



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



LIVE, LEARN & PARTICIPATE

ENHANCING ACCESS TO SOLUTIONS AND DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH ALONG THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN ROUTE



FRONT COVER:

Mai Aini Camp, Shire, Ethiopia: Refugees and local children attend school together

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KEY STATISTICS BY LOCATION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

A total of
3,536
unaccompanied children
arrived by sea in Italy
in 2018, representing

15%
of total arrivals¹

75%

of children and youth who took the Central Mediterranean route reported to have suffered some form of exploitation, including human trafficking⁴

Over

60%

of children reported being held against their will and just under half of all children endured forced labour with no expectation of compensation⁵

66%

reported rate of onward
movement in 2018 of children
from the Unaccompanied
Children's Centre in Shagrab
Camp, Eastern Sudan²

21, 591

total number of unaccompanied children according to UNHCR ProGres registration data in all the target six locations (Shire, Addis, Kassala, Khartoum, Cairo and Tripoli)

3,066

youth 15-24 in detention
centers in Libya
(1,463 under 18)³

UNHCR staff members interviewing arrivals who have disembarked in Europe note that the "vast majority of women and girls, as well as many men and boys had been victims of torture and sexual and gender-based violence, including sexual assault and rape, sometimes by multiple perpetrators, during their journeys."⁶

¹ UNHCR, Italy – Unaccompanied and Separated Children Dashboard – December 2018; January 2019, available from: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67556>

² UNHCR 2018 ProGres data and internal tracking

³ UNHCR July 2019 ProGres data

⁴ UNICEF, Harrowing Journeys: Children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea, at risk of trafficking and exploitation, September 2017, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/59b7fdd74.html>. Statistics cited include all nationalities as the report did not differentiate between refugees and migrants.

⁵ ibid

⁶ UNHCR, Desperate Journeys: Refugees and migrants arriving in Europe and at Europe's borders, January –December 2018; January 2019, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/67712.pdf>; p. 20

RATIONALE AND BACKGROUND

Thousands of refugees and migrants risk their lives at the hands of traffickers and smugglers on dangerous journeys from the Horn of Africa to North Africa. Many are travelling in the hope of reaching Europe through increasingly perilous journeys across the Mediterranean Sea. Others are looking to access protection, employment and other opportunities in North African countries. In their majority, refugees and migrants, moving as part of mixed flows, face life-threatening risks along the route including extra-judicial killings, sexual violence, arbitrary and prolonged detention, starvation, extortion, being left to die in the desert, and forced labour.

In recent years, UNHCR in Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya and Sudan has witnessed the steady movement from first countries of asylum of many unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and young people seeking to travel within the region or to Europe via Libya. While UNHCR and other organizations have strengthened their presence and assistance programs, many challenges remain with respect to:

- ▶ Reaching out to mobile vulnerable populations under the control of smuggling/trafficking networks;
- ▶ Making sure that children and young people have access to existing national and local support structures and that such institutions have the capacity to respond to their needs;
- ▶ Making services, activities and access to solutions responsive to the needs and aspirations of children and young people on the move;

- ▶ Addressing family separation and specific needs of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) facing heightened and additional risks.

UNHCR is committed to launching a major cross-regional initiative in Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya and Sudan beginning in 2020 and for a period of three years targeting at-risk children and youth on the move from the Horn of Africa to North Africa. The overall objective is to **enhance protection and support services for children and youth across different locations: Cairo in Egypt, Shire and Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, Khartoum and Kassala in Sudan and Tripoli in Libya**. The initiative will build most notably upon the lessons learned from UNHCR's Live, Learn and Play Safe (2014-2016) regional child protection project.⁷ Proposed activities for the 2020-2022 initiative will be integrated into existing service arrangements in the target locations with the aim of improving access and service delivery through a comprehensive set of services for children and young people on the move (up to age 24). The initiative is based on the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) which calls for investment in cross-border cooperation and regional partnerships to provide a continuum of protection, care and services for at-risk children and youth. The GCR also calls for the empowerment of refugee youth building on their talent, potential and energy and for resilience and eventual solutions.⁸

⁷ "Live, Learn & Play Safe" (LLPS) was a regional initiative implemented from 2014-2016 and aimed at protecting children at risk in Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen. Its primary focus was to provide children and youth in countries of first asylum with access to a nurturing protective environment through enhanced educational and developmental activities as well as a strong emphasis on family-based care and access to durable solutions in their best interests. It also emphasized the need to strengthen national child protection systems in order to open up greater protection space for children in key countries of asylum along the route to Libya. The initiative resulted in the establishment of educational, livelihood and recreational programs in the target countries and was reported to have contributed to a substantial decrease in overall onward movements in Khartoum and Shire (34% and 20% respectively)

⁸ https://www.unhcr.org/gcr/GCR_English.pdf, see in particular paragraphs, 76-77 on Children, Adolescents and Youth.

