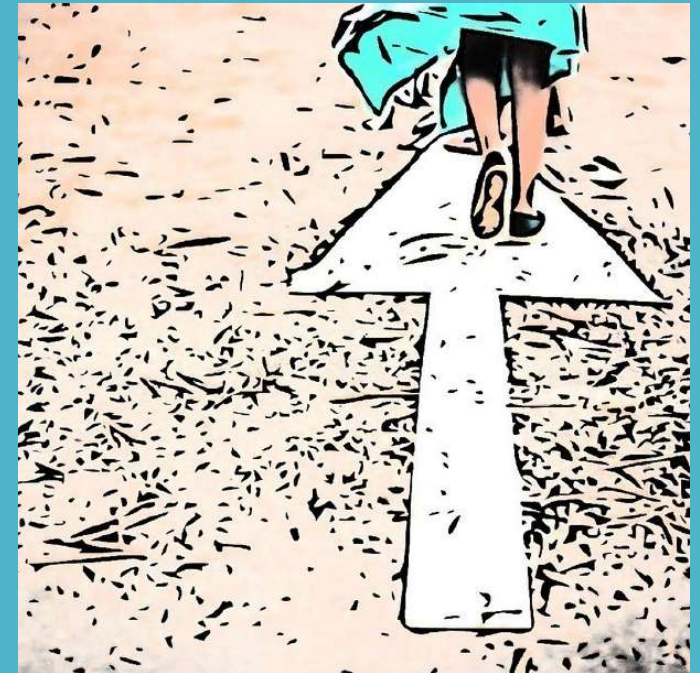


Settling in Belgium. Unaccompanied refugee minors and how experiences before, during and after the flight impact their psychological well-being.

