

YOUNG INVISIBLE ENSLAVED

THE CHILD VICTIMS
AT THE HEART OF TRAFFICKING
AND EXPLOITATION IN ITALY



Save the Children

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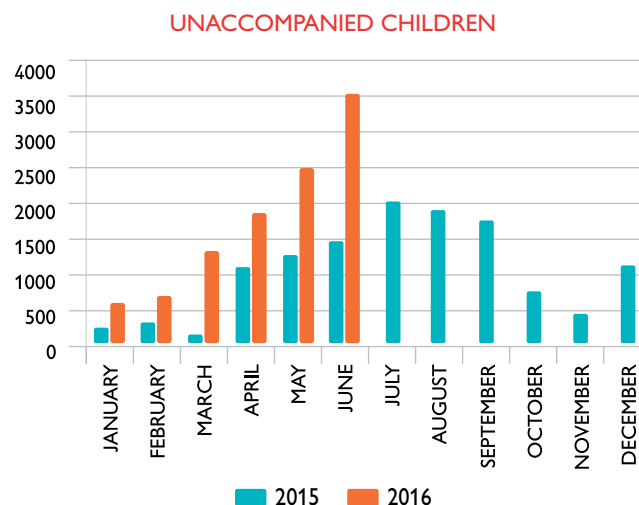
INTRODUCTION

Children who are victims of forced labour – a broader issue sometimes connected with trafficking – number 168 million worldwide. Of these, 85 million engage in work that directly harms their health and safety, for example in agriculture, mines, construction or factories¹. It is estimated that in Europe there are 1,243,400 victims of slavery and severe exploitation²; in Italy today, there are estimated to be at least 129,600³.

If we shift the focus to trafficking instead, in Europe there are 15,846⁴ confirmed or presumed victims (2013-2014), of whom 15% are children. In Italy, as of 31 December 2015, 1,125⁵ victims of trafficking are being protected through the programmes set out in Article 18 of Legislative Decree 286/98 and Article 13 of Law 228/2003⁶. This number includes 884 women and 80 children, and 80% of them come from Nigeria⁷.

It is worth noting that these data exclude a large number of children who are difficult to identify as victims of trafficking and exploitation, either because the phenomenon itself is hidden and hard to trace – exploitation of the youngest victims often takes place in apartments or indoors – or because many unaccompanied children are in transit in Italy and move rapidly from one town to another.

Between January and June 2016, 70,222 people arrived in Italy by sea (70,329 in 2015), fleeing war, famine and violence. 11,608 of them were children, mostly unaccompanied children (90%), a number that has more than doubled since the same period in the previous year⁸ (figure 1). Unaccompanied children in particular can be an almost endless source for those who wish to profit from migration flows, taking advantage of the vulnerability of the youngest migrants in a number of ways.



NOTE

¹ International Labour Organization (ILO), World Report on Child Labour, 2015.

² Walk Free Foundation, Global Slavery Index Report, 2016.

³ Idem.

⁴ European Commission, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. Report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings, 2016.

⁵ Italian Department for Equal Opportunities, Sistema informatico raccolta informazioni sulla tratta – SIRIT Progetti ex Art. 13 L. 228/2003 e progetti ex Art. 18 DLgs 286/98 (Information system data collection on trafficking – SIRIT projects under Art. 13 of Law 228/2003 and projects under Art. 18 of Legislative Decree 286/98).

⁶ Article 18 (Legislative Decree 286/98) allows a residence permit for social protection to be issued in order to “enable the foreigner to break free from the violence and conditioning of a criminal organisation and to take part in a support and social integration programme” (Article 18, paragraph 1). Article 13 (Law 228/2003) establishes a special support programme for people who are subject to powers that correspond to the right of ownership or people in a state of permanent subjugation, who are forced to provide labour or sexual services, to beg, or otherwise to provide services that amount to exploitation. Article 13 projects guarantee support for presumed victims for a minimum period of three months, which can be extended for another three months; Article 18 projects last for 12 months. For more information (in Italian), see: <http://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/index.php/component/content/article/70-traffico-di-esseri-umani-/2295-contro-la-tratta-di-persone>

⁷ Idem note 5.

⁸ Italian Department of Public Safety, Central Immigration and Border Police Division, Riepilogo per Nazionalità delle Persone Sbarcate (Summary of People Landed by Nationality), data up to 30 June 2015 and 30 June 2016.

CHAPTER 1

ANALYSIS AND DEFINITION OF THE ISSUES

1.1 HUMAN TRAFFICKING, SMUGGLING AND EXPLOITATION

Agreed definitions of **trafficking** and **smuggling** were established by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) in 2000. “**The crime of human trafficking has three typical elements:** act (i.e., recruitment), means (i.e., through the use of force or deception) and purpose (i.e., for the purpose of forced labour). Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation¹⁰”.

The coercive and deceptive behaviour of traffickers towards their victims means that any initial consent to exploitation by the victim is **irrelevant**.

The above elements distinguish trafficking from smuggling, which amounts to **irregular entry into a State against payment of money**. In reality, it is becoming more and more common that children who have consented to travel then become victims of trafficking: during the journey to the destination country, the migrants suffer violence and forms of coercion at the hands of the smugglers or the many other people who are in some way involved in organising irregular migration (for example, corrupt border police or criminal gangs).

1.1.1 DEFINITION OF TRAFFICKING, SMUGGLING AND EXPLOITATION

Trafficking

A **child who is the victim of trafficking** is any individual aged under 18 years who is **recruited, transported, transferred, harboured or received for the purposes of exploitation**, whether inside or outside a country, even if there has been no coercion, deceit, abuse of power or other forms of abuse.

Smuggling

Smuggling child migrants means the procurement, for financial or material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a state of which that person is not a national or resident¹¹.

Exploitation

Exploitation means obtaining an unjust profit from the activities of others by “imposition”, involving behaviour that influences the will of others and deliberately leverages young victims’ limited capacity for self-determination.

There is no complete and exhaustive list of forms of exploitation, which can involve a very wide range of types of behaviour and conduct. According to Article 3 of the United Nations Protocol¹², exploitation may include:

- exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation;
- forced labour or services;
- slavery or practices similar to slavery;
- servitude;
- removal of organs.

In **Italy**, the crime of human trafficking comes under **Article 601¹³ of the Penal Code**, which refers to the transfer into the State territory of a person enslaved through violence, threats and deceit, through **abuse of authority**, or by profiting from a vulnerable situation.

Children, and particularly unaccompanied children, are recognised as a category especially vulnerable to this type of exploitation and abuse¹⁴: they are very prevalent in migration flows towards Europe and Italy and, once they have come into contact with **traffickers** (who arrange the journeys and routes), they are easily lured into exploitation rings. Enslavement, which is also connected to children's vulnerability, can develop at any of the typical phases of trafficking: recruitment in the country of origin, the journey through the transit countries, and exploitation in the destination country. Exploitation may, of course, even occur in the country of departure.

In response to the serious human rights violations perpetrated through the crime of **trafficking**, the Italian State has developed legal instruments for protecting and assisting victims, which have been in place for some time now. Article 13 of Law 228/2003 has established a special support programme for victims of crimes defined under the Penal Code articles on trafficking (Articles 600 and 601), while Article 18 of Legislative Decree 286/98 has introduced provisions for social protection. The latter allows victims to escape from violent situations and remain in Italy legally by obtaining a residence permit for social protection, with no binding requirement - unlike in other countries - to report their traffickers and those exploiting them. However, use of this provision is still very limited because it is almost exclusively reserved for cases of sexual exploitation, and it is often subject to restrictive interpretation by police authorities, which in many cases continue to require the victim to report those exploiting them.

1.1.2 SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SUPPORT

Social Protection aims to ensure that victims are safeguarded so that they can escape from the conditions of enslavement created by an exploiter or criminal network. To this end, Article 18 sets out social protection provisions that allow a residence permit to be issued (for 6 months, renewable for one year or for a longer period where necessary), enabling victims to access care services, study, register as unemployed and undertake paid employment. The residence permit can be renewed if the holder has ongoing employment, or converted to a residence permit for study¹⁵.

The **Support Programme** guarantees adequate housing, subsistence and healthcare conditions for the physical and psychological recovery of victims of crimes defined under Articles 600 and 601 of the Penal Code, on a transitional basis¹⁶.

1.2 DATA AND TRENDS IN TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION

To date, there are no precise statistics on the real number of victims of trafficking and exploitation. The data available are the result of estimates and projections, which tend to underestimate the extent and the impact of these issues. The following information comes from analysing the most accredited sources and from data collected by Save the Children in the course of its activities over the year, and is given as an aid to understanding the seriousness of the issue worldwide, in Europe and in Italy.

Victims of trafficking and exploitation worldwide, in Europe and in Italy

Worldwide, there are **168 million** children in forced labour, of whom **85 million¹⁷** engage in work that directly harms their health and safety, while around **5.5 million¹⁸** children are victims of slavery and severe exploitation and **2 million¹⁹** are exploited sexually. In Europe, there is an estimated total of **1,243,400 victims of slavery and severe exploitation²⁰**.

Where victims of trafficking involved in slavery or severe exploitation are concerned, worldwide it is estimated that **at least one in five victims of trafficking are children²¹**. According to some projections, **1,200,000 children²²** are victims of national or international

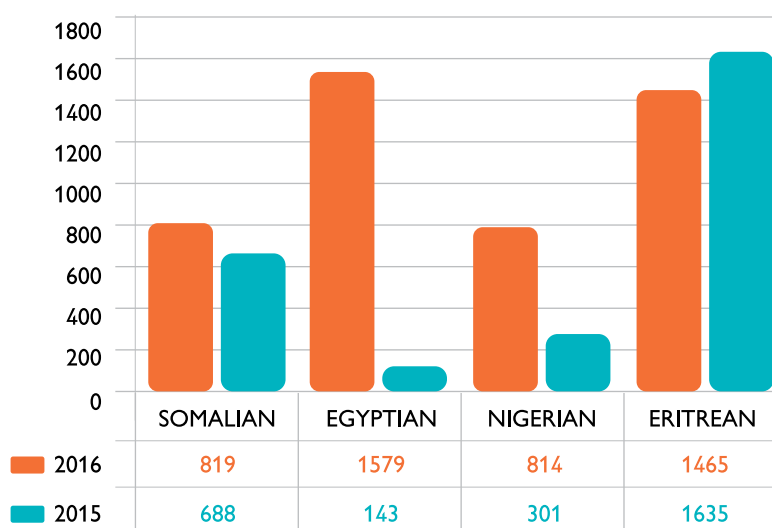
human trafficking. The phenomenon of human trafficking has a strong gender component and there is a **growing trend especially in the number of children involved**: between 2004 and 2011, out of all identified cases of human trafficking, the number of girls increased from 10% to 21% and the number of boys increased from 3% to 12%²³.

