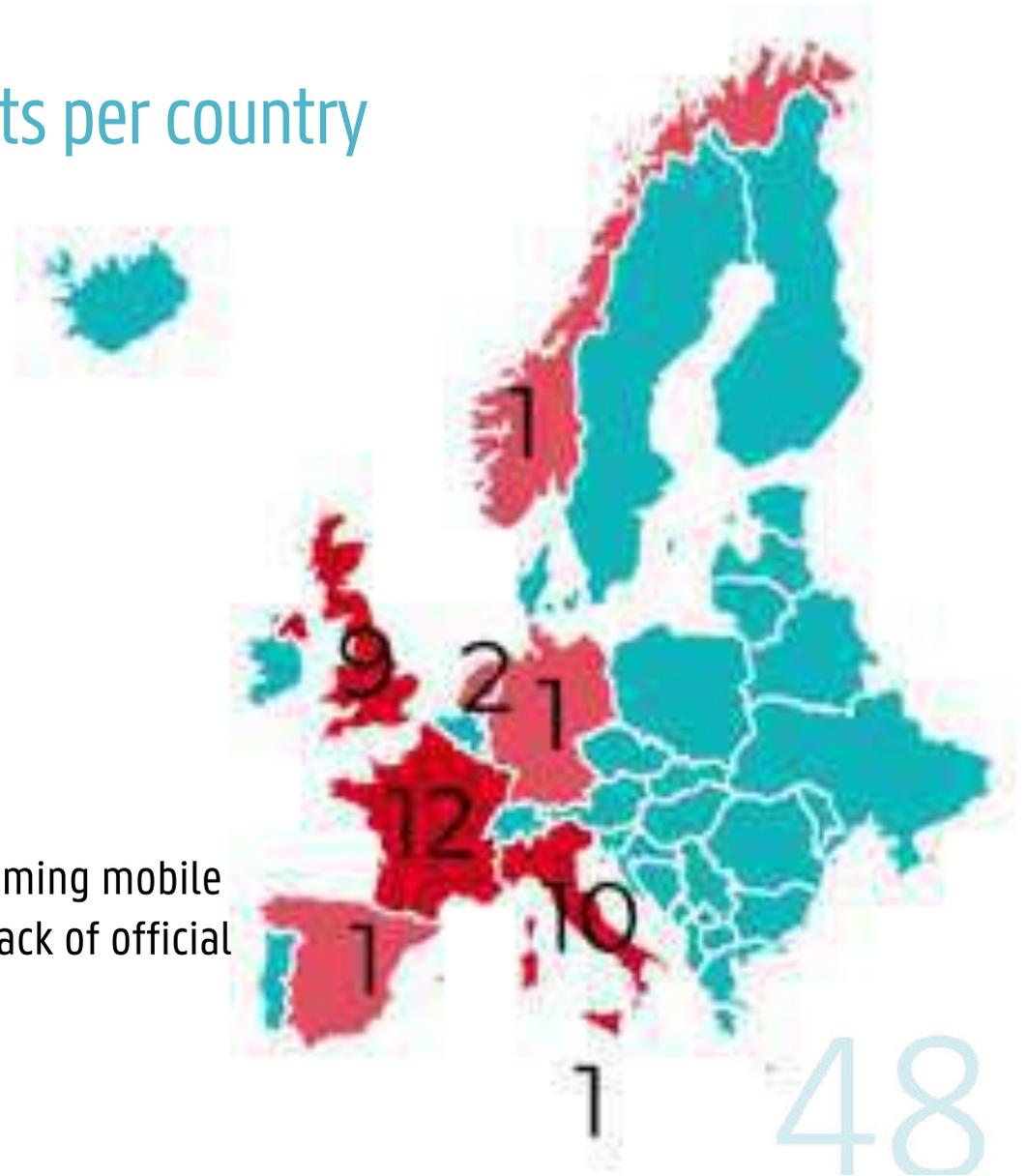
# Sample of participants (=39)