Malte Behrendt

International advisory board

3 February 2020



Childmove
Project
Belgium

Overview

1. Overview of the data collection
2. Challenges
3. Results
4. Planning ahead

Data collection

M1: Nov 2017 – Mar 2018

“Orientation and
observation centers”
around Brussels

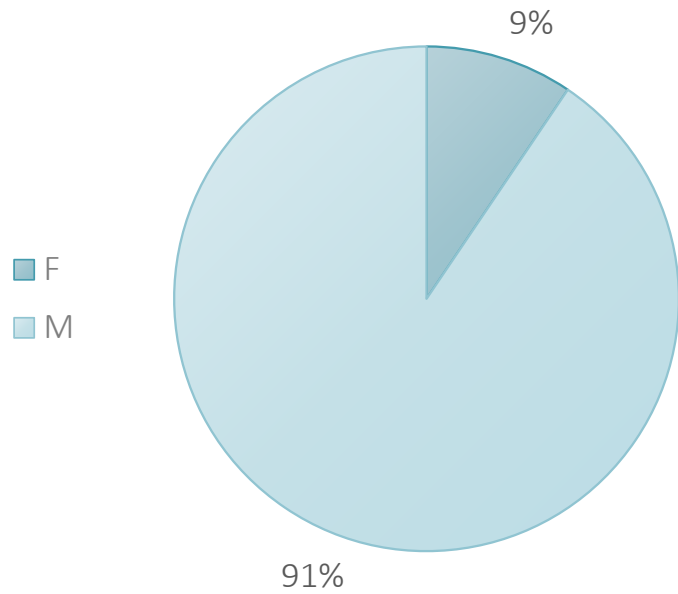
79 interviews



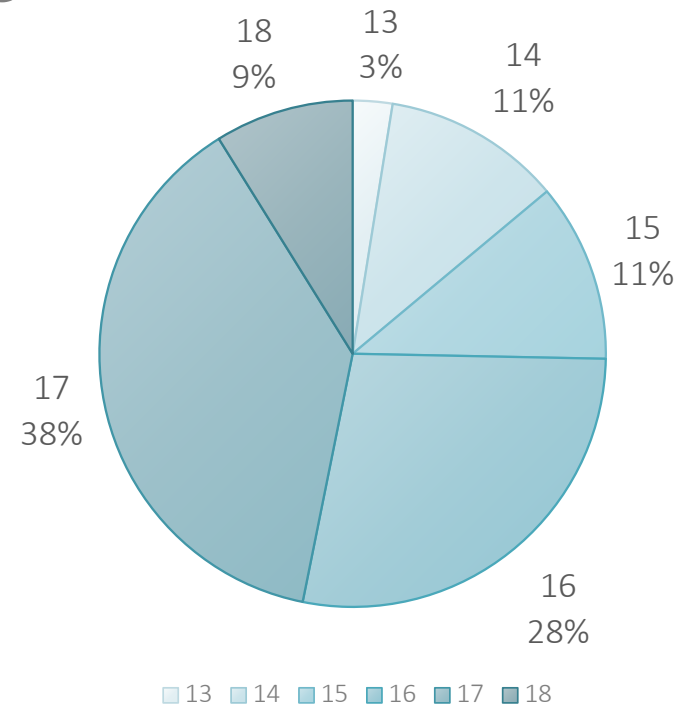
OOC Neder-Over-Heembeek

Data collection

Gender



Age



Data collection

M2: May 2018 – Mar 2019

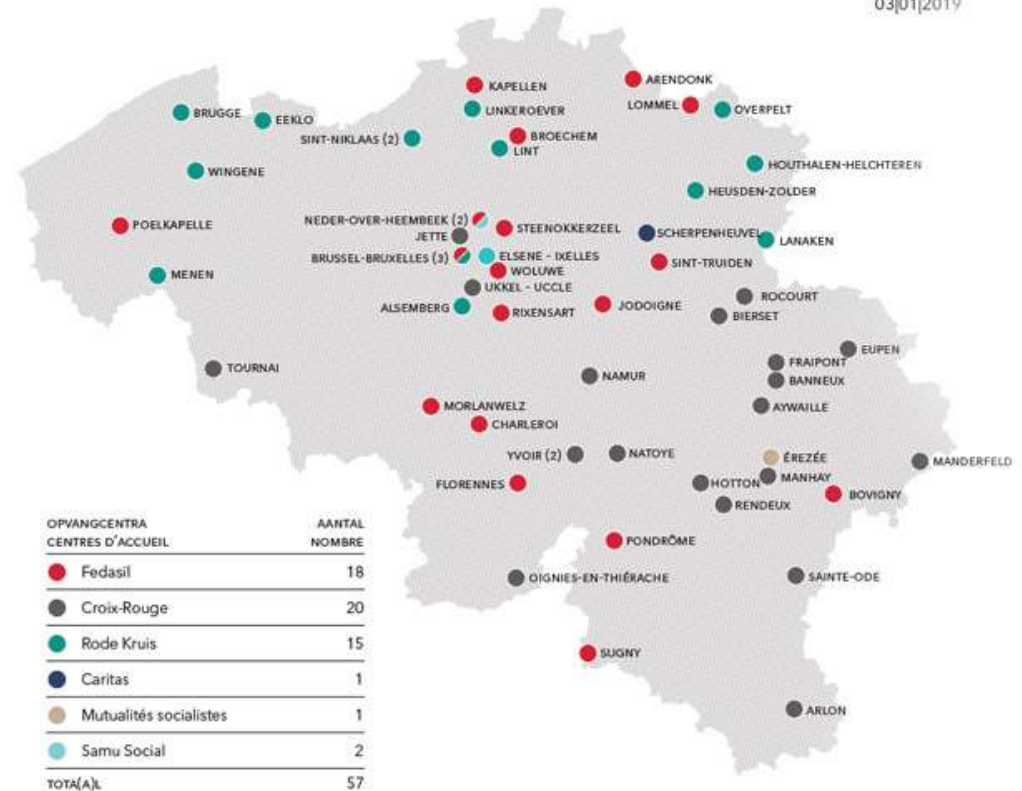
Belgium, Germany, France,
Switzerland

15% left Belgium (age-test,
Dublin, family...)