In Europe, the latest data available on recorded victims of trafficking (those identified as victims or presumed to be victims by competent authorities) date from 2013-2014 and number 15,846²⁴. Of these, **76% are female, 67% are victims of forced sex work**, mostly from Nigeria and Romania, and 21% are exploited in a workplace (especially in agriculture, manufacturing, construction, domestic services and catering)²⁵. According to testimonies collected during Save the Children's operations, the victims are brought into Europe illegally via the Mediterranean, the Balkans, eastern European countries and Turkey, with Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Italy, Greece and the Netherlands as the main destinations²⁶. Here, the presence of illegal or unregulated markets facilitates undeclared work and the seriously exploitative situations from which criminal organisations profit.

In Italy too, slavery is a significant issue: according to the latest projections, there are **129,600 victims** of slavery and severe exploitation in the country²⁷. Where trafficking and consequent exploitation are concerned, at the end of last year there were **1,125 victims** in protection²⁸. According to a Ministry of Justice analysis on the typical victim profile, **75.2% are female and 15.7% are aged under 18 years**. Among underage girls in particular, **68% are forced into sex work**, while among underage boys, almost half (46%) are forced to commit petty crimes²⁹.

Italy is a known destination and transit country for children, young women and young men who are victims of sex and labour trafficking. As such, it should be noted that arrivals by sea in 2016 have seen a sharp increase in unaccompanied children, a particularly vulnerable group at risk of exploitation. Between January and June 2016, **70,222 migrants** were rescued at sea and arrived on Italy's shores, including **9,156 women, 11,608 children** and 10,524 unaccompanied children. The latter group was predominantly male and the most common countries of origin were the Gambia (1,578), Egypt (1,575), Eritrea (1,465) and Nigeria (814)³⁰. In the same period in 2015, only 6,496 children arrived including 4,410 unaccompanied children³¹. The total number of unaccompanied children in 2015 was 12,360, with 13,026 in 2014.

TRENDS IN ARRIVALS OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN BY NATIONALITY (MAIN GROUPS)



Child migrants are at particular risk of exploitation. Especially relevant in this respect is the recent alert issued by the European Police Office (Europol) regarding the **disappearance of 10,000 children** who entered Europe in 2015. In Italy, 6,135 unaccompanied children could not be traced as of 31 December 2015, primarily of Eritrean (1,571), Somali (1,459), Egyptian (1,325) and Afghan (649) origin³². Out of all unaccompanied children who arrived in 2015, almost 5,400 came to Italy from countries such as Eritrea, Somalia, Syria, Palestine and Afghanistan with the specific aim of reaching other countries in northern Europe.

They were therefore determined to leave first reception facilities as soon as possible to continue their journey towards northern Europe alone, with the help of smugglers and at the risk of ending up in severe exploitation networks.



Jonathan Hyams / Save the Children

NOTE

⁹ United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto, adopted by General Assembly resolution 55/25 of 15 November 2000.

¹⁰ *Idem*.

¹¹ Art. 3, lett. a), Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime: "Smuggling of migrants shall mean the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident".

¹² Art. 3, lett. a) Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

¹³ Article 601 – Any person who recruits, introduces into the State territory, or transfers out of the State territory, transports, sells authority over, or harbours one or more persons referred to under Article 600, or who carries out these acts towards one or more persons by means of deceit, violence, threats, abuse of authority or by taking advantage of a situation of vulnerability, of physical or psychological weakness or of need, or who promises or provides sums of money or other benefits to third parties who have authority over such persons, with the aim of persuading them or forcing them to provide labour or sexual services or to beg or otherwise carry out illegal activities that amount to exploitation or to undergo the removal of organs, is liable to imprisonment for a period of between eight and twenty years. The same penalty applies to any person who carries out the abovementioned acts towards a child, even outside the modalities set out in the first paragraph.

¹⁴ Article 1 of Legislative Decree 24 of 4 March 2014.

¹⁵ Legislative Decree 286/98, Article 18.

¹⁶ Law 228/2003, Article 13.

¹⁷ International Labour Organization, ILO, World Report on Child Labour, 2015.

¹⁸ ILO, Global estimate of forced labour Executive summary, Forced labour, human trafficking and slavery, 2012.

¹⁹ UNICEF, Bambini da proteggere: alcuni dati (Children to protect: some data).

²⁰ Global Slavery Index Report, 2016.

²¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Human trafficking. People for sale.

²² UNICEF, Bambini da proteggere: alcuni dati (Children to protect: some data).

²³ United Nations Office On Drugs And Crime, Global Report On Trafficking In Persons 2014.

²⁴ European Commission, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. Report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings, 2016.

²⁵ *Idem*.

²⁶ No Tratta, Vittime di Tratta e Richiedenti / Titolari Protezione Internazionale – Research Report (Victims of Trafficking and International Protection Applicants/Holders – Research Report), June 2014, Roma.

²⁷ Global Slavery Index 2016 Report.

²⁸ Italian Department for Equal Opportunities, Sistema informatico raccolta informazioni sulla tratta – SIRIT Progetti ex Art. 13 L. 228/2003 e progetti ex Art. 18 DLgs 286/98 (Information system data collection on trafficking – SIRIT projects under Art. 13 of Law 228/2003 and projects under Art. 18 of Legislative Decree 286/98).

²⁹ Projections from the Italian Ministry of Justice – Directorate-General for Statistics and Organisational Analysis, La Tratta di Esseri Umani (Trafficking in Human Beings), September 2015.

³⁰ Italian Department of Public Safety, Central Immigration and Border Police Division, Riepilogo per Nazionalità delle Persone Sbarcate (Summary of People Landed by Nationality), data up to 30 June 2016.

³¹ *Ibid.*, data up to 30 June 2015.

³² Italian Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policy, Dati minori stranieri non accompagnati (Data on unaccompanied foreign children).

CHAPTER 2

**THE FACE OF CHILDREN WHO ARE VICTIMS
OF TRAFFICKING IN ITALY**

THE FACE OF CHILDREN WHO ARE VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN ITALY

Once again this year, Save the Children has observed ever younger girls from Nigeria and Romania in Italy, forced into sex work on the streets or in apartments. Through our mobile and outreach units, we have also intercepted groups of Egyptian, Bangladeshi and Albanian children in labour exploitation networks and illegal labour markets, forced to provide sexual services, deal drugs or commit crimes. The testimonies of these boys and girls show that demand for people who are forced into practices comparable to slavery remains high in Italy. For the most part, they are children who often work on the streets for all to see.

2.1.1 NIGERIAN ADOLESCENT GIRLS

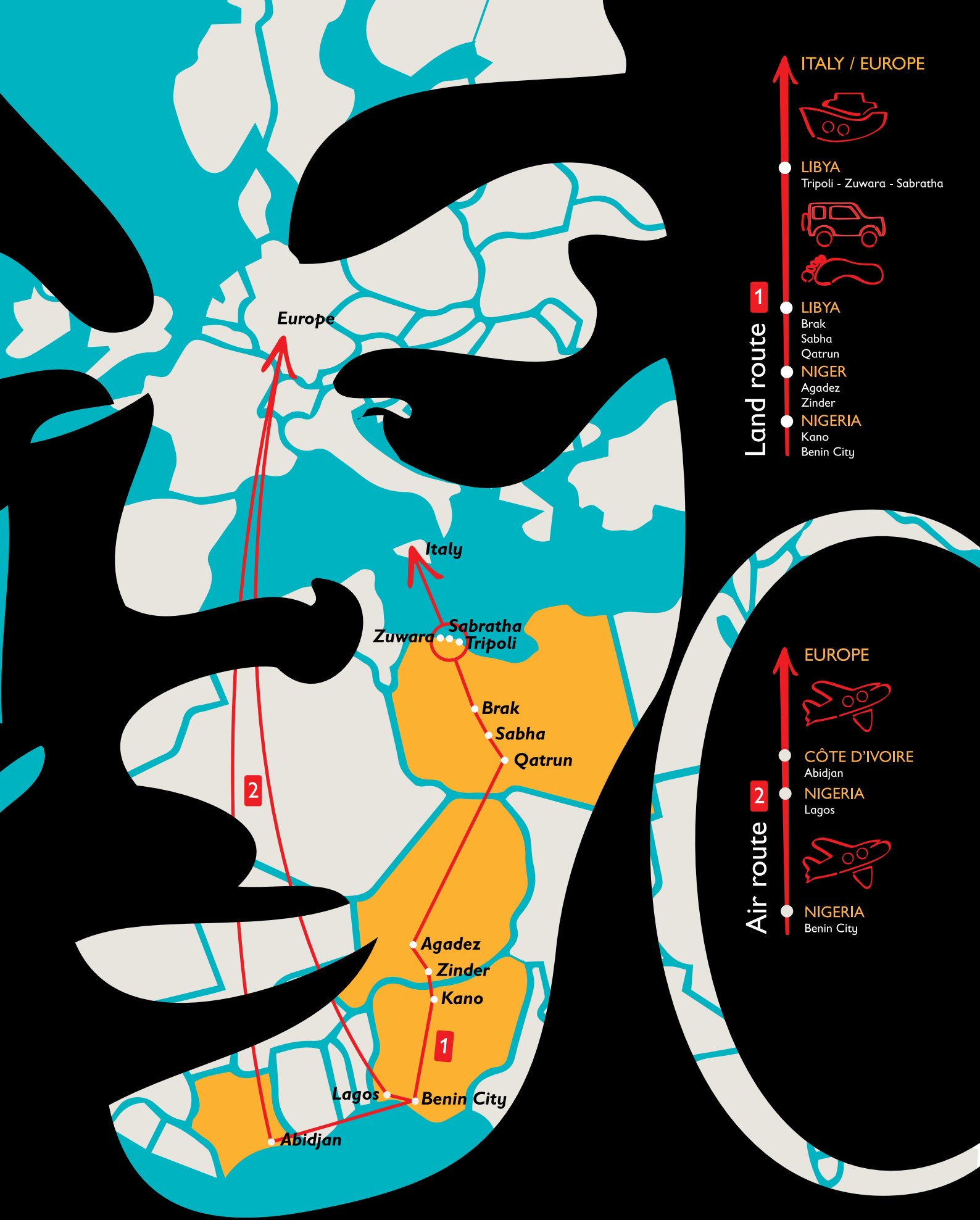
The number of Nigerian girls and young women brought into Italy to be exploited is constantly rising: between January and June 2016, a reported **3,529** Nigerian women arrived by sea, among them very young and underage girls. The 2016 data confirm a growing trend in arrivals of Nigerian women, which had increased by 300% between 2014 and 2015 (they totalled 5,633 in 2015, and there were increasing numbers of girls with 1,022 unaccompanied children³³).