SIX TARGET INTERVENTION LOCATIONS



OBJECTIVES AND KEY PRINCIPLES:

The primary goal of this initiative would be to provide comprehensive protection services and care along commonly used routes by streamlining and scaling up additional resources, referrals and responses by UNHCR and service providers across key locations.

Specific objectives will include:

- Facilitate the delivery of **high-quality case management, care arrangements, educational, livelihoods and psychosocial and other services** to children and young people of concern to UNHCR directly or through partners as per identified needs; and
- **Improve access to livelihood opportunities and solutions including family reunification** through legal assistance and case management support for children and youth qualifying for this solution.

Activities will be organised under the following principles:

- Empowerment of children and young people on the move through improving access to information and encouraging participation and ownership through peer-to-peer counseling and support, community mobilization and activities linked to community-based protection;
- Application of an age, gender and diversity approach that recognizes children and youth on the move as rights-holders;
- Improved partnership and coordination among different actors to increase access to quality services;
- Engagement of local and national actors including public institutions (national child protection systems/social services) and host communities;
- Child protection and youth engagement capacity development along with international human rights and humanitarian law training, paralegal workshops and other workshops/training that are location and context-appropriate.

The approach in each target location will depend upon the location's operational context and the profile of the communities. Interventions need to be relevant and attractive to children and young people on the move. Young people will be involved in the design and implementation of training targeting local, regional and national organizations in child protection and youth development, sports-for-protection, based on local needs and capacities.

1. Complementing and scaling up **existing services and physical spaces** (through both UNHCR, new and existing partners);
2. **Establishing new services in target locations**, combined with mobile outreach teams (made of young people who can relate to those on the move) to provide services and referrals for children and youth on the move;
3. **Developing technological platforms** to map and identify existing services, provide information and referrals to users;
4. **Strengthening protection case management**, supported by information management.

TARGET GROUP:

The primary target group are **children and youth (from 15 to 24) on the move**. UASC constitute a significant proportion of persons on the move. In Egypt, for example, 50% of UASC are Eritrean and 15% are under the age of 15. Shire had 13,000 registered UASC in their database in 2018, all of whom were Eritrean. The project is designed to address the fact that the target population consists of varying profiles: children and youth in a protracted displacement situation, those in transit and encompasses populations in camp and urban settings. Activities and services will be designed to address their different needs. Due to the large number of UASC, there will be a particular focus on family tracing and reunification (FTR) and family-based care including foster care.

Refugee and host community children show their support for UNHCR's anti-trafficking campaign at Wad Sharife camp in east Sudan



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PLANNED ACTIVITIES BY OBJECTIVE:

OBJECTIVE #1: Children and youth are better protected against the risks associated with onward movement through the strengthening of existing child and youth-centred protection programming

Support for early identification, referrals, registration and comprehensive case management for children at-risk: A minimum package of services will be delivered that would include: early identification, best interest procedures and referral to relevant providers with follow up specialized services and identification of family-based alternative care and support arrangements. The successful “integrated Best Interest Assessment” at registration level in Shire will be revived to improve early identification of children at-risk and timely post-arrival care planning for UASC. The Kassala operation in Eastern Sudan will recruit a specialized core team of child protection staff to coordinate activities and undertake case management as well as significantly expand the foster care network for this complex caseload.

Emergency housing and post-arrival reception facilities: As hunger, thirst, and SGBV are among the main hazards/risks persons experience on the move, under the initiative directly or through referrals, basic first aid and humanitarian assistance (food, water, clothing, washing facilities) and medical/other attention through partners, health facilities, and/or specialised SGBV services will be provided. Safe spaces will be identified or established to support short-term interventions for children and youth in terms of meeting basic or emergency needs, providing legal advice, ensuring registration and referrals and allowing for planning of longer-term interventions. Where facilities are already in place (Endabaguna reception centre in Shire), these will be renovated and expanded to accommodate new arrivals. In other locations, transitional safe housing will be established to support children and youth at-risk or victims of trafficking including through referral to specialised providers.