53 interviews

Mostly in big-scale reception
centers, awaiting decision

03/01/2019



Data collection

M3: Apr 2019 – Feb 2020

Belgium, Germany, England

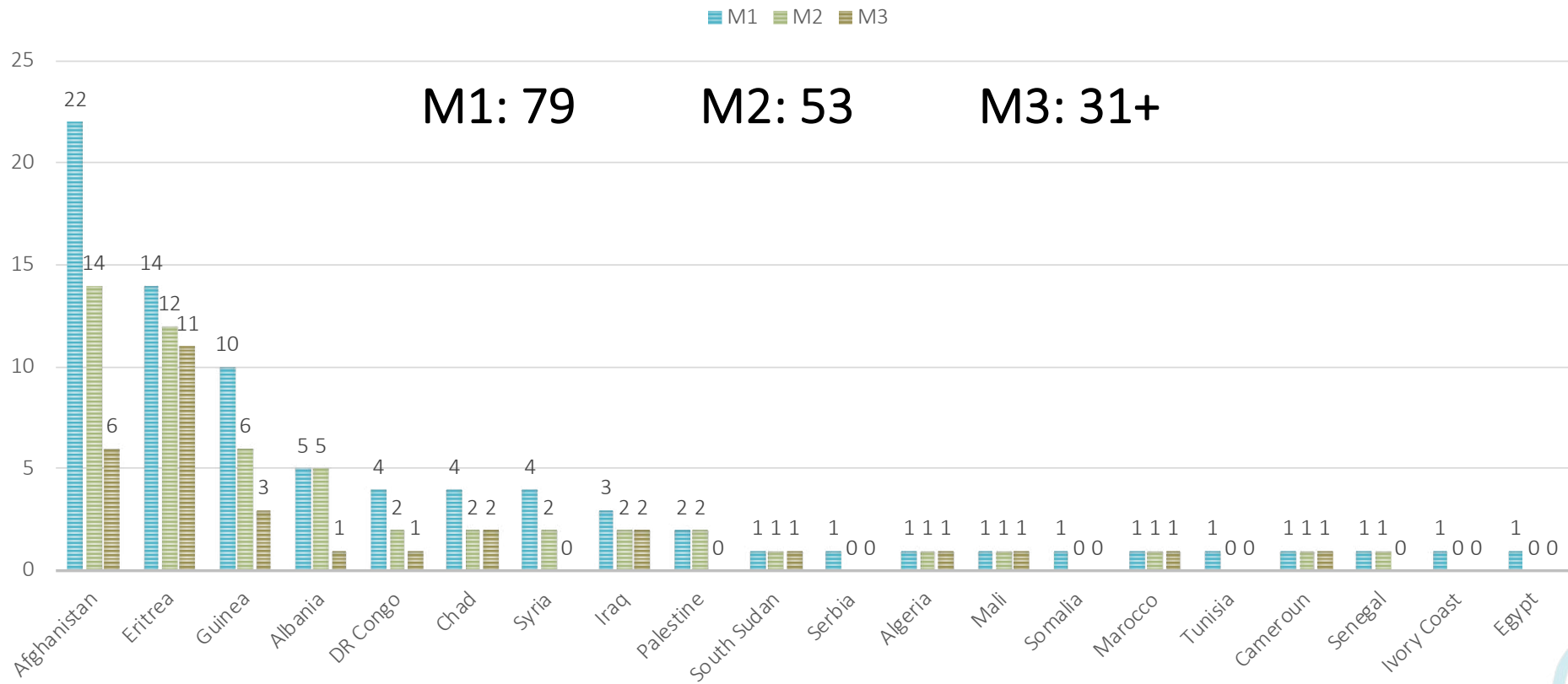
31 interviews so far

Mostly small-scale centers, own
apartment, host family...