Nigerian girls who arrive in Italy by sea are mostly aged **15 to 17 years**, with a growing quota of 13-year-olds. Almost all state that they are from Benin City and the surrounding areas, or more generally from Edo State (other regions of origin include Delta State, Lagos State, Ogun State and Anambra State)³⁴.

The girls come from the fringes of cities or rural environments³⁵, from very large families or from nuclear families that have fallen apart, where one or both parental figures are often missing. They frequently describe having lived with uncles or other relatives, where they suffered violence and were abused by people they knew from a young age, being treated as inferior to other members of the family and finally being given or sold to traffickers.

According to testimonies directly collected by Save the Children, girls are solicited for trafficking through acquaintances, neighbours, school friends or sometimes older sisters who have already gone to Europe. Once recruited, the girls take an oath through a **juju** or **voodoo ritual**, under which they swear to repay their **debt to those exploiting them, which is around 20,000 to 50,000 euros**. This creates a binding contract from which the victim will struggle to free herself.

The main **transport corridor used by traffickers to take Nigerian children to Europe** involves crossing the Mediterranean and arriving in Sicily, after a land route that covers Kano (Nigeria), Zinder (Niger), Agadez (Niger), Qatrun (Libya), Sabha (Libya), Brak (Libya), Tripoli (Libya), Zuwara (Libya) and Sabratha (Libya). For those who travel by air - a small minority - the point of departure is always Benin City, with a stopover at Lagos or Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), from where they board a direct flight to Europe.



- Land route 1**
- ITALY / EUROPE

 - LIBYA
Tripoli - Zuwara - Sabratha


 - LIBYA
Brak
Sabha
Qatrun
 - NIGER
Agadez
Zinder
 - NIGERIA
Kano
Benin City

- Air route 2**
- EUROPE

 - CÔTE D'IVOIRE
Abidjan
 - NIGERIA
Lagos
 - NIGERIA
Benin City


ROUTES for trafficking Nigerian girls to Europe

CHAPTER 2

During the **journey** over land, the girls suffer abuse and violence at the hands of their traffickers or other people that they meet. By Niger, they have already been persuaded or forced into sex work and the same thing happens in Libya, where they are held in places of segregation - so-called **connection houses** - to await the next stage of the journey. As a result of this sexual violence, some girls contract the HIV virus or develop genital lesions and sexually transmitted infections. Some arrive pregnant. The latter are even more vulnerable because they are forced to undergo abortions by the traffickers. If, however, they are allowed to continue the pregnancy, the child becomes another way for the traffickers to coerce and psychologically pressure the mother. In this case, the children witness violence against their mother. Sometimes they are forcibly separated and sent back to Nigeria or detained by the **madam**, becoming themselves at risk of other forms of exploitation.

G'S STORY (NIGERIAN GIRL)

In her country of origin, G. was forced to live on the streets and beg. Her aunt did not want her in the house and she had nowhere to go. At 13 years old, she was taken to Libya by a lady who said she could help her. When she arrived, she was forced to engage in sex work in a connection house, where she was held for about 18 months, with eight other girls. She was paid 15 dinar (less than 10 euros) per sexual service.

By the time they land in Italy and meet those working in the reception facilities, the Nigerian girls are already under the direct and visual control of traffickers or their accomplices (these are often other, older Nigerian girls, or boyfriends)³⁶. The girls' accounts to Save the Children staff bear all the hallmarks of trafficking: often they deny being children even when they are clearly and visibly underage, because they have been instructed by those exploiting them to avoid the child protection and support system. In many cases they state that they do not know how they got to Italy or the name of the countries they travelled through, or they claim not to have paid anything for the journey. These indicators ring alarm bells for exploitation, because they typically conceal the contract between the trafficker and the victim. Few children admit to being victims of trafficking, but those who do are placed in safe houses or women's refuges.

In many cases the Nigerian girls are forced to start sex work in areas adjacent to the reception and identification centres; otherwise, they are transferred by the traffickers to Campania, where they are sorted and then moved to other Italian cities. Depending on the criminal network's organisational capacity, the girls may also be sent directly to other European countries such as France, Spain, Austria or Germany.

Once they have reached Italy, the trafficking victims must repay their debt, a sum that continues to increase through entirely arbitrary sanctions, each time that the girls break the so-called rules imposed by those exploiting them. In some cases, the girls must pay rent for the pavement space where they work - their "**joint**" - which can range from 100 to 250 euros per month. All these extra costs cause confusion and uncertainty as to the exact amount that must be paid to clear the debt.

To avoid violence and extortion towards themselves or their families in Nigeria, the girls work under conditions of slavery, for periods typically ranging from 3 to 7 years. They are forced to carry out sex work whatever their physical health, on the streets on the outskirts of the city, at very low prices starting from 10 euros. To increase their earnings, they often have no choice but to accept the risk of unprotected intercourse. Apart from the obvious physical stress, which may be partly caused by lack of sleep, the street girls experience violence and assault - including group violence - from their Italian clients.

They are not only exploited on the streets, but also indoors, for example in apartments or hotels. When the girls are first introduced to sex work, they are monitored by their exploiters hiding in cars. If they are not supervised in person, this takes place via messaging apps or mobile phones.

CHAPTER 2

The “turnover” of girls across the country is very high and especially affects the youngest, who are moved from one city to another to avoid the attentions of the police or to prevent close relationships forming with clients or caseworkers.

Save the Children has also witnessed an ever increasing use of **psychotropic substances** by the victims, often combined with alcohol, to which they are introduced by their traffickers.

As a result of the ongoing violence, these children have signs of physical and psychological trauma that is often irreversible. The youngest frequently have voluntary terminations of pregnancy or clandestine abortions, or they take medicines with abortifacient effects, which they self-administer or are given by their **madam** or others. These are misoprostol-based drugs normally used to treat ulcers, which cause strong contractions when taken as an overdose, leading to miscarriage. In some cases, use of these substances can cause convulsions, abdominal pain, palpitations or even potentially fatal bleeding.



JESSICA'S STORY

I was born in Benin City in June 1990. My parents are dead and I only have one sister left, who lives in Nigeria with our aunt. In Benin City I worked as a hair stylist. One day, my boyfriend asked me to go to Libya with him and from there on to Italy. I agreed because I trusted him. In December 2007, we left Benin City on the bus. We didn't have any documents with us and the police stopped us at the Kano border. My boyfriend paid them and so we made it to Libya, where we stayed for six months to put money aside for the journey to Italy. One day, however, my boyfriend told me that I had to leave without him and that he would catch up with me later. I got on a boat with 120 other people. It was a very long journey and I was so frightened. When I arrived in Lampedusa I was taken to a Reception Centre. I stayed there for four days and was then transferred to the Ponte Galeria CIE [Identification and Expulsion Centre] in Rome, where I met Angela, another Nigerian girl. While I was at the CIE, I found out that the boat my boyfriend was on had sunk and that he was dead. I felt awful and I was very scared.

When I got out of the CIE, the only person I knew was Angela. She invited me to live in her house near Rome, where I stayed with two other girls who did sex work and who called her “Sister”. Angela told me that I too had to pay to live in her house and that I had to do sex work on the streets during the day, in the Nettuno area. I didn’t want to, but she mistreated me and I had no other choice. Like the others, I started to call Angela by the name “Sister”. There were terrible weeks and months that I cannot talk about: I didn’t speak Italian and I didn’t understand what the clients told me to do, I was always crying and at night I could never sleep. I had to work so many hours, even if I was ill, because otherwise “Sister” would be angry and would beat me.

One day I called my boyfriend’s sister in Nigeria, who told me that I owed their family 50,000 euros for the journey to Italy. I also learned that my aunt, in Nigeria, had been threatened and that my little sister had been beaten up. They threatened to do a voodoo ritual against me and I got scared. By working on the streets, I sent them about 6,000 euros.

In the meantime, I got to know Glory and went to live with her. She too made me do sex work to pay rent. That was my life for another five months, until I was stopped by the police and taken, for the second time, to the Ponte Galeria CIE where I remained until March 2011. After being released from the CIE I went back to Glory, who in the meantime had moved to the Adriatic coast, and there I went back to sex work in the Bonifica area. I was very tired and sometimes I fell asleep among the reeds and in clients’ cars. During my time on the streets I met an outreach worker who said she could help me.

LOVET’S STORY (17 YEARS OLD)

My name is Lovet, I was born in Benin City (Nigeria) and I am 17 years old. Until I was seven years old, I lived with my grandmother in a village. My mother and father were not married. My mother lived with another man in the same village as my grandmother, while my father lived in Benin City. When my grandmother died, I went to live with my father, who had remarried in the meantime. I went to school (I attended primary and secondary school) and I had many friends. I was not happy living with my father’s family, however, because my stepmother hit me, leaving scars on my body, and I wanted to get away. To escape, and also to help my mother who had financial problems, I decided to leave.

The possibility of going to Europe was suggested by one of my friends, who put me in touch with a lady called Mama G. She was the sister of V., a man who lived in Italy and would pay for the journey. Mama G. told me about the possibility of working but I had no idea that I would have to do sex work. I only knew that it would be possible to earn some money. On 5 January 2015, together with my friend, I went to Mama G.’s house: she explained that I would leave soon and reassured me that the journey would be straightforward and comfortable, a maximum of two weeks. Then we went to a native doctor to seal the agreement through a voodoo ritual. I promised to pay back the sum of 30,000 euros to V. once I had arrived in Italy, and that if I did not do this, I would die.