OBJECTIVE #2: Prioritised alternative care arrangements and support structures

Family-based care for children prioritized and foster programs expanded: While most separated children are placed in kinship care with their relative(s), operations often face challenges when identifying foster families for unaccompanied children, especially older children, sibling groups and unaccompanied children with an illness or disability. As a result, some children end up living in “child-headed households” supervised by a community member or a social worker. Others may be placed for long periods of time or even permanently in institutional care or “institutional-like” care. Under this objective, family-based care and support for foster parents will be prioritized not only through financial support but also for foster parent trainings, community dialogues and through the establishment and enhancement of monitoring systems to respond to needs and vulnerabilities as they emerge. In Eastern Sudan, reliance on the care model of the Shagrab UAC Center will be decreased in the coming three years in favor of family and community-based care models.

Strengthened tools for children “ageing out” to succeed with transition to adulthood: When most children transition to adulthood, they rely on family support until they can attain self-sufficiency. For UAC and other children without comprehensive family support, this sudden withdrawal of assistance at the age of 18 or shortly thereafter can lead to negative coping mechanisms and increased vulnerability to being lured by smuggling and trafficking networks. Transitional programming is necessary which pairs young adults together through peer-to-peer support mechanisms and links them with vocational and educational opportunities in line with their interests and aspirations within the overall objective of eventual self-sufficiency.

Strengthened community-based interventions through child/youth-led projects to provide the basis for the development of intergenerational relationships with elders, faith and other community leaders and management structures in each target location and to promote child and youth decision making and participation in activities that impact upon their lives. Capacity development in leadership, soft-skills including communication and conflict management skills will be provided as part of a comprehensive response that *inter alia* engages children and young people in discussing the dangers of smuggling and trafficking. Awareness-raising will be done through community forums and discussions, printed materials and through the use of technology and “community-managed” projects that facilitate communication within communities. Initiatives proposed and implemented by youth will be funded and evaluated in all the target operations, following on UNHCR’s successful model of the “Youth Initiative Fund” which gives young people the funding and empowerment to run programs in their location to benefit refugee and host community youth.

Accessible and age-appropriate psychosocial support: The provision of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MPHSS) is an integral part of comprehensive case management for children and youth at-risk, as well as their caregivers and families. For young people who have suffered abuse, exploitation, human trafficking and/or arbitrary detention in countries of asylum as they attempted the journey to Europe, MPHSS is a vital intervention. That being said, many other categories of children and youth are also in need of MPHSS, including children and youth living with special needs, LGBTI and children and youth who have been separated from their families. MPHSS staffing and programming will be boosted through UNHCR’s pre-existing mental health partners across the targeted locations with an emphasis on recruiting specialists and designing programs which are child/youth-friendly and context-specific.



Somali refugee students are photographed at a secondary school in Ethiopia

OBJECTIVE #3: Children and youth have access to developmental and livelihoods opportunities

Increased access to educational, vocational and available livelihood opportunities in line with children and youth's interests: For many displaced children and youth, the pursuit of educational and vocational opportunities in a country of asylum is fraught with challenges. Education in urban settings can be expensive, and for many the national language of instruction might be completely foreign. In camp settings, schools are often over-enrolled and secondary and tertiary programs are far less accessible than primary schooling. Many children and youth have no access to education and find themselves employed in the informal sector with all its associated risks.

Under this initiative, referral and facilitation of access to formal and informal education and training services in coordination with local and national actors will be undertaken. Focus will be placed on the development and implementation of blended learning programmes and skills development/vocational training that is certified, market-relevant and built upon services and facilities already in place. A unique accelerated learning program for out-of-school children and youth will be piloted in Khartoum to serve 300 out-of-school children and youth with training. Support with DAFI scholarships in Ethiopia will be strengthened while good practices in language and day school support will be expanded across all locations to reach more at-risk children and youth. Technology and internet-based non-formal learning programs (such as Microsoft Virtual Academy) will be used to promote innovative ways for education delivery where appropriate (in locations where internet connection is stable and accessible). Youth should be continually empowered, assisted, and employed to design, create, and deliver their own courses or trainings. The use of targeted micro-grants and business expansion projects will be sought where appropriate to facilitate access to employment opportunities. It is hoped that the initiative will serve as a catalyst to expand livelihood and employment opportunities for youth (18-24).



Refugee children play on a jungle gym at the St. Andrew's Refugee Service Center in Cairo

Recreational and social activities will be enhanced, and also benefit host communities: Sports-for-Protection and recreational activities including the use of art therapy have the unique ability to engage young people as well as foster social cohesion among refugees and host communities, promote well-being and build peer support networks. Under this objective, existing successful programs such as the tournament and sports camp program in Cairo, and Child and Refugee Community Centres in Addis and Kassala, will be expanded across all target locations to reach more young people. Refugee youth will be encouraged to lead and implement activities which they have designed, with the involvement of the host community. Recreational activities may also link up with psycho-social counselling, for example through art, music, or drama therapy.



