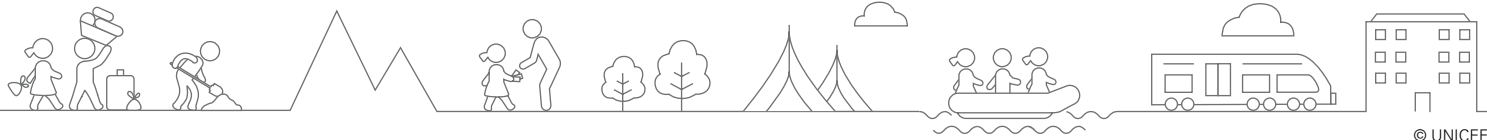


BRIEF 3 Vulnerability, Discrimination and Xenophobia

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Informing Child-sensitive Solutions for the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration: Evidence from Children's and Young People's Experiences in the Horn and North of Africa

This series of briefs draw on the findings of multi-country research based on first-hand migration experiences of 1,634 children and young people moving between Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt¹ (available at www.unicef-irc.org/child-migration-hoa). The briefs highlight findings that can inform decision makers when designing child-sensitive solutions for children on the move (COM), in line with relevant objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child establishes rights for every child in a country's jurisdiction without discrimination, so that all children in the country are the subjects of rights³. Children and families use migration as a coping strategy when their environment compels them to seek safety, protection and livelihoods elsewhere.

The GCM further promotes existing international legal obligations on child rights; upholds the principle of the best interests of the child at all times and stipulates child-sensitivity as one of its cross-cutting guiding principles (GCM Para. 15(h)). In addition, the GCM includes a number of further principles and objectives for member states to ensure protection of children on the move from **vulnerability, discrimination and xenophobia**:

- **Cross-Cutting Principles Para.15 (f) Human rights:** By implementing the Global Compact, member states ensure effective respect for and protection and fulfilment of the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migration status, across all stages of the migration cycle. They also reaffirm the commitment to eliminate all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance, against migrants and their families.
- **Objective 2: Minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin** by committing to create conducive political, economic, social and environmental conditions for people to lead peaceful, productive and sustainable lives in their own country and to fulfil their personal aspirations, while ensuring that desperation and deteriorating environments do not compel them to seek a livelihood elsewhere, through irregular migration.
- **Objective 4: To facilitate access to personal documentation**, such as passports and visas, and ensure that relevant regulations and criteria for obtaining such documentation are non-discriminatory, by undertaking a gender-responsive and age-sensitive reviews in order to prevent increased risk of vulnerabilities throughout the migration cycle.

1 Primary data collection took place in Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan. Additional data were collected in Egypt, by reaching children through UNICEF and partners, using the same methodology for specific indicators.

2 UNICEF & IOM (2017) 'Harrowing Journeys: Children and Youth on the Move in the Mediterranean Sea, at risk of trafficking and exploitation'. https://www.unicef.org/media/49046/file/Harrowing_Journeys_Children_and_youth_on_the_move_across_the_Mediterranean-ENG.pdf

3 States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status. <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>



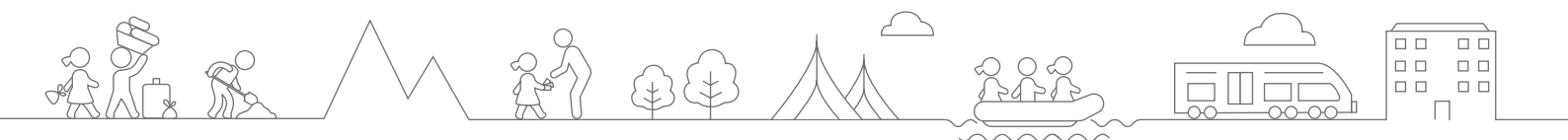
Kingdom of the Netherlands

unicef  | for every child



from the British people

- **Objective 5: To enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration**, whereby member states commit to options and pathways for regular migration in a manner that optimizes education opportunities, upholds the right to family life, and responds to the needs of migrants in a situation of vulnerability, with a view to expanding and diversifying the availability of pathways for safe, orderly and regular migration.
- **Objective 7: Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration**, whereby member states commit to responding to the needs of migrants who face situations of vulnerability, which may arise from the circumstances in which they travel, or the conditions they face in countries of origin, transit and destination, by assisting them and protecting their human rights, in accordance with our obligations under international law. And whereby member states commit to upholding the best interests of the child at all times, as a primary consideration in situations where children are concerned.
- **Objective 11: Manage borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated manner** ensuring that child protection authorities are promptly informed and assigned to participate in procedures for the determination of the best interests of the child once an unaccompanied or separated child crosses an international border, in accordance with international law, including by training border officials in the rights of the child and child-sensitive procedures, such as those that prevent family separation and reunite families when family separation occurs.
- **Objective 17: Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration**, that member states commit to eliminate all forms of discrimination, condemn and counter expressions, acts and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, violence, xenophobia and related intolerance against all migrants, in conformity with international human rights law.