On 24 January I set off from Nigeria with the two other girls on a bus that went directly from Benin City to Abuja. From there, a car took us north, to Kano, where we met a local who had to take us on a bus to Niger. We reached Agadez and crossed the desert, arriving in Sabha. There, a man took us into his home for three days. The journey from Nigeria to Sabha took about a week. At the border with Libya, the soldiers abused us girls. I started to understand that I was supposed to sell my body to pay the debt. Finally, we arrived in Tripoli where we stayed for three months before leaving for Italy. I arrived at the Port of Palermo in 2015 and was immediately placed in a facility there. Once I reached Italy, I was supposed to get in touch with a person who was awaiting my arrival so I could work and pay off the debt. I didn’t want to keep the agreement because I didn’t want to do sex work. I entered the social protection programme: now I am in a safe house where I am protected and get psychological support. I know good people, I study and I know I will be helped to integrate and become independent in Italy. Right now I am frightened because V.’s sister has a photo of me and she could track me down in Italy.

Testimonies from outreach workers indicate that Romanian girls are one of the national groups most exposed to forced sex work, with a worrying **increase in the proportion of children between 15 and 17 years**.

The girls lured into trafficking come from **impoverished sociocultural backgrounds** with complex family situations because of domestic violence or alcoholism. Young adolescents are the easiest group to entice, especially if they lack a solid parental figure or are running away from orphanages or guardians. They are recruited in their country of origin by their peers, by men who ostensibly promise a stable relationship and a better future, or via fake job advertisements on the internet or in employment agencies (chapter 3, section 3.1.2).

Bringing Romanian girls to Italy is not particularly problematic because there are many low-cost transport options over land (such as bus lines that cover the Romania-Italy route daily). Many arrive by car with their supposed boyfriend, convinced they can work in Italy as baristas, waitresses or dancers. Those who reach Italy may also have lived in other European countries for a while, usually including Spain or Germany. In general, high **mobility and turnover** across Italy or within the European Union (EU) is seen with Romanian girls³⁷.

The exploitation of young Romanians as sex workers mainly develops through a **submissive relationship with the person exploiting them**, who often hides behind the role of 'boyfriend' (chapter 3, section 3.1.2). In addition, among Romanian girls who work on the streets, there is sometimes a hierarchical structure: an older, more experienced woman supervises the behaviour and activities of the other girls.

As well as street-based sex work, cases have been reported of severe labour exploitation of Romanian women in the agricultural sector. These children and young women are forced to work in conditions of semi-slavery, subjugated by their employer (sometimes an Italian citizen) who takes advantage of their neediness to force them to have sexual intercourse. Especially vulnerable are those women with dependent children, who are easier to blackmail because they are mothers. In essence, these women suffer **labour exploitation and sexual abuse** in conditions of total segregation.

The testimonies show that Romanian girls and young women who are exploited on the streets have a depressed attitude, which manifests as poor self-care, an unkempt appearance, and a state of constant anxiety, desperation and resignation. The girls often undervalue the importance of healthcare and hygiene and do not worry about sexually transmitted diseases. They are not uncommonly forced to have unprotected intercourse with their boyfriends/exploiters. In addition, they have problems relating to **drug and alcohol use and the abuse of medicines**.

One of the most common ways out for these girls is to return to their country of origin, or independently move to another Italian city with the support of relatives or friends. Even in these situations however, the risk of falling back into the control of the exploiters remains very high.

Outreach workers have also reported cases of multiple exploitation involving young girls from eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, and also Italian citizens) who travel with their nuclear family between Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, Spain and Germany. These girls are **forced to commit crimes, beg and engage in sex work** by their own families, or by relatives acquired through early marriage. They are victims of physical violence, sexual abuse, blackmail and threats.

ANA'S STORY (ROMANIAN CHILD)

Ana explains that she was born in Constanta County (western Romania) and that her father died when she was eight years old. Ana has four brothers; one of them has stomach cancer and is undergoing drug treatment, for which she covers at least half of the cost. This brother has had one operation and will need to have another. One of the reasons that prompted Ana to come to Italy was being able to pay for her sick brother's medical treatment.

Through Facebook, Ana made contact with a woman who used to live in an apartment block near hers and whom she had known since she was little. The woman offered her a job washing dishes in Italy, with an agreement to split the earnings in exchange for accommodation. Ana decided to leave and go to Italy, where she joined the woman, who was living with her partner. The woman told her, however, that her partner was a dangerous man, especially when he drank. She then told her to have a shower because he would take her to work on the streets, as a sex worker. Every time that she finished work, the man took all the money from Ana. He also took away her identity card and her tax code. On several occasions, Ana was hit and raped by the man who, during these violent acts, took photos to be published on Facebook.

One night, Ana plucked up the courage and escaped. With the help of another Romanian girl, she contacted the police and went into a safe house, where she began her journey of physical and psychological recovery.

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2.1.3 EGYPTIAN ADOLESCENTS

According to testimonies collected by Save the Children staff, the Egyptian children who have landed in Italy in **2016 have a lower mean age** (14/16 years) than those who arrived the previous year (15/17 years). The number of younger children, aged between 12 and 13 years, is also increasing. The main regions of origin are Gharbia, Sharqia, the Nile Delta of Lower Egypt more generally (including Kafr el-Sheikh and Beheira), and the southern part of the country, particularly Minya and Asyut. Children also come from the Governorates of Faiyum, Monufia and Qalyubia.

Migrant children have a **very low level of education, with many cases of illiteracy**³⁸, either because there is limited access to school facilities in their regions of origin (often rural and remote areas), or because they frequently have to leave school at the age of 12 or 13 years (and in some cases, as young as seven or eight years) in order to work. These young people are encouraged to make the journey to Europe having seen their peers move to Italy and send their parents money. The message of easily accessible wealth and prosperity in Europe is spread through social media and the Facebook profiles of their friends and peers abroad³⁹.

The journey to Italy is managed by a network of people who are known in the local community as taking care of this business. A contract is drawn up for a **debt** that varies depending on the total cost of the journey (chapter 3, section 3.1.3). Adolescents who come from the areas furthest from the coast, generally in the south of the country, pay about 4,000 euros, whereas those from the Nile Delta region pay between 2,000 and 2,500 euros.

The main ports of departure for Italy are Alexandria, Rosetta, Baltim and Damietta. It should also be noted that some Egyptian children intercepted in Milan have arrived in Italy after stopovers in Greece or France. The crossing from Greece is organised by Egyptian or Kurdish smugglers for a price of around 600 euros.

In the ports of departure, while they wait for the boats to be prepared, adolescents are placed together with other migrants in farmhouses. From here, they are **taken onto small boats to get to a fishing boat off the coast**.

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The journey takes seven to fifteen days on average. The general condition of the boats - always operated by smugglers - and brawls between the migrants themselves make the sea crossing an extremely traumatic time. Within a few days or weeks of their arrival in Sicily or Calabria (chapter 3, section 3.1.3), the adolescents tend to leave reception facilities to travel to cities in north or central Italy - especially Rome, Milan or Turin - or, in a small percentage of cases, other European countries such as France, Germany, the Netherlands or the UK. Often, those who leave the reception facilities do so because they have a relative or contact in these places from whom they hope to get support or a job.

Once they have arrived in Rome, Turin or Milan, the Egyptian teenagers, sometimes on the advice of an adult, make contact with the authorities to enter a residential care facility for children. **Entering residential care**, especially when this provides an effective pathway to work and training, helps them to create new opportunities for inclusion, to become acquainted with the culture of the destination country by learning Italian, and sometimes to break free of exploitative situations.



The reception system in these cities, however, cannot cope with the large number of foreign children present in the country. Those who remain outside the protection system end up living on the street, or with some relative or acquaintance who makes them pay board and lodging by exploiting them for work. This difficult situation is also experienced by unaccompanied children who reach the age of 18 before they have been able to meet the requirements necessary for permission to stay in Italy legally, or who may have the option of renewing their residence permit but do not have accommodation. Adolescents outside the system are also more easily lured into the route of drug dealing, sometimes becoming users of substances (such as hashish, cannabis and crack) themselves.

All Egyptian adolescents have to work so they can send money back home to their families, and some must also repay their debts from the journey. Their urgent need for employment, willingness to work under any conditions, limited knowledge of what it means to be exploited, and the illusion of earning lots of money (when euros are compared to the Egyptian pound) make them easy recruits for the illegal labour market and expose them to various forms of exploitation. In the few cases where adolescents try to undertake training or study, they often face disapproval or rejection from their acquaintances in Italy or their family at home.

As Save the Children saw last year, particularly in Rome, Egyptian children are at risk of exploitation in carwashes, general fruit and vegetable markets, pizza shops, kebab shops, greengrocers and in scaffolding. Some are also victims of sexual exploitation or involved in illegal activities such as drug dealing. In Milan, they are primarily exploited in pizza shops, bakeries and fruit and vegetable markets, or in construction firms run by fellow Egyptians.

In Rome, in 2015, Egyptian adolescents were found working in general fruit and vegetable markets (at the Centro Agroalimentare), earning 10 euros to unload a lorry with 12 pallets (security has been tightened and the area is now much more difficult to access).

In carwashes, adolescents work seven days a week, from 8am to 8pm, for an average wage of 2 euros per hour. In addition, their employers sometimes exploit them for weeks, not giving them any pay with the excuse that they are doing an apprenticeship.

In Turin, Egyptian adolescents work every day, including evenings or nights, for more than ten hours a day, in pizza and kebab shops or for scaffolding firms where they earn 200 or 300 euros a month. Those who do not have accommodation often sleep at their workplace: for example, in greengrocers they get up at 5am when all the goods are unloaded and then finally go back to sleep after closing.

In addition, young Egyptians find it hard to deal with a socioeconomic reality that is very different from what they imagined. Unmet expectations, strenuous work conditions and being apart from their families makes them feel very frustrated, leading to states of profound depression, which often manifest as a desire to go home. Their unhappiness can also lead to provocative behaviour and occasional conflict.

AMIR'S STORY (17 YEARS OLD)

My brother was a tailor and he was my father's right arm. When he reached the age of enrolment, he was drafted. My father then wanted me to take my brother's place and he taught me the profession, hitting me with whatever he had in his hands. Once, he tightened an iron wire around my neck. I was scared to go back home and I slept outside. So I decided to leave. My father agreed to the idea and he called my aunt's husband to find out how to make the journey. I went to Alexandria, where I stayed for a week, and from there I took a small boat, which held at least 30 people, to get to another boat offshore. The smugglers went back to get other people, but the police arrested them. We remained at sea for two days before we reached an island, where the police came to pick us up and take us back. However, I decided to try again. I got on another boat and this time, I changed boat twice. After five days of sailing, we met other people who were travelling: everyone got onto our boat. It was so full that we were always at risk of capsizing. We remained at sea for a week without eating or drinking. Finally, we were spotted by a helicopter which rescued us; if it hadn't come, we would be dead.

