BRIEF 2 Access to Basic Services

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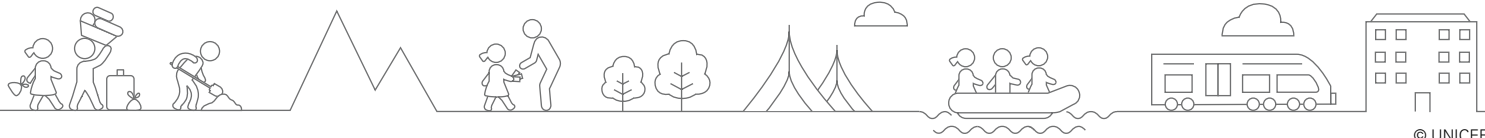
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Informing Child-sensitive Solutions for the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration: Evidence from Children's and Young People's Experiences in the Horn and North of Africa

Global Compact for Migration

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 Egypt[1] (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 rights[3]. Children and families use migration as a coping strategy when their environment compels them to seek safety, protection and/or livelihoods elsewhere.

Objective 15 of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) establishes that Member States: **Provide access to basic services for migrants.** Countries that have endorsed the GCM have signed up to ensure that all migrants, regardless of their migration status, can exercise their human rights through safe access to basic services and further commit to strengthen migrant-inclusive

service delivery systems.

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 objectives for member states to support migrant access to basic services, and the importance of removing barriers to those services:

- **Objective 4:** Ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation

- **Objective 7:** Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration, account for inclusion of migrant children in national child protection systems and provide unaccompanied and separated migrant children with access to health-care services, including mental health, education, legal assistance and the right to be heard in administrative and judicial proceedings, including by swiftly appointing a competent and impartial legal guardian

- **Objective 8:** To save lives and prevent death and injury, especially the primary objective to protect migrants' right to life that uphold the prohibition of collective expulsion, guarantee due process and individual assessments, enhance reception and assistance capacities, and ensure that the provision of assistance of an exclusively

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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

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humanitarian nature for migrants is not considered unlawful.

- **Objective 15:** Provide access to basic services regardless of migration status, as a human right and take measures to ensure that service delivery does not amount to discrimination against migrants on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other grounds.

- **Objective 16:** Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion

- **Objective 17:** Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration

- **Objective 23:** Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration, especially to strengthen cross-border protection and provide a continuum of care for children at any stage of their migration journey.

While limited availability of basic services is a problem that confronts host and migrant communities alike, in countries along migration routes, children and youth on the move face additional challenges.

The research found that many children classified as being "on the move" are involuntarily immobile: they are often stranded and in limbo, even if their intention is to move onwards. They have few options to move elsewhere, face multiple barriers to local integration and regularisation of status, and express little desire to return home to the same problems that led them to leave in the first place - a situation which has only been amplified by the movement restrictions introduced as a result of COVID-19 responses worldwide.