## Current location of the participants per country

- Italy
- France
- Spain
- The Netherlands
- The United Kingdom
- Malta
- Norway
- Germany

- Majority of the sample is settled / Few are becoming mobile again because of negative asylum decisions or lack of official documents for adults when becoming of age



## Young migrants transiting in Italy remain particularly at risk

- Fragmented journeys and long waiting periods: difficult border crossings in the mountains, dire living conditions during the journey
- Push backs and detention at the borders (Ventimiglia and Bruges)

“When I try to cross the border and after when the police pushes me back, I want to be alone. I don’t want to speak because I am very stressed. Until now I tried four times to go by train”

Eritrean girl, 17y/o

“In Belgium I went three times in detention. It was one or two days each time and they took my fingerprints”

Ethiopian boy, 17y/o

- Exposure drug dealing and prostitution in transit hubs (Ventimiglia, Roma)

“ There are things that I don’t want to do here [in Roma], like drug dealing. But if someone offers me, I will do it because I don’t have any other choice.”

Tunisian boy, 16 y/o

“ I am afraid of police officers who are always ready to attack me for any reason. I am scared when I see police officers now “

Tunisian boy, 17 y/o- Roma

## Aspirations during the journey

- To meet family members in another country in Europe and find better work and school opportunities

“I want to meet with my uncle in Norway but I am not there yet”  
Eritrean boy, 16 y/o - Ventimiglia

“I think I am inside [Italy] and that my family is in Ivory Coast and in France. I suffer because I would like to be with my family in France. I would like to get documents to bring my mother in France. I feel responsible for the future of my mother”  
Ivorian boy, 15 y/o - Ventimiglia

- To help their families (sending money, helping family members to travel legally to Europe)

“Later I would like to build a house for my mum”  
Malian boy, 17 y/o

“I want to bring my family in the Netherlands, not in Italy”  
Eritrean boy, 16 y/o - Ventimiglia

## Challenges observed for social workers in Sicily

- High turn-over among the staff of the centres, shortage of finances and of experienced staff
- Closure of reception centres in Italy since 2017
- Lengthy asylum process : long waiting period for the minors
- Mobility within centres Sicily and from South to North of Italy
- Difficulties to obtain legal documents (passport, residence permit)
- Limited labour opportunities (agriculture and food industry)

# Young people's perspectives on their future in Italy

“After learning the language, if I can find a job that allows me to study I will do it, otherwise I will focus on finding a job. Working is more important than studies.”

Malian boy, 17 y/o - Roma

“I am training to become a football player right now, but it might be that I am not the kind of man who can be a football player, but a man who can become a mechanics.”

Ivorian boy, 16y/o - Palermo

“If I find my ‘documents’ here [in Italy], If I find a work here, I will stay in Italy.”

Ivorian boy , 17y/o - Palermo

“Before they gave two years document [residence permit], they stopped now. Now they talk about 5 years. It means that if there is war in your country, they will give you documents. But if there is no war, like ‘family problems’ or ‘little conflicts’ they won’t give you ‘documents’. People who obtained this [humanitarian] document before, it is a big problem to renew it now! If you’re not going to school or having a work contract they can’t renew your document’ “

Ivorian boy, 17 y/o - Palermo

“When I will have documents I will help other migrants to get documents because all of us we are migrants and Africans“

Guinean boy, 17 y/o

# Essential support from social workers, lawyers, volunteers

Feeling of being supported and cared for through:

- Having information and answers
- Inclusion in local and national intercultural projects, professional schools
- Providing opportunities for internships & trainings
- Football and sport projects



Credit : Uzureau. O - 2018

## Young people's perspectives on support they received

“The staff of the centre gave me a lot of advice. [...] They help because we talk, we have a lot of conversations. They helped me to improve my level in Italian language“