After we landed in Brindisi, we were told that everyone who was over 18 would have to go back to Egypt. Many of us were scared and I decided to escape together with some others. At the station, I met an Egyptian who lent me his phone so I could call one of my uncles who lived in Turin. He told me that he would get me a ticket through this man. My uncle came to meet me at Turin station and took me to work with him in a pizza shop. This uncle was worse than my father: he insulted me and hit me and took it out on me because there wasn't enough work and he was stressed. He wouldn't let me rest. I worked from 9am until midnight without a break. After three months working without being paid, I asked for a monthly salary and he told me that he had sold the shop. I got really upset because he had not told me. I was in trouble again.

2.1.4 BANGLADESHI CHILDREN

Adolescents from Bangladesh who come to Italy are generally aged between **16 and 17 years** and from rural areas. The harder life is for children in their country of origin, the younger the age at which they decide to leave. Those who have easy access to school facilities (with a medium/high level of education) and better economic prospects tend to delay the journey.

Typically, the children's families support and fund their journeys in the hope of offering them better opportunities in life, as well as ensuring future benefits to the immediate family. Depending on the timescales and practicalities of the different routes possible, they arrive in Europe via a direct flight to an eastern European country from where they can get to Italy; by sea, crossing the Mediterranean after leaving from Libya; or by land, crossing India, Pakistan,

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Iran, Turkey and Greece (a long journey that takes an average of eight months). Once they have arrived in Greece, the adolescents hide underneath lorries that board ferries for Puglia or other regions of Italy. A journey of this type carries extremely high risks, including death from exposure or an accident. The **cost of the journey** ranges from 5,000 to 11,000 euros.

In general, **the risk of exploitation is particularly high for young Bangladeshis** who come to Italy without a network of contacts or who do not manage to be placed in a residential facility for children. Those who do not find accommodation in care facilities sleep with their peers, or with Bangladeshi adults in overcrowded apartments. The presence of acquaintances and friends, or of a national community in Italy, may give these young people a sense of belonging but it also exposes them to situations where they are exploited by their fellow Bangladeshis.

In Rome and Naples, Bangladeshi adolescents are exploited within small businesses (for example, in flower shops) and as street vendors by fellow Bangladeshis, Italians and Chinese. Even young adults who have just turned 18 are at high risk of exploitation if they do not have a residence permit. Bangladeshi adolescents and young adults are forced to work illegally for up to 12 hours in a row, six days a week, selling umbrellas, flowers and handkerchiefs in public places, outside bars, in the evenings and at night, or at traffic lights where they offer to clean car windows. The pay is minimal and it is common for the agreed wage not to be received.

Language barriers and fear of being in a potentially dangerous situation make Bangladeshi children particularly submissive to their employers, who take advantage of their obvious vulnerability. Even those who enter the reception system are at risk of being used in illegal activities or the undeclared labour market. Reaching the age of majority increases the vulnerability of these young people, as it means they lose support services and have to leave residential care facilities. Their new situation may drive them to the street and all the activities and living conditions that go along with it, such as sleeping in makeshift shelters and begging.



2.1.5 ALBANIAN CHILDREN

Albanians are the second most common nationality of unaccompanied children in Italy, with 1,453 children (12.5% of the total), and in April 2016 the number of Albanian children in the country was estimated to be up by 15% compared to the same month in 2015⁴⁰.

This growing trend is partly explained by the recent abolition of visas for Albanian citizens entering the Schengen countries. Italy has thus become a more attractive destination for Albanian families, who encourage their children to emigrate as a potential route to social elevation and so that they can enjoy goods and services which are higher quality than those in Albania.

The journey usually takes place by air (from Tirana) with relatives and family members (often parents, siblings, uncles or aunts), or other significant people, who accompany children to Italy to make sure they are taken on by social services. The main destinations in Italy for recently migrated Albanian children are in Emilia Romagna and Tuscany. Since 2014, Italian authorities and institutions have reported increasing numbers of Albanian children in the country.

In 2015, the Albanian children intercepted were predominantly male, aged 15 to 17 years, and from central and south Albania, particularly Elbasan, Vlorë and Fier or areas surrounding these cities. The children usually come from broken families with problems involving serious financial difficulties (caused, for example, by long-term unemployment in one or both parents), or they are vulnerable because of a family member's issues (for example, a parent is an alcoholic).

In Italy, Albanian children are at risk of exploitation in illegal activities because of the environment and facilities where they are placed. Within the timeframes required by law, they are unable to meet the requirements necessary for permission to stay in Italy once they turn 18, and for this reason, they risk being repatriated when they come of age. In 2015, for example, the Municipality of Milan shifted towards a focus on repatriation. Although the Municipality of Milan has had arrangements for placement in children's residential care facilities since early 2016, due to a lack of capacity, Albanian adolescents may still be placed in adult centres that primarily house other Albanians. This puts them in a very vulnerable situation where they can easily become victims of bullying and be deceived by small-time criminals into stealing, begging and drug dealing. The environment also encourages drug use.

2.2 CHILDREN IN TRANSIT: VULNERABILITIES AND RISKS

Again this year, Save the Children has intercepted and helped groups of unaccompanied children travelling across Italy towards northern Europe, at high risk of human trafficking, exploitation and abuse.

During their journey towards ports on the African coast, these children, who have sometimes barely reached puberty, already face inhumane and degrading treatment, as well as genuine forms of torture. They fall into the hands of trafficking rings which, taking advantage of their complete vulnerability, often sell and exchange them, as in the illegal arms and drugs market.

These are children who undertake very long and gruelling journeys alone in the hope of ultimately going to live with or re-joining relatives or acquaintances in the final destination country. Their arrival in Europe rarely means an end to the oppression: local traffickers in the country of arrival continue to exploit and extort them, based on their need to remain as 'invisible' as possible to the authorities, move across the country, find somewhere to sleep and something to eat from time to time in the transit city, and arrange the ongoing journey over Italy's northern border.



Unaccompanied children from Eritrea are again one of the largest groups this year, with 1,465 arrivals by sea by 30 June 2016. The Eritreans smuggled are mainly **boys aged between 14 and 17 years**. Over the course of 2015, increasing numbers of boys aged 11 to 14 and adolescent girls were observed among the arrivals (accounting for between 5% and 10% of the total intercepted). Most Eritrean girls and boys who arrive in Italy are Orthodox Christian⁴¹ Tigrinyas from remote areas in the south and southwest of the country, bordering on the Tigray region (such as Senafe, Adi Keyh, Tserona, Adi Quala, Omhajer and Teseney), or from the Danakil and Southern Red Sea regions (such as Foro, Gelalo and Assab).

Not all young Eritreans who attempt the journey are from impoverished backgrounds; some are middle class and have a certain level of education. They often have large families, with several family members already abroad in Europe or Israel.

The conscription imposed by the Regime is the main reason for young Eritreans to flee their country. Military service is compulsory for both men and women and consists of a training period lasting six months to one year followed by enlistment for life. Servicemen and women live under the authority of a designated 'commander', carrying out a series of duties for him or her (manual labour or office work) for pay that is not enough to live on. To support their families, young people must leave school early and start work at around the age of 14 (in pastoral work, in agriculture, in the markets or on building sites)⁴².

For Eritreans, the journey to Italy is an extremely lengthy one, with three typical stopovers in Ethiopia, Sudan and finally Libya. The children's families pay between 5,500 and 6,000 US dollars for the journey: the stage from Sudan to Libya or Egypt costs between 1,600 and 2,000 US dollars, while travelling from Egypt to Italy costs about 3,000 euros. For those who leave from Libya it can be up to 2,500 US dollars. These amounts do not include all the money extorted through abduction and imprisonment along the route to the North African coast.

During the journey, **Eritrean children and adolescents are sold and detained by traffickers**, criminal gangs and police. Traffickers go as far as torture to seek ransom from their relatives: they hit the soles of their feet, use acid on them or waterboard them while their relatives hear them scream over the phone. Some girls say they have experienced sexual violence.

The first stage of the journey is generally undertaken on foot, in small groups consisting of school friends or neighbours, as far as the refugee camps in Ethiopia. Depending on how fast the adolescents manage to contact acquaintances or friends abroad and obtain the sum needed for the journey to Sudan, their stay in the camps can range from one or two months to two or three years. In Ethiopia, they make contact with Sudanese **people smugglers**, paying around 1,700 US dollars for the journey to Khartoum. Those who do not have money for the journey join a group of their peers, using the arrangement known as **mikerkar** (literally "slot in" or "place in the middle"), which consists of an agreement made between a group of adolescents and the smuggler so that the whole group can continue the journey⁴³.

The stage between Ethiopia and the capital of Sudan (about 2,000 km) is undertaken on foot and in private vehicles. The desert between Sudan and Libya⁴⁴ is crossed in pickup trucks overloaded with people: during this part of the journey, more and more often, young Eritreans report being attacked by Chadian "pirates" who lock them into a metal container during the lengthy wait for payment of a further sum of money (about 1,500 or 2,000 US dollars)⁴⁵.

Once they have reached Libya, the Eritreans are placed in migrant centres known as **mezraa**, where they wait for two to six months before departing for Italy. During this phase, the police may even invade the **mezraas**, taking children to jail and locking them up until the umpteenth ransom is paid.

The ports of departure for Italy are the cities of Zuwara, Tripoli and Sabratha.

The journey is undertaken on **old fishing boats or rubber dinghies with 45 or 50 horsepower, with potentially more than 100 people crammed on board.**

The atrocious living conditions and multiple acts of violence during the journey are evident from the physical appearance of the Eritrean adolescents and children when they land in Italy: as well as reporting various physical traumas, they show signs of skin diseases and infections (such as advanced scabies), fevers and respiratory or gastrointestinal problems that suggest a prolonged state of dehydration and poor sanitary/hygiene conditions.

In general, after suffering violence and abuse, young Eritreans sustain considerable psychological trauma that manifests in behaviour which may be pathological. In some cases, they feel they are to blame for all the violence experienced and they ask their mothers to forgive them for “failing” the migration project. Once they have landed in Sicily⁴⁶, the Eritreans try to continue their journey towards northern Europe and especially the Scandinavian countries, Switzerland, Germany and the UK. They prefer these countries because they have contacts, family members or friends there, and because of the organised state reception systems.