Furthermore, children and youth expressed high levels of distrust in authorities and therefore, often avoid potential use of services that are associated with those authorities. Improved availability of services, along with their inclusiveness and appropriateness, are necessary elements for ensuring meaningful access for children and young people on the move.
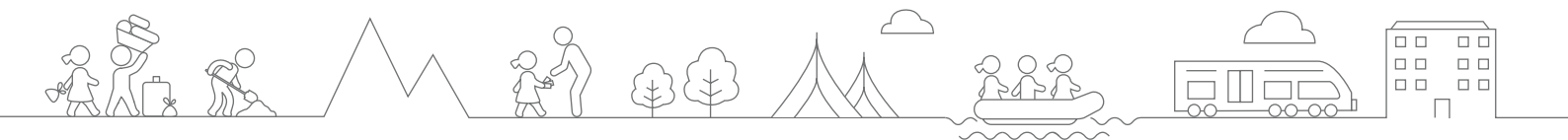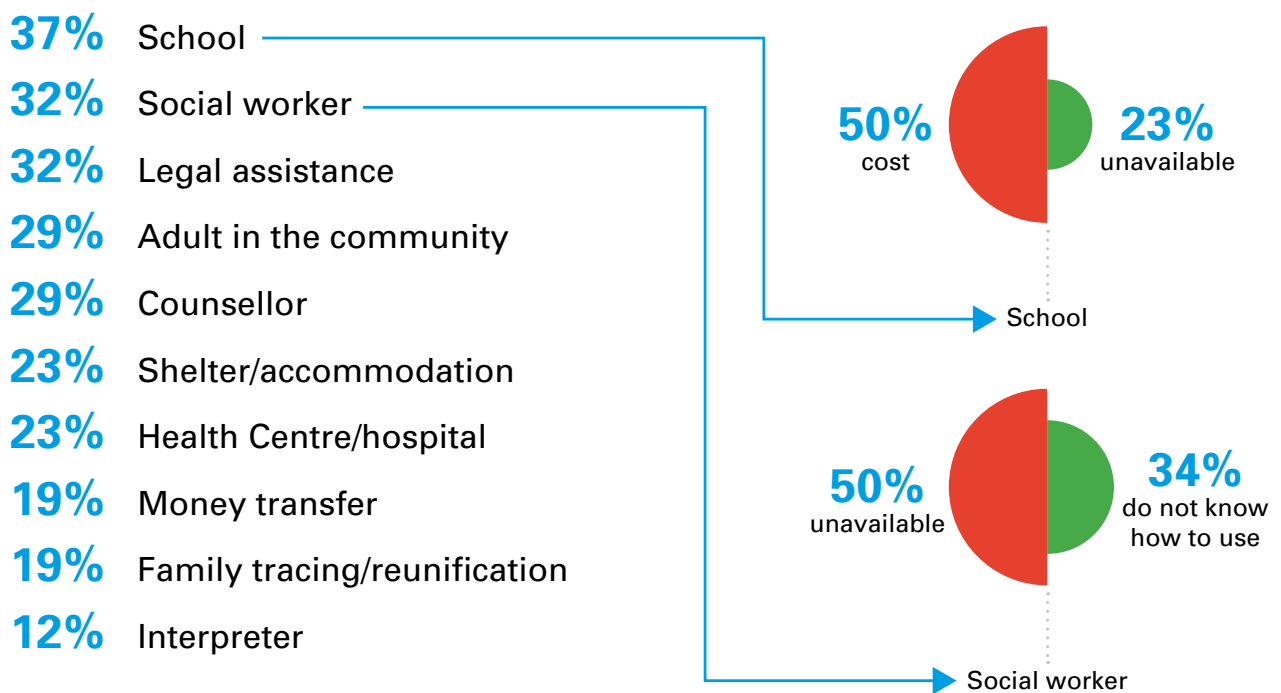
BARRIERS TO USING SERVICES

The research explored whether children and young people on the move were able to use basic services[4], and examined a range of specific barriers. While limited existence and availability of services is a problem that confronts migrant and host communities alike, in countries on the migration route, children on the move face additional challenges to access and use. **These challenges to use services include issues around language, cost/ fees, lack of documentation, lack of recognition of skills/certificates, the priority need to work/earn, care for family member/s and xenophobia.**

"When I see my family without food, I feel helpless and hopeless... So, while there is a school, I never think of going there because what should come first is survival."

– 17 year-old Somali boy, Ethiopia

Percentage who wanted to use each service, but were unable to

37% School

32% Social worker

32% Legal assistance

29% Adult in the community

29% Counsellor

23% Shelter/accommodation

23% Health Centre/hospital

19% Money transfer

19% Family tracing/reunification

12% Interpreter

50% cost   **23%** unavailable

School

50% unavailable   **34%** do not know how to use

Social worker

The role of documents in facilitating eligibility and access to services

Most children and young people on the move had some form of identification documents with them, but a significant minority – almost 3/10 – did not. There was little difference between the proportion of boys and girls without documentation, but somewhat more children than young people did not have documentation.

"I want to go to school but I don't have a residency permit and also I'm afraid to go there on my own. I never feel safe leaving home without my mother."