Tunisian boy, 17y/o – Roma

“ I chose to do this training as a cook because there are lot of restaurants here so when you look [for a job] it is easy to find this type of job here. The lady working at Laboratory 53 [an organisation] gave me this idea “

Malian boy, 17 y/o - Roma

“The questions I have, I ask to my lawyer. He is nice, we speak on Whatsapp, when I ask a question he answers it“

Malian boy, 17 y/o –Roma

“My heart become nervous because of the social worker. [When] she’s speaking about me, my heart becomes really hot “

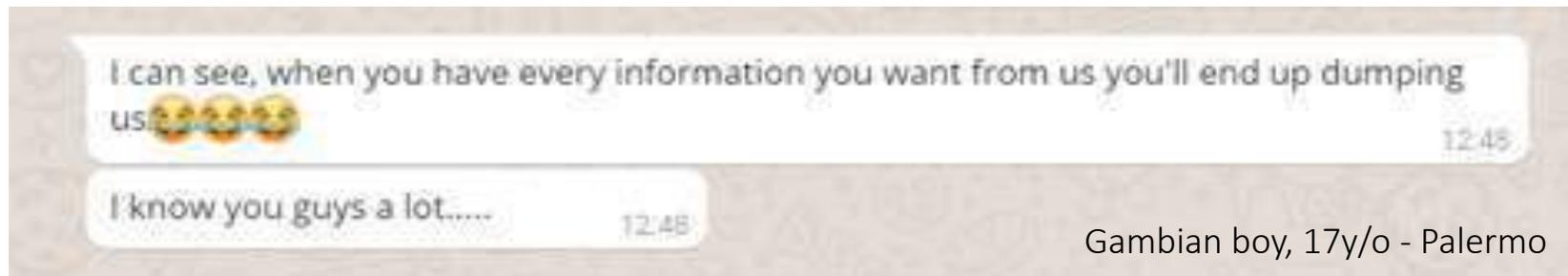
Ivoirian boy, 15y/o



Red Cross training for volunteers  
Torino, 2019

## Challenges of the research

- Access to the field
- Lack of trust in researchers and journalists



- To **repeatedly** explain the role of the researcher along the research process
- Follow-up of the participants by distance, commitment to the research & flexible participation
- Feeling of powerlessness : adaptability of the referral network & constraints of the legal framework
- Managing the social worker-participant relationship
- Manage the trust relationship built during the research

## Contact

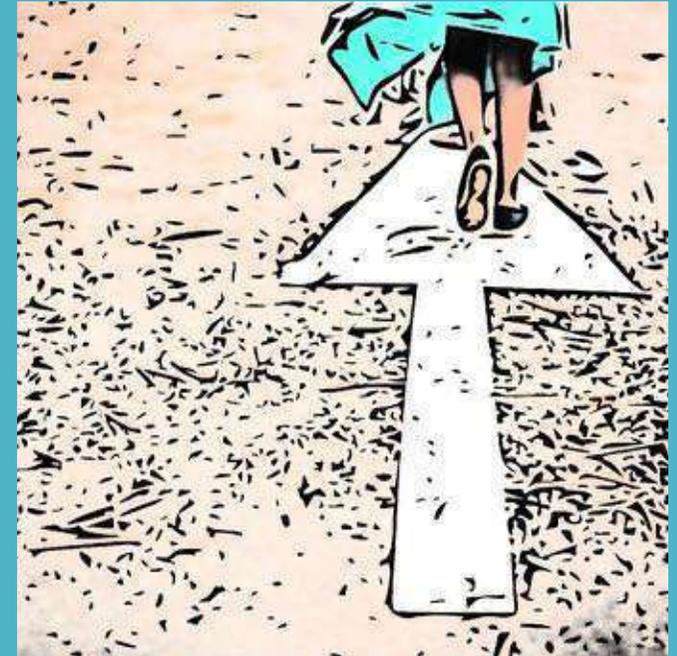
Océane UZUREAU

E: [oceane.uzureau@ugent.be](mailto:oceane.uzureau@ugent.be)