The journey across Europe is also characterised by a number of intermediate stopovers, which vary depending on the final destination: for migrants heading from Milan to Germany, the first stop is Verona, from where they continue to Austria. If their destination is Switzerland, however, they may cross the border on foot. To complete this final leg of the journey, the migrants pay up to around 1,200 euros.

During their brief stay in Milan, young Eritreans go to the Hub on via Sammartini where migrants in transit can find shelter. In the past, during this transitional phase, young Eritreans mostly spent the night on the streets together with adults, or alternatively in the private homes of fellow Eritreans. In Rome, since autumn 2015, the Red Cross has provided humanitarian aid which has replaced the makeshift camps set up at Tiburtina station in the summer of that year.



ABASI'S STORY (17 YEARS OLD)

I used to live in Tserona, a small town in the south of Eritrea (near the Ethiopian border), with my father and brother. My mother, however, lived in Saudi Arabia. I also have another brother, named Simon, who now lives in Denmark. I fled Eritrea for Ethiopia three years ago. I stayed in a refugee camp in northern Ethiopia for almost two years. Then I went to Sudan, where I was kidnapped by ethnic Rashaida traffickers who kept me for almost two months. To release me, my relatives had to pay a ransom of 7,000 US dollars. One month later, I left for Libya, where I stayed for two months before moving on. On the night of 25 May, there were two boats next to each other in Tripoli. On my boat were about 450 people mostly from Eritrea and Ethiopia: including about 130 women, 35 children aged under 13, a few two-year-old children, and at least 150 teenagers on their own like me.

We knew from the start that the engines on our boat did not work and so the traffickers had tied our boat to the other with a rope. We set off like that. In the late afternoon of that day we saw another boat. We thought it was the coastguard, but it was actually other migrants like us heading for Italy. The fishing boat that was pulling us stopped and our boat started to leak. So I and some others dived off to get to the other boat. I was the only one who survived.

The fishing boat that was pulling ours risked being dragged to the bottom of the sea, so they cut the rope. Our boat sank and the coastguard arrived about an hour later. They saved about forty people.

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2.2.2 SOMALI CHILDREN

This year, Save the Children has recorded a slight increase in arrivals of Somali children, with 968 arriving by sea between January and June 2016. Young Somalis - who often come from Mogadishu or Luuq - take the same route as the Eritreans, which goes from **Ethiopia** to **Sudan** and then on to **Libya**. Another option is to travel from **Kenya** to **Uganda** and from there to **South Sudan**, before reaching Sudan and then Libya. The Somali children who arrive in Italy have a good level of education and are fleeing conflicts in Somalia, as well as violence from the Islamist terrorist group Al-Shabaab.

In this case too, they face a **very long journey, undertaken partly on foot and partly with makeshift transportation, which physically and psychologically damages the children**. Like their Eritrean peers, young Somalis are victims of frequent and serious violence at the hands of traffickers, criminal gangs and Libyan groups. Not infrequently, Somali children are detained in Libyan jails until a ransom of about 2,000 US dollars is paid.

For the sea voyage from Libya to Italy (with Tripoli among the main cities of departure), Somalis pay between 1,000 and 2,000 US dollars. Somalis also view Italy as a transit country on the way to northern Europe, and in particular to the Scandinavian countries.

2.2.3 AFGHAN CHILDREN

Unaccompanied children from Afghanistan are predominantly male, from the **Hazara, Pashtun and Tajik** ethnic groups, and aged between 15 and 17 years (in some cases aged under 14).

Ethnic Pashtun children are headed for the UK to find work, whereas Hazara children travel to Scandinavia in the hope of being accepted in reception facilities there.

Until early 2015, Rome was the standard stopover point in Italy for Afghan migrants and Ostiense station was the logistics centre for smuggling activities.

Afghan children stop in Rome for a very short period of time, between seven and ten days, before continuing their journey towards northern Europe. Afghan children who agree to enter the protection and reception system are a rare exception: when this happens, it is for health reasons or because of the exhaustion and stress caused by the journey.

Most Afghan unaccompanied children are **ethnic Hazaras**, who face severe persecution in Afghanistan as well as in Pakistan and Iran. In this case, migration involves whole family groups who leave their own country in search of opportunities elsewhere. In Pakistan, the Hazara community suffers serious violence and abuse.

In Iran, although violence against Hazaras is less obvious, it nonetheless takes place throughout the country, and consequently affects their human and civil rights.

Because of this violence and social marginalisation, Hazara children who have moved to Iran or Pakistan with their immediate families are often extremely vulnerable psychologically and physically, which may drive them to drug and alcohol use.

Under these conditions, they see the journey to Europe as their last chance to escape from an environment and social system that has rejected them.

Their parents and families support and fund the journey in the hope that their children will succeed in an environment that is different from where they have come from. In terms of routes used to reach the countries of northern and central Europe, **the Balkan route was seen to grow in importance in 2015**.

The journeys of young Afghans is managed by Kurdish or Afghan smugglers who arrange their departure from Iran or Turkey. In this case too, the journey involves multiple stages with long stopovers: young people travel through Pakistan and Iran, finally reaching Turkey where there are hubs of sorts that function as migrant shelters (the best known are in Izmir, Bodrum and Istanbul). In Turkey, young Afghans stop for months to work and earn the money they need to continue their journey. From here, they move on to the Greek islands for a cost of around 1,000 US dollars. Those who do not have the financial means are employed by the smugglers to drive the rubber dinghies from Turkey to Greece to pay for the cost of the journey.

In early 2015, it was reported that there were still a number of Afghans lured into prostitution rings in Greece or detained in the country's identification centres where they were exposed to violence and abuse. For many children, Greece was a long stopover, with a stay of three to six months or even years. Those who managed to continue to Italy mostly went to Patras, where they would set sail for Puglia (Brindisi and Bari), Venice or Ancona, hiding themselves under the axle shafts of lorries: cases of children killed by exposure or crushed beneath the wheels were not infrequent.

The dangers of the journey, and the risk of repatriation once they reached Italy, have been a strong deterrent to using this route.

More and more often, the route across Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy and Austria is chosen instead. Alternatively, from Turkey migrants can travel to Bulgaria and then cross Romania and Hungary to reach their final destinations. From Iran to Italy, the total cost of the journey is around 4,000 to 5,000 euros.

According to evidence collected by the anti-trafficking coordination service in Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, in 2016 some cases were reported in Friuli of young Afghan children, aged ten years, accompanied by presumed family members in transit in Italy, who were headed for labour exploitation in other European countries such as Belgium, Norway and Austria.



Jonathan Hymnam / Save the Children

NOTE

³³ IOM – Rapporto sulle vittime di tratta nell'ambito dei flussi migratori misti in arrivo via mare: aprile 2014–ottobre 2015 (Report on trafficking victims as part of mixed migration flows arriving by sea: April 2014–October 2015).

³⁴ The dynamics of trafficking, and more generally of the irregular migration flow from Nigeria to Europe, follow certain patterns: Nigerian women and girls from Benin City and Edo State are headed for forced sex work in Italy, whereas women and girls from other states are transferred and forced into sex work in Spain, Scotland, the Netherlands, Turkey, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Ireland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Greece and Russia (European Asylum Support Office, EASO Country of Origin Information report on Nigeria – Sex Trafficking of Women, October 2015).

³⁵ The recent formation of terrorist groups has made Nigerian girls particularly vulnerable: in 2013, the terrorist organisation Boko Haram recruited and used boys as soldiers and abducted young women in the Northern Region of Nigeria. Some of them are forced into domestic slavery and marriage with the militants, experiencing rape and violence.

³⁶ Because of fear of the traffickers and the consequences they may face, the girls are extremely reserved and wary with the caseworkers; almost always, even the youngest (who still have adolescent bodies) state that they are adults aged between 22 and 25 years, mechanically citing a false date of birth.

³⁷ The free movement of Romanian citizens within the European Union (since 2008) has encouraged women and children to come to Italy, including to be exploited as sex workers.

³⁸ Egyptian children are coming from a place where the political and institutional crisis has weakened public services and damaged the socioeconomic context, leading to a drop in standards of living for the population. According to official estimates, widespread poverty has led to an increase in the number of young Egyptians forced to live on the streets and at risk of exploitation and trafficking; the estimated figure is 200,000 to one million street children (both male and female) involved in activities related to sex work and/or begging (US Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report, 2015).

³⁹ Save the Children, Migrant Minors: Travelling through the Net. Risks and opportunities stemming from the Internet as voiced by foreign adolescents arriving in Italy on their own, February 2016.

⁴⁰ Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy – Report di monitoraggio minori stranieri non accompagnati in Italia (Monitoring report on unaccompanied foreign minors in Italy) (30/04/2016).

⁴¹ A very few children from the Saho ethnic group (Muslim) have been intercepted by Save the Children, plus a limited group of Ben children. Children belonging to the latter ethnic group are half Christian and half Muslim.

⁴² Like their male peers, girls also face conscription. The few cases worked on by Save the Children staff mainly involve girls accompanied by a close relative or compatriots, or girls fleeing arranged marriages that were designed to avoid military service.

⁴³ In general, Eritreans show solidarity among themselves, which encourages networks and transnational bonds to form. Communication within the Eritrean national group, in part through the use of social media, is very strong.

⁴⁴ The number and severity of abuse cases and the new danger from ISIS in Libya seem to have encouraged a change in route to Egypt from Sudan, at least in 2015. Libya, however, is still the most frequently reported route in Eritrean children's accounts.

⁴⁵ The frequency with which instances of abduction are reported suggests complicity between the smugglers and the so-called pirates; the low probability of coming across vehicles transporting migrants in the desert, indeed, makes it plausible that the abductors are informed of the exact time and place of transit.

⁴⁶ To be able to continue the journey, when they disembark, young Eritreans state that they are travelling together with an adult (usually an older brother or uncle) or that they have already reached the age of majority.



CHAPTER 3

TRAFFICKING OFFENDERS AND EXPLOITERS

The profiles of **offenders**, exploiters and others who profit from the trafficking and exploitation of children are mostly based on evidence collected by Save the Children and our partners⁴⁷ during projects for protecting child migrants and victims of trafficking in Italy. These include the Vie d'Uscita project (see 4.3.1).

3.1 ORGANISED OR INFORMAL NETWORKS: STRUCTURES AND METHODS

From the accounts of children who are victims of trafficking in Europe and Italy, it is clear that seeking a better life for themselves, and for their immediate families left behind in the country of origin, is often one of the key reasons motivating them to tackle a long journey alone.