High drop-out rate

Sample

COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



Examples of data

Questionnaires:

Hopkins Symptom Checklist-37A (HSCL-37A)

Stressful Life Events (SLE)

Reactions of Adolescents to Traumatic Stress (RATS)

Daily Stressors Scale for Young Refugees (DSSYR)

Open questions:

Well-being

Itinerary

Coping

Living conditions

Social support

Future

Challenges

Drop-out

No contact details (left the country, no guardian etc.)

No time (work, school, looking for houses etc.)

Trauma and avoidance

No benefit for them

Difficult situation (order to leave the territory, hiding, on the move)

Lack of trust?

No-show

Results: Coping and social support

Research questions:

1. What coping strategies do they use?
(at the moment right after arrival, data from M1)
2. What coping resources do these depend on?
(such as social support)
3. What different stressors do they target?
(current stressors vs. traumatic stress)

Strategy	Behavior	Resource (and kind of social support)	Targeted stressor
Avoidance and distraction	Hanging out with peers	Peers (social companionship)	PTS (post-traumatic stress/RATS)
	Activities in the center	Formal support (social companionship)	PTS
	Listening to music, watching movies, reading books etc.	Self-reliance, smartphone, private space, books, internet, TV room	PTS, boredom
	Social withdrawal and isolation, sleep	Bedroom, outside area for walks	PTS, crowded center
	Focusing on the future	Self-reliance. Aspirations, hopes, dreams	PTS, uncertainty
Continuity and coherence	Staying in contact with ethnic peers and community	Ethnic peers and community (social companionship, informational and instrumental support), internet and phone	Cultural loss, language barrier, cluelessness upon arrival
	Contact with family	Family at home and in Belgium (emotional support), phone, internet, middlemen/community	Separation from family, daily stressors
	Sharing with peers, making sense of SLE's	Peers (emotional support)	Both SLE and PTS
	Cultural practices, religion	Peers, prayer, religious community	Cultural loss, uncertainty
Distancing	Mistrust/ Selective trust and "people knowledge" (identify trustworthy people)	Self-reliance, social support on various levels incl. researcher, formal support = mainly instrumental social support	Dangerous situations (during flight), potential abuse, unknown environment and cluelessness upon arrival
	Acting independently (not-relying on others)	Self-reliance	Dynamic context, disruptions
Positive appraisal and acceptance	Gratitude, putting things in perspective	Self-reliance, social context (social comparison), positive experiences	SLE, daily stressors (not the symptoms but the appraisal of the event)
	Accepting difficulties	Self-reliance, religion	SLE, daily stressors
	Positive reframing	Self-reliance, co-constructing "witnesses"/social context	SLE, daily stressors
	Altruism, "giving back", reciprocity, advocacy and activism	Self-reliance, aspirations, future children, community/society	SLE, daily stressors (powerlessness and dependence)
	Humor	Peers, etc.	SLE, daily stressors

Avoidance and distraction

“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, then you think about those past experiences but, when you’re with your friends, then you forget these things.”

(16, M, Eritrea)

Continuity and coherence

“I go to friends and we talk about the past, sometimes we talk about politics and we talk about the president of Afghanistan and about our country, so that helps me.”

(17, M, Afghanistan)

Distancing

“I need to help myself”

(17, M, Afghanistan)

15

Positive appraisal and acceptance

“I sleep well, I go to school. It’s all you need. It’s good what I have. I mustn’t complain because many people don’t have what I have today”

(17, M, Iraq)

Planning ahead

Longitudinal study

- Impact of existing ties in Belgium

- Formal vs. informal support

- Avoidance as a coping strategy

Theoretical reflection on differentiation of stressors

- Do daily stressors “replace” traumatic stress?

Case study

- Minors who continue their journey

Etc...

Malte Behrendt
PhD student

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

E-mail malte.behrendt@ugent.be
Telephone +32 926 462 86
Mobile +32 478 923 880

www.facebook.com/childmove

www.childmove.eu