T: +32 478 923 891

Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy  
Center for the Social Study of Refugees and Migration (CESSMIR)

[www.facebook.com/childmove](https://www.facebook.com/childmove)



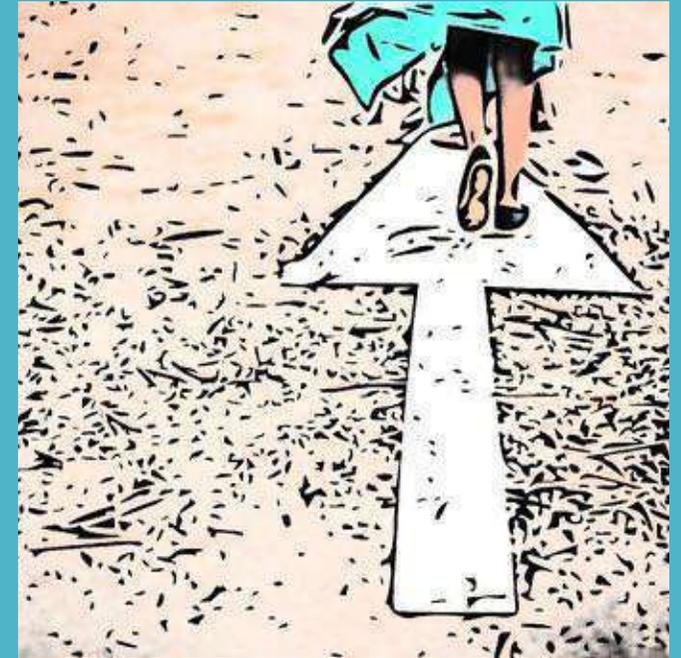
# ChildMove Project: The impact of flight experiences on the psychological wellbeing of Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM)

Stakeholders' Meeting, Italy

Sarah Adeyinka



SARAH ADEYINKA

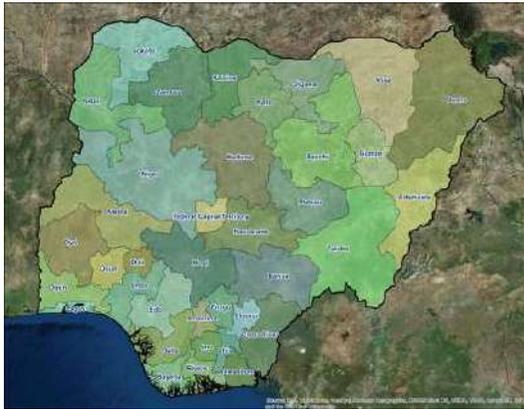


Childmove  
Project  
Italy

# Overview

1. The research
  - Introduction
2. The Nigerian context
3. The Italian context
  - Recruitment locations
  - Sample/participants' overview
  - Measurement moments
4. Observations and emerging themes
5. Quotes from the field
6. Challenges
7. Questions
8. Feedback
9. The end

# Female Nigerian migrants and refugees in Italy



# The Research

Nigerian females who arrived in Italy between June 2016 and June 2018 via the central Mediterranean route

- 21 adults
- 10 unaccompanied minors
- Mixed-Methods Approach
- Cross country and longitudinal follow up