Human trafficking is therefore fuelled on one hand by the need to find help and a living elsewhere, which encourages children to migrate, and on the other hand by high demand for cheap labour and a flourishing sex work market in European countries. It is managed and directed by informal networks, criminal organisations (including transnational ones) and/or single individuals who facilitate one or more of the typical phases of trafficking (recruitment, transfer and exploitation; see Chapter 1, section 1.1).

There are good reasons to believe that **the number of victims in Italy is much higher than the current recorded total** (according to the latest data, from 2013/14, there were 15,846 victims in Europe⁴⁸).

The recent increase in migration flows into Europe, caused by current economic and socio-political crises in migrants' countries of origin, includes a significant proportion of children, adolescents and trafficked boys and girls, who are exploited and forced to work in EU member states.

In addition, developing an accurate picture of the extent of trafficking and exploitation is all the more complex because data on the 'offenders' is not representative.

The numbers of trials and especially of definitive convictions remain low and somewhat circumscribed, partly because of criminal organisations' notorious capacity to react and adapt to the **law enforcement** and **empowerment**⁴⁹ strategies used by European countries (for example, with new methods for subjugating victims or new routes)⁵⁰.

In Italy specifically, between 2013 and 2015, a total of 464 individuals were charged with crimes relating to trafficking and exploitation (Articles 600, 601 and 602 of the Penal Code).

Most of the charges or arrests concerned the crime of enslavement, whereas for trafficking in persons specifically, **more than 190 individuals were arrested**, mostly Romanians, Albanians and Nigerians (see 3.1.1).

Human **trafficking** is thought to be the **third highest source of revenue for criminal organisations** in Italy⁵¹; although it comes below arms and drugs trafficking, it is a widely concealed phenomenon. It is therefore essential to strengthen networks between people working in law enforcement, the judiciary, social services, NGOs and civil society so that victims can be freed and supported, and trafficking can be effectively prevented or stopped.

3.1.1 OFFENDERS IN NUMBERS

In Europe⁵²

6.324

People intercepted by the police or in the penal system in relation to the crime of human trafficking

4.079

Criminal trials for human trafficking in Member States

3.129

Convictions for human trafficking in Member States

In Italy

242

Indictments for crimes relating to human trafficking⁵³

73%

Enslavement (Art. 600 of the Penal Code)

23%

Trafficking in persons (Art. 601 of the Penal Code)

4%

Transfer and acquisition of slaves (Art. 602 of the Penal Code)

464

Subjects charged with crimes relating to human trafficking⁵⁴

109

Subjects charged with the crime of trafficking

6/9 years

Average sentence for offenders convicted of trafficking

Offender profile

2 over 3

Men

35 years old

Average offender age

Romania

Albania

Nigeria

12%

Offender nationalities

Italian citizens⁵⁵

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3.1.2 INDIVIDUAL TRAFFICKING OFFENDERS

As can be seen from the stories of children who have been trafficked, there are not always complex criminal organisations behind this type of crime. Sometimes, especially in sociocultural contexts where gender discrimination and early marriage are common, the conditions of subservience and subjugation are created by a single individual with whom the victim has a family tie or romantic relationship.

Here, the victim's vulnerability is heightened by gender and age-related factors: these girls and young women are dependent on their nuclear family both culturally and financially. In addition, in the testimonies collected, a key role is played by the family tie or romantic bond that the victim has with her exploiter and abuser. In such situations, she would have to rebel against her own family - her only adult figures of reference - or a partner on whom she is **psychologically, emotionally and financially dependent**.

A romantic relationship between exploiter and victim makes it hard for the victim to clearly see that she is being exploited; often, girls are convinced they are acting of their own free will and they do not recognise the influence exerted by their partners, who actually control them through constant telephone calls or by keeping watch on the place where they work. Such submissive relationships occur not only with partners, but more and more often with other **friends or family members** (such as cousins or sisters). In the case reported below, for example, it was C.'s parents who handed her over to her future exploiter, a much older man who forced her into sex work from an apartment, moving her to several European countries.

C.'S STORY (ROMANIAN CHILD)

C.'s exploiter is a 29-year-old fellow Romanian, who was introduced to her by her family as **her boyfriend**. C.'s parents gave this young man power of attorney, giving him custody over their underage daughter. When they reached the Romanian border, the man told her that **her mother had sold her** and that from that moment on, she had to do everything she was told. The man took C. to London, where he made her engage in sex work out of an apartment. Later, the man and C. came to Italy, first Milan and then Perugia. Here, he continued to exploit her in an apartment where he accommodated men, obtaining payment for services. C.'s exploiter was constantly abusive and threatening towards her.

Similarly, in the case below, S. had barely reached puberty when she began to suffer multiple forms of exploitation - forced labour and street-based sex work - before being sold to a man who tried to take her abroad with him-

S.'S STORY

S.'s mother was 40 years old, a Bulgarian woman of Romani origin. She moved to Italy with her daughter (aged nine) after separating from her husband. When S. turned 12, her mother sent her out to work: **by day in the fields harvesting fruit and vegetables, and sometimes also stealing, and at night as a sex worker on the street**. Her mother confiscated all the money she had earned. Eventually, this woman **sold her daughter** to a man, who requisitioned her and planned to take her abroad as soon as she came of age. Her mother did not agree to this and so she reported that her daughter was missing. S., however, took advantage of the situation to escape. She was placed in a refuge, where she reported her mother and the abuse she had suffered.

In the story of A., a 17-year-old Romanian girl, it is her violent partner who forces her to beg in Italy. As in so many other young women's stories, A. was recruited by her partner and future exploiter on Facebook. In this particular case, the victim suffered ongoing domestic violence - which was also experienced indirectly by her daughter - and was constantly watched by her partner.

A.'S STORY

A. was **recruited on Facebook** by a man with whom she fell in love. He told her that he had a job in Italy as a train station porter and asked her to come with him. When A. first came to Italy, she was still a child (...). Once they had arrived in Italy, they went to live in an abandoned building near a wood. After a little while, he told her that working as a porter did not pay enough and **he asked her to go out and beg** (...). During this period, he started to become violent, hitting her frequently and watching her while she begged, not allowing her to go out on her own.

When they returned to Romania, A. went to live with her parents who helped her and her newborn daughter and found her a job as a factory worker.

One day, however, her partner waited for her outside the factory, abducted her, hit her, and locked her in a house for days.

A. and the man returned to Italy, where he forced her to beg (...). When she was accepted into a refuge after years of exploitation, at the first meeting A. appeared terrified and was bruised with a black eye, headache and sore ribs from being beaten.

To outside eyes, these girls **seem to have freedom** in their movements and relationships, but they actually live under the constant control of those exploiting them.

The effects of street exploitation on its victims, sometimes very young girls, are well described in a sentence from the Italian Court of Cassation, section III, no. 40270, which states:

<< (...) the criminal behaviour of “enslavement” refers to repeated acts of coercion through violence and threats and also to the persistence of the exploitation; this habitual nature transforms a human being who is free, and thus has the possibility of self-determining his or her own free behaviour, making choices in relation to his or her own life, into an enslaved subject, that is, used for profit, almost like a “res” or item of merchandise, through exploitation, which in the present case took place through forced sex work in order to profit from the revenue generated by soliciting. >>

In the case of young Romanians forced into sex work, either in a domestic environment or on the streets, there is sometimes a hierarchical structure where an experienced girl or woman supervises the work and activities of the others. It is also possible for a boyfriend/exploiter to manage and maintain a relationship with several girls at once.

In Marche and Abruzzo, in 2015 and 2016, some Romanian women aged between 18 and 22 years were arrested and accused, together with their boyfriends/exploiters, of exploiting the prostitution of others. These girls recruited their peers within the family circle to become sex workers, and in this way they were able to live with their own partners thanks to the income from the victim; they were unaware that they, in turn, were acting as pawns for their boyfriends/exploiters.

The state of prolonged exploitation, psychological subjugation, ongoing time spent with compatriots involved in human trafficking, and the normalisation of violence in everyday life mean that over time, girls are persuaded to take part in the business side of sex work, even playing an active role.

3.1.3 INFORMAL NETWORKS

As shown by the testimonies of unaccompanied children who come to Italy from overseas, human smuggling across multiple countries is organised by networks which tend to be informal, sometimes even made up of acquaintances or relatives. These networks owe their existence to an enduring migration flow between the migrants' place of origin and the destination cities in Europe. Over time, constant migration flows have even led to ethnic or national communities forming in the arrival countries.

A classic example of this is the migration routes taken by Egyptian children. As they widely report, boys from Asyut and Sharqia are generally headed for Milan or Turin, whereas those from the cities of Minya and Gharbia end their journey in Rome. This recurrent pattern in Egyptians' destinations is influenced by the presence of relatives, friends or ready-formed communities in certain Italian cities. Most Egyptian children in Turin have adult contacts or acquaintances locally who come from their own neighbourhoods and regions of origin.

Informal human smuggling networks are usually activated by family members or acquaintances of the children who hope to make the journey. They contact and agree a price with individuals who are known locally for arranging journeys to Europe and who essentially operate as a sort of “travel agency”. Within no more than a week of this contact, the family receives a telephone call stating the time, date and place of meeting. The child goes to this appointment alone and is accompanied to the Egyptian port where a boat is ready for the crossing to Sicily or Calabria.

In some cases, children are recruited by people they know who are involved in the network that organises the journey, and who go from house to house to tell people about it and explain the procedures. Adolescents may also be recruited by adults who convince them to leave with promises of easy earnings and money given directly by the reception centres.

THE INTERMEDIARY OR GUARANTOR

The “intermediary” - known among Egyptians as **el mandoub, sim sar** or **bi’ saffar** - takes care of the logistics of the journey, arranging support contacts for the different stages. Essentially, the intermediary is a local point of reference for anyone who wants to come to Italy or another European country. In Egyptian society, the intermediary acts as “facilitator” and is often viewed as a good person worthy of respect.

D.A.’S STORY (16 YEARS OLD)

One day I was passing **the house of one of my best friends**. He was sitting outside the house with his mum, talking to her about a relative who had gone to Italy. **They invited me to come to Italy** and I went home and talked to my father. He was not very happy about it; he was scared I would die at sea like so many young people. My father would never refuse me though, so he decided to let me go. **He spoke to a man who arranged the journeys, and he said that a boat would leave for Italy in a few days**. When that day came, I was at home but my friend was at school. I went to get him because he was coming with me. Everything was rushed. I only said goodbye to my mother and grandmother, and didn’t manage to say goodbye to my brothers.