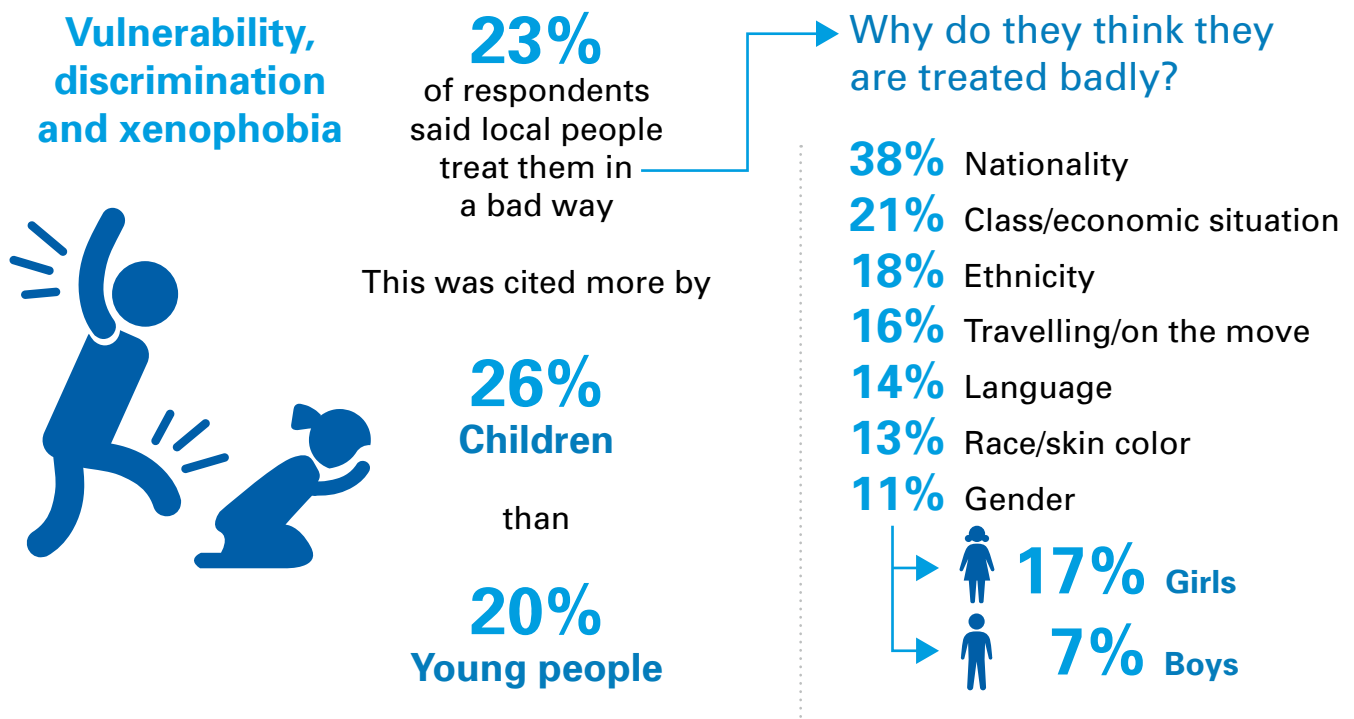


CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF VULNERABILITY, DISCRIMINATION AND XENOPHOBIA

Globally, migrants are often seen as outsiders and are pushed to the margins of society. While nationality and race are often key factors in their exclusion, this research finds that other reasons, such as economic status, can be a further alienating factor.

"I am constantly attacked and beaten up on the streets because of my skin colour."

- 14 year-old South Sudanese boy, Egypt



One in four children and young people said they felt local people treated them in a bad way, and children were more likely than young people to feel this way. The main reason they felt treated badly was because of their nationality.

Of those who were non-nationals, 57% identified their nationality as the reason for poor treatment. Overall, 21% of respondents felt their class or economic status were used by local people to treat them badly, and of those who were nationals of the country they were interviewed in, 46% cited the same.