– 16 year-old Sudanese girl, Egypt

Unaccompanied children were the least likely to have documentation.

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4   The survey included a list of services that was read out to the interviewee.

72%
of children and young people **DID** have some kind of documentation

27%
of children and young people had **NO** documentation

29% Boys   25% Girls
33% Children   23% Young people
33% Nationals   23% Non-nationals

and

55%
of unaccompanied children had NO documentation

Children without documentation were more likely to say they were unable to access services they required. This is true both for nationals and non-national respondents as seen in the graphic below:

Percentage of those who had some documentation, who were unable to access the service

Percentage of those who had no documentation, who were unable to access the service

	Service	
17%	Health centre or hospital	37%
28%	Social worker	43%
31%	School	50%
29%	Legal assistance	42%
18%	Shelter / temporary accommodation	45%

TRUST IN AUTHORITIES AND SERVICES

Only 36% of children and young people felt the government officials or the police would help them. High levels of distrust can be considered as one of the factors challenging use of services. While the majority of children and young people believe that international charities, teachers, religious leaders and social workers would help them, many children and young people on the move responded that they **do not trust authorities and institutions** that are intended to provide care, protection and basic services.

Will these people HELP or HARM people like you?

● Harm   ● Help

International charities	Teachers	Religious leaders
6% ● 66%	6% ● 61%	5% ● 60%

Social workers	Community leaders	Government officials	Police
4% ● 54%	7% ● 43%	15% ● 36%	27% ● 35%
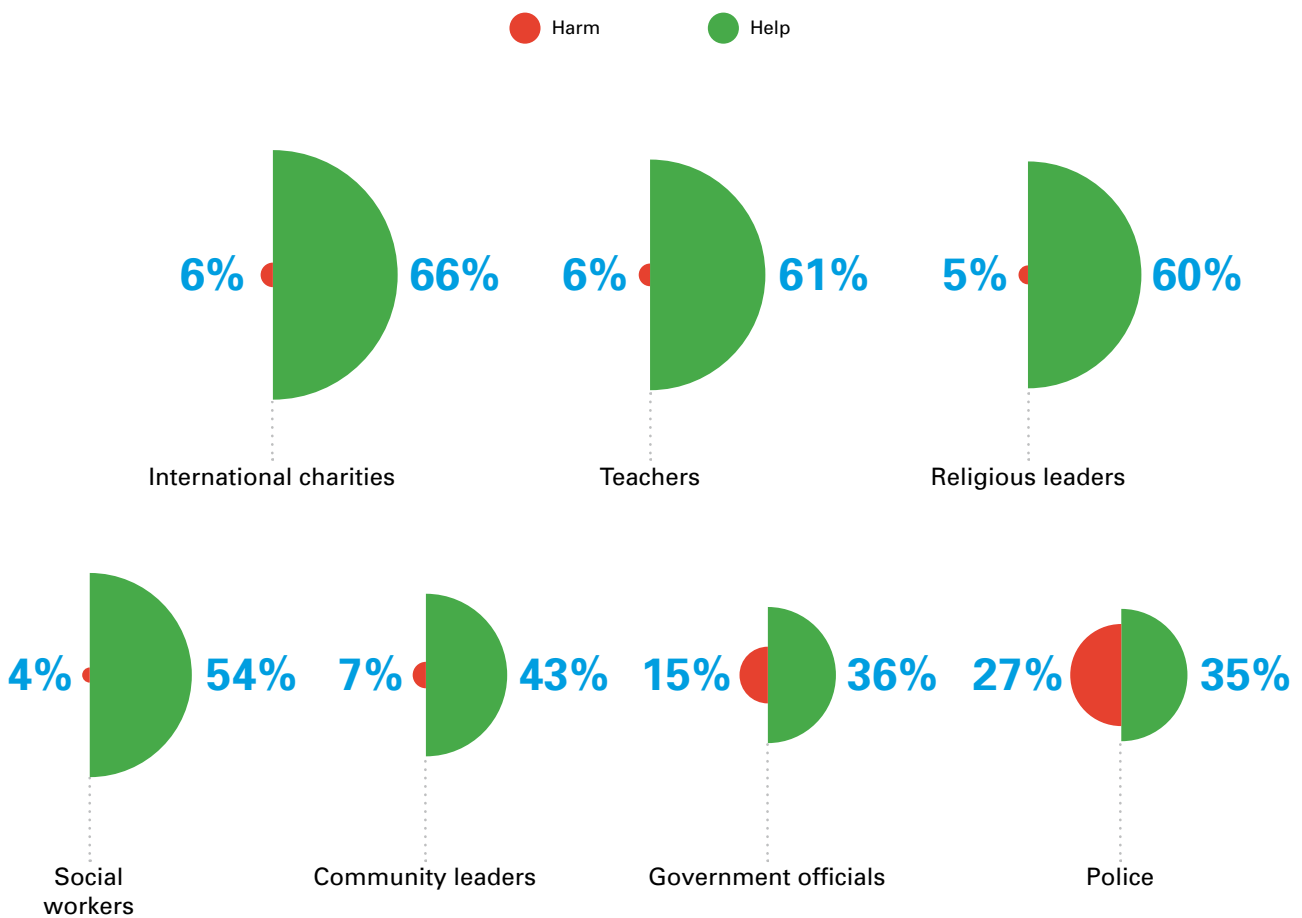
Awareness of services facilitates access to services