# Why Nigerians

## Nigerian women victims of trafficking in 2016



Source: IOM





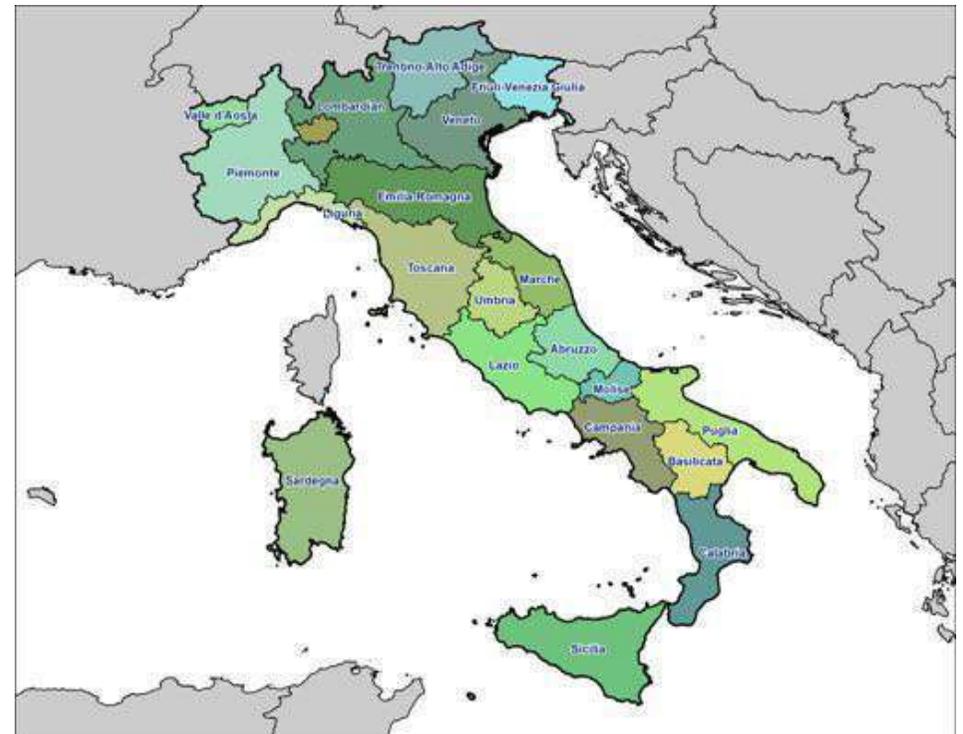
# The Italian Context

In 2017, 15% of all registered sea arrivals in Italy originated from Nigeria (18,158 people)

5,400 were women

88 were accompanied children

1,228 were unaccompanied minors



# NIGERIAN MIGRATION TO ITALY

(As of January 1, 2018)

## TRENDS AND FACTS

**106.069** NIGERIANS RESIDING IN ITALY  
(OUT OF **5.144.440** FOREIGNERS IN ITALY)



43.419  
ARE WOMEN



62.650  
ARE MEN

NIGERIANS ARE **2.1%**  
OF TOTAL FOREIGNERS IN ITALY  
(+ 19.8% compared to the previous year, 2016)

## HIGHEST CONCENTRATION OF NIGERIANS IN ITALY



'Emilia Romagna' is the  
region with the highest  
number of Nigerians:  
14,543  
(2.71% of total population)

SOURCE: ITALIAN MINISTRY OF INTERIOR - ISTAT - EUROSTAT.  
CREDIT: P. SPOLICCI/IPS (ITALY AREA SERVICE)



# (Tentative) Research Questions

- What are the experiences of young female Nigerian refugees during their migration trajectory? (e.g. smuggled vs trafficked)
- How do these young refugees cope with their migration experiences, and how do their experiences impact their psychosocial wellbeing? (e.g. the impact of perceived stigmatization on self worth and mental health).
- What is the place of possible experiences related to human trafficking in their journey and how do these trafficking experiences impact their psychosocial wellbeing? (e.g. when does trafficking start? Do people who pay to be smuggled deserve to be trafficked?)
- What role do policies play in their migration, trafficking and integration trajectory?



