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Smuggling and trafficking of unaccompanied and separated children

Developing preventive strategies, Delivering child victim support

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Refugee and migrant situation in Europe

1,556,000 people arrived in Europe in 2015-2017
393,600 of which were children
133,000 incl. 23,300 children through the Central Mediterranean in 2017

11,480 people died in the Mediterranean in 2015-2017
1,400 of which were children
2,500 incl. 300 children died in the Mediterranean in 2017

70,900 people stranded in Greece, Bulgaria and the Balkans
22,700 of which were children in June 2017
Children at risk

Who?

Refugee and migrant children often experience or witness exploitation both during their journey and once in Europe.

Unaccompanied and separated children are particularly at risk. They make over 90% of children arriving in Italy.

Children who travel alone, have lower levels of education or originate from sub-Saharan Africa are more vulnerable. (UNICEF/IOM, Harrowing Journeys)

Why?

- Restrictive border policies resulting in children being stranded and exposed to trafficking
- Slow relocation, resettlement and asylum procedures
- Accommodation in sub-standard centres without perspectives for future
- Limited opportunities for family reunification
- Limited access to guardians, services and child protection systems
- Detention for migration control purposes and fear of return
Data gap

There exists no overall and comprehensive data on trafficking in Europe or globally. The most recent data is from 2014.

Children are the second largest group of trafficking victims globally after women. In Europe, they account for a quarter of detected victims.

This data gap is in part due to the fact that trafficking remains a hidden phenomenon.
On the Central Mediterranean route, many adolescents and youth experienced multiple types of exploitation

Fig. 12: Most common reported exploitation experiences of survey respondents aged 14–24 years, by migration route, 2016–2017

Note: Subtotals under the category 'other' are indicators of exploitative practices such as 'forced entry for arranged marriage' and further combinations of types of exploitation. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: UNICEF/IOM, Harrowing Journeys
Identification and referral of children at risk by mobile teams with cultural mediators
→ 20,900 children at risk identified

Technical assistance and specialised training on guardianship and alternative care of UASC
→ Ongoing programme to train professionals on guardianship and alternative care of UASC in Italy

Support to alternatives to immigration detention of children through group homes for UASC
→ 240 UASC provided with accommodation and a package of services in four shelters in Greece
UNICEF action

- Development of and training on child protection minimum standards in centres
  - 4,000 frontline workers trained on child protection standards

- Provision of psychosocial support
  - 192,000 children received psychosocial and other community-based child protection support

- Support of long-term inclusion into formal education and provision of structured non-formal education
  - 9,000 children supported
Promising practices

- A **new law** on the protection of foreign unaccompanied children in Italy
- An **independent agency** in charge of guardianship and foster care in the Netherlands
- **Minimum Standards** for the protection of children, adolescents and women in refugee accommodation centres in Germany
- The **Communication** of the European Commission “The protection of children in migration” guiding Member States to address the rights and needs of all children on the move

*unicef* for every child
Recommendations

Preventive strategies

- Strengthen child protection systems to provide interim care, protection and access to services
- Appoint guardians, provide child-friendly information and ensure access to legal aid
- End the detention of children on the move
- Invest in relocation and resettlement, prioritising the most vulnerable children
- Provide safe and regular pathways
- Listen to the voices of children, including through child-friendly interviews by qualified professionals

The Way Forward

The Way Forward

Call for Action

UNICEF for every child
Recommendations

Child victim support

- Strengthen child protection systems to prevent, identify, refer and address cases of trafficking
- Invest in outreach to children exploited or at risk and provide long term support
- Ensure support is not conditional to children’s collaboration with authorities
- Prevent the prosecution of trafficked children for criminal activities committed as a direct consequence of their exploitation
- Offer children access to services and durable solutions built with them
Agenda for action

- Protect uprooted children from exploitation and violence
- Help uprooted children to stay in school and stay healthy
- End the detention of refugee and migrant children by creating practical alternatives
- Press for action on the causes that uproot children from their homes
- Keep families together and give children legal status
- Combat xenophobia and discrimination
Thank you