"I have been beaten and abused frequently by [the travel] broker when I was in Sudan... I experienced the same violence in Saudi Arabia by my employer. The elder son of my employer also tried to rape me twice. There was no one there to protect me."

- Interview with female Ethiopian returnee, aged 18, Ethiopia

Research showed little gender differences as to how many children and young people felt treated badly overall or the reasons why this happened. However, **more girls than boys indicated that gender was a reason that they were mistreated.**

In the context of perceived or real discrimination and mistreatment, it is important to understand the lived reality of children and young people. Half of interviewed children felt lonely in their current environment, while 45% believed they can find help if needed.

“I always feel lonely, because here I just live a solitary life. I left my country and I left my mother behind.”

– 17 year-old Eritrean boy, Ethiopia

Perception of their current living environment



45%

said they can find help where they live, but

50%
feel lonely

of the 50% who are **unaccompanied children**

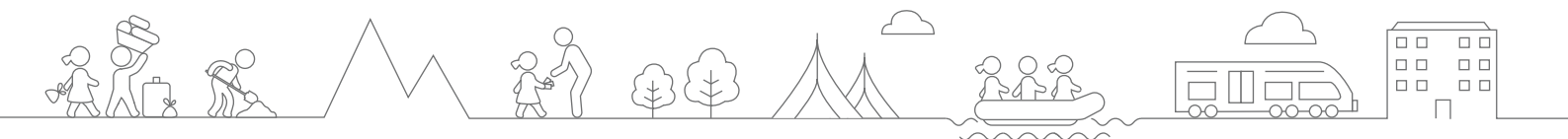
63%
feel lonely



There was little difference between boys and girls, or between different age groups, on this indicator. **Many more unaccompanied children felt lonely** and overall, twice as many unaccompanied children said the area they lived in was lonely (63%) rather than somewhere they could find help (30%).

“I feel unsafe here because I am always afraid of being attacked and beaten whenever I leave my home.”

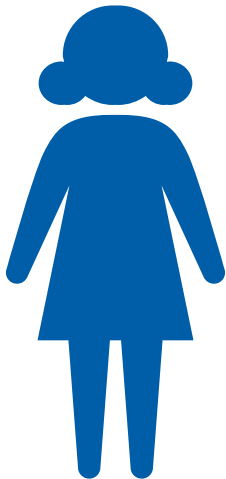
– 16 year-old Sudanese girl in Egypt



AWARENESS AND SENSITIZATION OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Part of the reason why only a minority of children and young people believed they could get help is that **two-thirds said the authorities did not care about their needs**. Both unaccompanied children and young people particularly answered feeling this way. A similar proportion of both boys and girls felt this way.

Relatively few respondents believe that government officials will in fact help them - importantly, almost as many think the authorities – including the police – will do them harm.

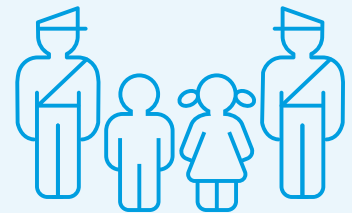


“Actually, that night I faced a lot of problems that I cannot talk about. The police were saying to each other that as long as they are here, we might as well enjoy ... Losing my virginity was the worst thing.”

– 20 year-old woman, Somaliland

“Most of the community and security officials label us rude, robbers, thieves, valueless and criminals.”

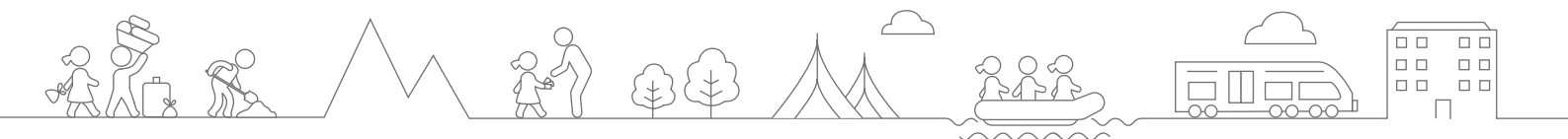
– 15 year-old Ethiopian boy living on the streets, Ethiopia



As one social worker said, government officials may also use violence against children and young people:

“In addition to holding them against their will, they also sometimes treat them badly. So, they come with a bad feeling from the beginning,”

– 18 year-old female returnee, Ethiopia






Implications of children's experiences for policy, resourcing and services:

- **Strengthening protective networks and addressing discrimination is crucial.**


The research findings indicate the precarious nature of the support networks surrounding some migrant children and young people and the need to strengthen their protective environment including public awareness raising, fighting discrimination and xenophobia.