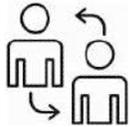
# Recruitment locations

- Asti



## Napoli area

Personal connections



- Catania



# Ethical Dilemmas

- Power dynamic- As a researcher living on the European continent legally, I am often viewed as “better” or “lucky” by participants
- Nigeria’s honour culture- “willingness” to participate in research
- Being viewed as “aunty” or “sister” instead of solely as a researcher *“Aunty, I beg, help me..”*
- Mediator-researcher balance- Encountering four girls from my Search And Rescue (SAR) mission.
- Keeping confidentiality when the girls might be at risk of emotional abuse/manipulation (due to relationships with others in positions of authority who exploit them)
- When disturbing facts are revealed by the participants, how do I proceed in lieu of my own ethical beliefs?
- Continuing with referrals in spite of difficult situations. *(Ria’s story)*
- Writing down what the participant is saying and not my interpretation of it or what I think she should be / is saying

# Emerging themes

- Experiences of stigma and discrimination- from caregivers, law enforcement etc.
  - Within the groups- e.g. the participant who had an abortion and the one who is unsure about the paternity of her child.
- Betrayal - 100% of participants experienced this on the journey (either at the beginning in transit or after arrival- some in multiple places) *“Female friends betray you.... And use your secrets against you”*
- Loneliness- 93% of participants feel lonely because they carry their worries and won't share because of previous betrayal and inability to trust other women
- Safety breaches:
  - *e.g. sexual assault- there have been several cases of attempted rape not just outside the shelter but within NGO facilities*
  - *Domestic violence- in participants' relationships with other migrants*
- Insufficient/non-existent sex education- one of the major needs *(e.g. abortion case in shelter)*
- Worry about family back home- need to send money *(one of the biggest concerns)*

# Emerging themes

- Lack of understanding and adequate information about the legal procedure they were undergoing
- Anger was a recurring theme- 98% of my participants admitted to getting angry “for no reason”
- Resilience- the strength and resilience is glaring
- Strength of the community (which can also be the weakness) but can also be positive. E.g. participant who gave birth and was cared for by another one.
- Support from caregivers *e.g. participant whose caregiver pleaded for her so that she would not be evicted from the shelter due to bad behaviour and breaking of rules*
- Desire to work- they do not want to be idle and desperately want to earn their living
- Hope- for a brighter future “*one day aunty, all will be well,*”
- Compassion- for those still on the streets

To the NGOs that opened their doors to me and enabled me to conduct my research...



**THANKS FOR LISTENING – ANY QUESTIONS?**

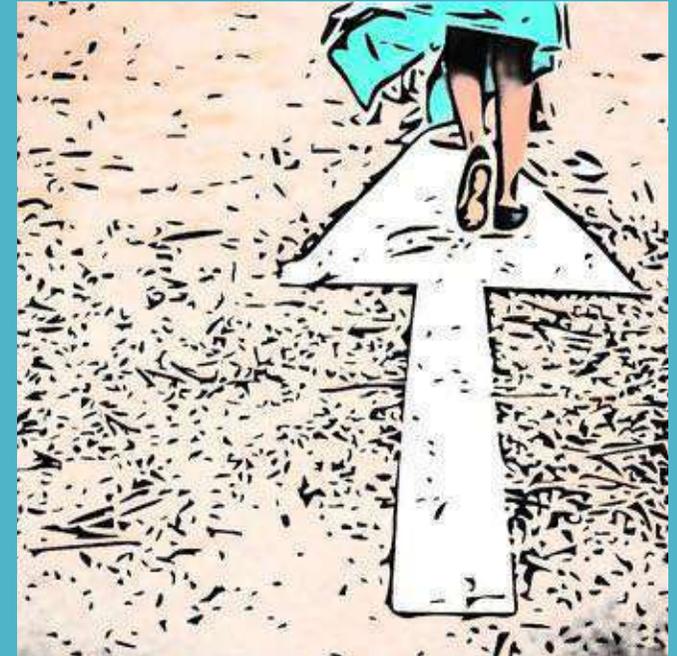


Sarah ADEYINKA

E sarah.adeyinka@ugent.be

T +32 473 921 409

Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy  
Centre for the Social Study of Refugees and Migration  
(CESSMIR)



# CHILDMOVE