Two boys reunited with their mother in Switzerland after eight years of separation

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OBJECTIVE #4: Access to family reunification and other durable solutions/complementary pathways are strengthened

UNHCR's pilot project on family reunification will be expanded in the target locations: Many children and youth who engage in risky onward movement do so with the hope of being able to reunify with relatives. The associated perils of the journey to Europe through Libya– human smuggling and trafficking, abuse, exploitation, arbitrary imprisonment, and death – could have been avoided in some cases if a safe and legal pathway to family reunification was pursued. UNHCR is currently leading a pilot project in the target operations to identify children and youth who could benefit from family reunification and connect their families abroad to *pro bono* legal support. Identification is done through a dedicated staff member (a RefugePoint “FR Expert” deployed to the location) and qualifying families are provided legal assistance through a network of attorneys managed by the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP). The families in destination countries are in parallel assisted to prepare FR applications of the highest quality. FR Experts in each operation also work to strengthen family reunification identification and facilitation more broadly, specifically through improved data collection, trainings of partner staff and support in the Best Interest Procedure (BIP).

Resettlement will be strategically pursued for children and youth at-risk: For vulnerable children and youth at-risk who do not qualify for family reunification, resettlement will be pursued as a protection tool. Increased casework and BIP capacity through this initiative will enhance identification of such cases, which may include adolescent mothers, child survivors, victims of trafficking as well as children and youth who have been victims of exploitation, abuse, and arbitrary detention.

Young men evacuated from Libya
to Niger await resettlement to France.



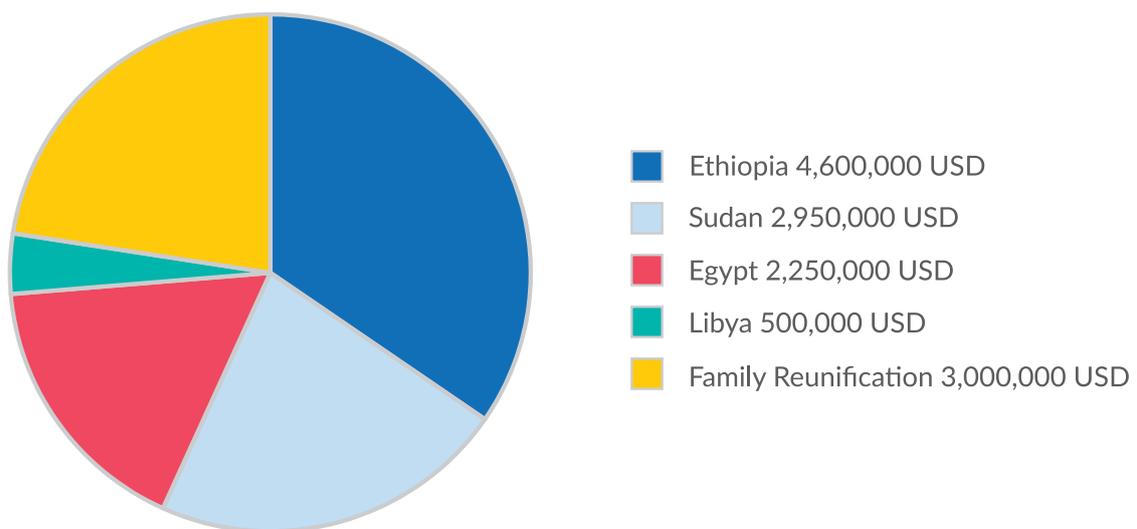
OBJECTIVE #5: Regional and country-level cooperation and coordination is strengthened to produce better outcomes for children

In country and cross-border cooperation will be enhanced: At the country-level, a proliferation of both UN and NGO actors involved in the issue of “Children on the Move” has underscored a need for effective coordination and information-sharing. Coordination forums between UN agencies, NGOs and national government (including front-line actors) in each operation are crucial to effectively map services and develop programming which fills gaps and avoids duplication.

National-level advocacy and coordination mechanisms will be established with the aim of mainstreaming refugee children and youth into national child and social protection systems as well as into national development plans in line with government commitments under the Global Compact on Refugees and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.⁹

Regional cooperation will be strengthened across target locations through the use of technology and innovation and via yearly workshops. Workshops will allow operations to touch base on the programs implemented, collectively brainstorm on responses to common challenges and take stock of successes.

Graph 1: Indicative Budget for 2020-2022 (total funding needs 13.3 million USD)



⁹ <https://www.unhcr.org/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-crrf.html>

BACK COVER:

UNHCR Protection Officer collecting interviewing young men disembarked in Libya after attempting to cross the Mediterranean

@UNHCR/Sufyan Ararah