 GCM Objective 17

- **Stigma against migrants – both nationals and non-nationals – creates a significant barrier to protective mechanisms and needs to be addressed with multi-pronged approaches.**


Therefore, there needs to be investment in overcoming these barriers. By legislating the human rights of migrants, including the rights of children and young people via an inclusive approach, and including linked sensitization and awareness-raising efforts with government

officials and communities, discrimination and xenophobia are minimized.

 GCM Objective 11

- **Vulnerabilities of children should be addressed individually, by assessing their best interests and offering appropriate solutions.**


While many children plan to move on, others want to or have to remain. Ensuring best interest assessments that pursue appropriate durable solutions – for all at risk and vulnerable children, is paramount. This also includes the need for cross-border coordination and protection for children voluntarily returning, reintegrating, or moving onward.

 GCM Objectives 5, 7, 11, 23

- **Addressing vulnerabilities in migration and tackling unsafe migration requires interventions in countries of origin, transit and destination.**


While children and young people have the right to mobility,

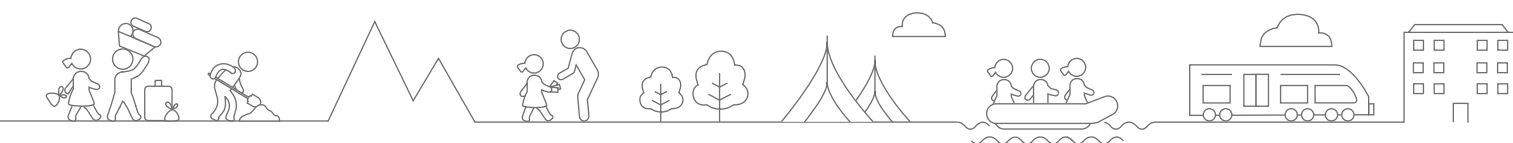
evidence suggests that improving security and economic opportunities in their country of origin will reduce migration push factors. Unsafe migration can be addressed by providing better opportunities for informed decision making, and by providing awareness and information about the potential risks.

 GCM Objective 2

- **While countries exercise the sovereign right to manage their borders, human rights and child sensitive approaches must always be practised.**

This includes timely guardianship and referrals of vulnerable children and young people to child protection services, as well as the sensitization, training and skills development of border guards, police and immigration officers.

 GCM Objective 11



Profile and Methodology

The research findings are based on face-to-face interviews with 1,634 children and young people (aged 14-24 years) who were classed as “on the move”. The research was ethically conducted by UNICEF-trained interviewers between April 2019 and January 2020 at sample points across Egypt, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan.

The respondents reflected the mixed nature of migration in this part of Africa. Two in five (40%) were nationals of the country they were interviewed in (having migrated, returned or been forcibly displaced within the country) and three in five (60%) were non-nationals (‘Non-nationals’ defined as those migrant children, including displaced children, interviewed without citizenship in host country).

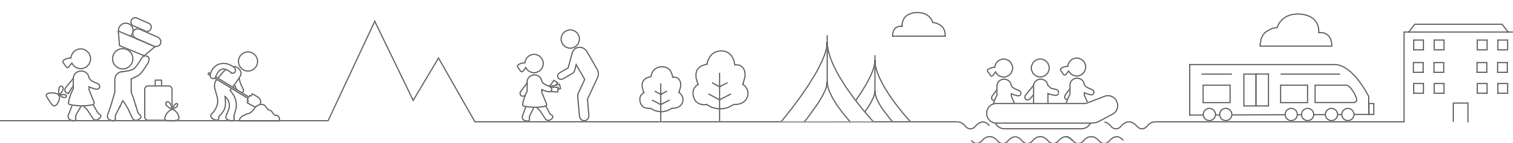
Fifty-seven per cent of the respondents were male and 43% female. The majority were aged between 18 and 24 years (59%) and the remainder (41%) were between 14 and 17 years.

Most respondents (82%) said that they were still moving in that they were not in their home area. In addition, 17% described themselves as returnees, i.e., they had moved and returned to their habitual residence in the last 12 months, and 1% said they did not know, or did not answer the question.

Other briefs available in this series:

Brief 1: Strengthening child protection systems and ending child immigration detention

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