Besides legislative eligibility, the research respondents identified that barriers to access included both limited existence (or knowledge of existence) and knowledge of how to access services. For example, barriers to the services of social workers was expressed by 50% of children and young people was due to lack of availability and 34% not knowing how to access a social worker.

> **Transparent referral pathways to services and awareness raising of service gatekeepers would help to facilitate awareness of and access to services.**

SPOTLIGHT –
EDUCATION AND ACCESS TO SCHOOLS

Almost two in five of all respondents said they had wanted to go to school, but had been unable to – the highest level of exclusion of all of the 10 services / types of support covered in the research.

Findings on access to education clearly demonstrate that children often face multiple barriers. The main barrier to school access was cost: twice as many gave this reason as compared to those who reported lack of availability of schools as the main barrier. Cost as a barrier was associated with not just school fees, but also secondary costs: money required to pay for school items, uniform and/or transport. Findings also indicate that children often have

to make a decision between earning or learning and opportunity-cost priorities prevent children from attending school. Some children reported that they could not go to school because they could not afford to take time off work to support themselves or their families financially. Others also felt too scared to go, as a result of xenophobia or discrimination.

Only 39% of children interviewed had been to school in the last month. There were significant differences between boys (21%) and girls (27%), and only 8% of respondent unaccompanied children had been to school in the last month.

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Percentage of children and young people who have been to school in the last month
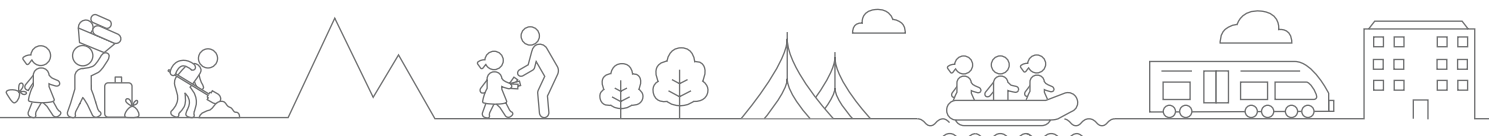
24% All interviewed

21% Boys
27% Girls

39% Children
13% Young people
8% Unaccompanied children

Access to services in a camp context

The research revealed that children and young people living in camps (often assumed as places with better availability of services for children on the move), actually reported higher levels of unmet demand for a range of services than those living outside camps (with the exception of shelter/temporary accommodation).
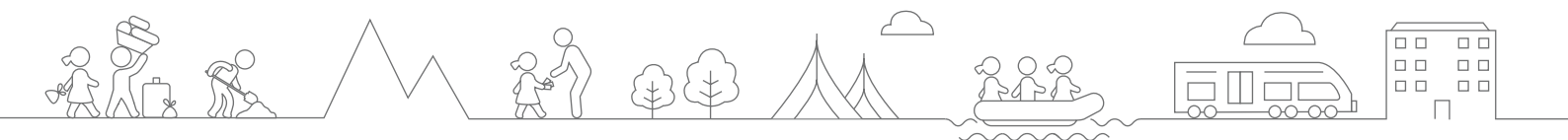
For example, 20% of respondents in a non-camp environment felt excluded from using health services. However, this rose to 30% of respondents within camps, who reported that they felt excluded from using health services. The gap was even more significant in terms of not being able to attend school (33% felt excluded in non-camps vs. 45% of those in camps) and use the services of a social worker (29% and 41%, respectively).

While the study was not designed to explore these differences further, or especially examine the typology of various camps and other living arrangements, it is evident that migrating children living in camp settings have barriers to accessing services requiring further research.

"I wanted to learn, but there was no school there. Plus, it is in a camp, and is so far from everything else.."
– 18 year-old Eritrean man, Sudan

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

- **Inclusion in national child protection systems at legislative and policy levels is just the first step towards ensuring that children on the move benefit from services. Existence, eligibility, access, and appropriateness of services for children's needs are equally important considerations.** Inclusion of children on the move in national child protection systems can be an opportunity to increase and strengthen systems and services for all children, irrespective of their nationality.

  GCM Objectives 7 and 16

- **Facilitating access to, and use of basic services requires careful analysis and consideration of all relevant barriers.** While the existence and availability of facilities and services is the prerequisite, ensuring eligibility (based on national legislation, gatekeepers and regional relationships and policies) and access (understanding barriers to use via participative research with children and youth) are just as important.

  GCM Objectives 4, 15, 17

- **Referral systems and pathways to services need to be designed in a way that facilitates early identification of unaccompanied and separated children, and provision of timely support by trusted professionals and authorities.** Unaccompanied minors face particular challenges in accessing services. Immediately assigning a guardian to unaccompanied and separated children is a priority in order to diverge UASC from the migration management system to the child protection system, and to ensure their timely access to protection professionals and other basic services. Guardianship and individualized social work case management provided for unaccompanied and separated children can play a significant role in addressing barriers related to accessing basic services.

  GCM Objectives 7, 8, 15, 16, 23
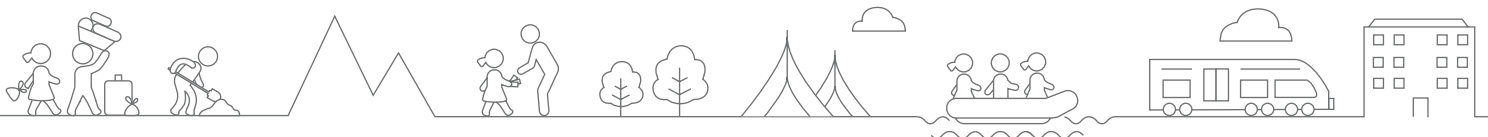
Profile and Methodology

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 are 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:

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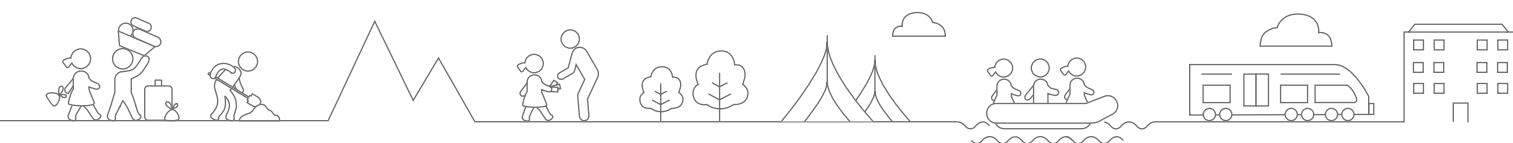
for every child, answers

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This brief has been reviewed by an internal UNICEF panel consisting of staff with subject matter or methodological expertise.

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