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It should also be noted that Egyptians who are trafficked through these networks often find themselves owing a debt to the smugglers, which must be repaid once they arrive in Italy. Egyptian adolescents feel the need to honour the debt very keenly, because they are conscious that if their family remains insolvent they may face criminal charges, social pressure or violence from the smugglers.

The **pact** with the smuggler is sealed through a private written contract or, rather, a sort of unofficial sale of goods agreement, which must be honoured. If this does not happen, the contract may be disputed before the Court, with severe legal consequences for the insolvent party, such as repossession of their house or, if they have no property, imprisonment for up to ten years. Failure to pay also often leads to extreme social disrepute for the family, which is seen by the community as dishonourable and lacking in self-respect. The first payment is due when the adolescent arrives and telephones the family. There is no obligation to pay if the child does not reach their destination.

In contrast, when young Afghans are smuggled, the intermediary figure, also known as the **guarantor**, is responsible for liaising with the smugglers on behalf of children and their families with the specific purpose of holding payment until the child reaches the destination country. There have been cases where the guarantor ran off with the money entrusted to them, leaving the child alone at the mercy of their smugglers.

When travelling by sea, one of the typical figures involved in human smuggling is the ‘boatman’. However, this person usually plays a marginal role within the networks that organise these illegal operations. As reported by both Egyptian and Afghan children, it may even be one of their **peers forced to drive the boat** to pay for part of the journey. Using children for the crossing means that the smugglers are not exposed to the dangers of the journey and do not risk being arrested and charged by the Italian authorities. However, this system and the use of increasingly run-down fishing boats do increase the risk of sinkings and accidents.

The smuggling network is also present and operational within Italy. For the journey from Sicily to Turin, for example, other people are involved and, in exchange for money, they arrange for the children to escape from the Sicilian reception facilities and travel to Rome, then on to Turin. The smugglers give the young people mobile phones to advise them of the time of the escape and so that they can make contact with their acquaintance in the destination city. Once this has been confirmed and the money has been sent, the young person is provided with a ticket to

northern Italy. It is probably also through the involvement of adults that children are assured of placement in a children's residential facility once they have arrived.

The same dynamics are involved when getting Eritreans from the southern border to Rome or Milan (with a typical stopover of 3-8 days), which is a transit city for them. In Milan, for example, the Bastioni di Porta Venezia area is a gathering place for Eritreans, a favoured spot for meetings between them and for a range of activities related to informal services. Here too, the children's departure for their final destination is organised by **people smugglers** (in Tigrinya 'delalai', meaning people who help). While they are in transit in Italy, Eritrean adolescents still face precarious living conditions and the risk of experiencing violence or further abuse remains high. Girls in particular may be asked to provide sexual services as currency to pay for the last stage of the journey.

THE PEOPLE SMUGGLER (PASSEUR)

The passeur is a smuggler who works in the border regions and is responsible for transferring children across their African and/or European transit countries. People smugglers may have the same nationality as the child migrants or they may be citizens of a transit country.

Sometimes, in southern Italy, the transfer to the northern regions is arranged by North Africans working in the vicinity of the railway stations. Some children report having paid a large sum of money, sometimes up to 200 euros, in exchange for a train ticket that costs a maximum of 45 euros, a ticket for much shorter route, or for nothing.

In general, these networks do not have the ultimate aim of exploiting migrants once they have reached their destination. That does not mean, however, that women or children (in particular) cannot be trapped in severe forms of exploitation during or after the journey. In this respect, even their compatriot contacts in Italy may play a negative role, as they often do not provide altruistic help but ask for money in exchange. In this way, the debt owed for the journey increases exponentially.

THE ACQUAINTANCE/RELATIVE IN ITALY

Once they reach Italy or their destination country, wherever possible, children make contact with a local acquaintance of theirs (a relative, friend, etc.) who may get the child involved in the undeclared or informal labour market. Unfortunately, within these networks it is easy for young people to be exploited, working all hours of the day and seven days a week.

3.1.4 CRIMINAL ORGANISATIONS

The criminal organisations that control human trafficking specifically intend to exploit and subjugate victims for financial benefit or other advantages. Some criminal gangs that traffic humans also carry out other types of smuggling, or they organise human trafficking as a springboard to more lucrative illicit trafficking (such as drug trafficking)⁵⁶.

As recent police investigations and operations⁵⁷ have established, there are also complex transnational groups made up of multiple cells that are semiautonomous, but maintain ties with the organisation in the country of origin. Generally, the structure of these criminal organisations is not overly hierarchical, with several figures in charge and well-reinforced behaviour codes.

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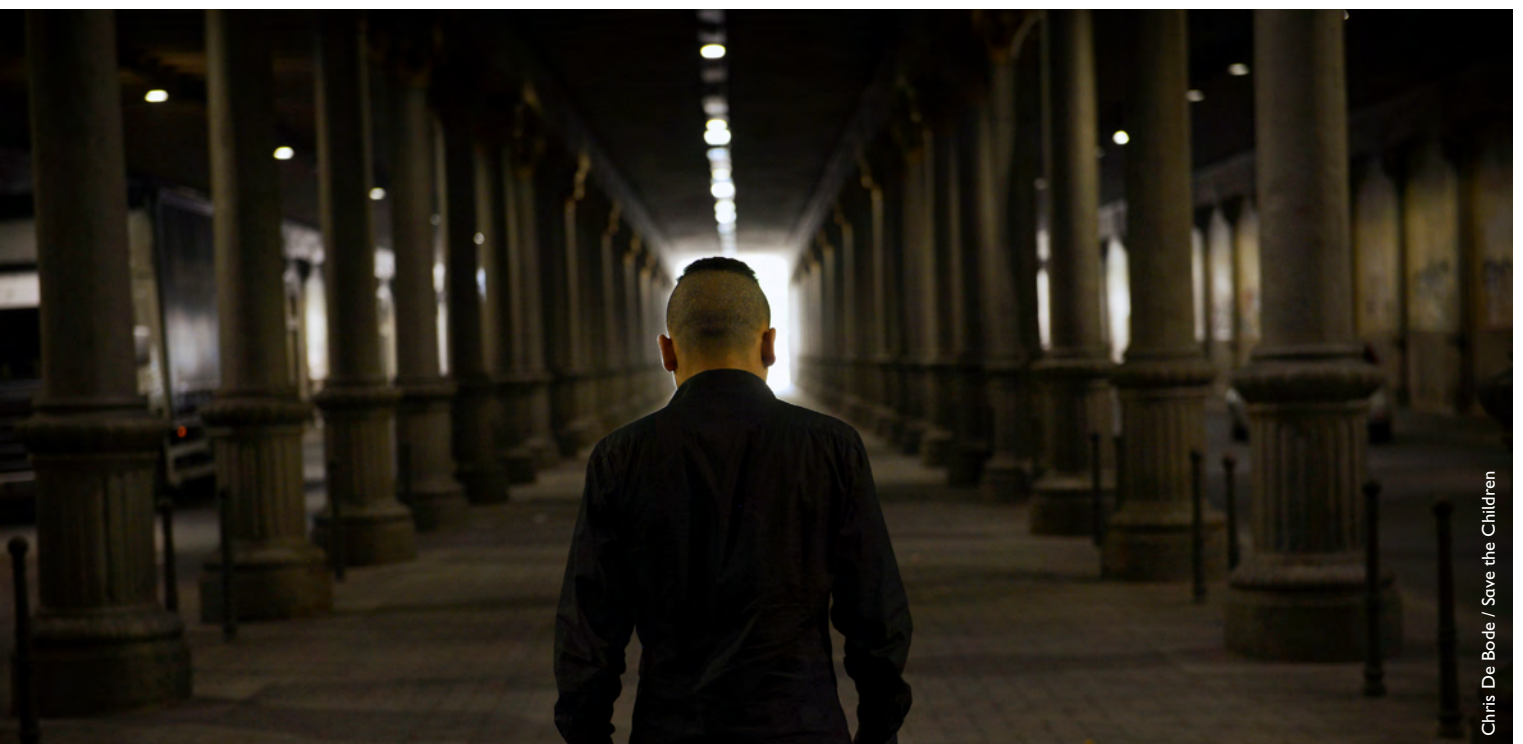
In this regard, particularly relevant is the recent verdict by the pre-trial hearing judge in Palermo, who sentenced six Eritrean citizens accused of human smuggling to between two and six years. The sentence on 8 February 2016 recognised the formation of an organisation that controlled migrant smuggling, and convicted the accused of having established a criminal cell dedicated to accommodation for migrants arriving in Italy, as well as their transfer to other European countries⁵⁸.

These organisational models are well established in Italy: with the agreement of the local Mafia, for example, Nigerian bosses now manage important segments of drug smuggling and dealing, thanks to a high level of control over the territory and over people⁵⁹. The type of organisation dedicated to trafficking finds an operational arm in the **madams** or **mamans** and in other collaborators⁶⁰. A 2016 investigation by the Palermo tax police unit led to the arrest of three Nigerian nationals and one Ghanaian accused of transnational criminal conspiracy to enslave, traffic in persons and aid and abet illegal immigration. At the head of the organisation was a **madam** who was habitually resident in Reggio Calabria, while one of her accomplices was based in Naples and two others moved between Lampedusa and Agrigento.

The most heterogeneous and organised transnational groups have cells throughout Europe and are able to relocate and manage a vast number of people, successfully moving them from one EU country to another based on demand for forced labour and sex work, and on other needs that arise from time to time.

The situation in Libya, which is increasingly out of their control, prevents Nigerian criminal gangs from operating. This means it is harder for them to maintain control over the girls during this stage of the journey. Here, the victims are transferred into Libyan 'ghettos' and forced into sex work. The Nigerian madams waiting for the girls in Italy are then obliged to buy them from the Libyans⁶¹. In other words, the stage in Libya is an increasingly dangerous time for young Nigerians, who are not only completely segregated but will then be forced to repay the entire amount of the ransom to their madam⁶².

Often, in the Nigerian model, victims are recruited by people close to their family circle: this pre-existing relationship with their recruiter makes the victim all the more submissive within the exploitation ring, and it also makes her position more complicated. The girl is aware that her recruiter - and thus the entire criminal network - knows who her family is and where they live. The fear of retaliation and threats against her immediate family makes her easy to blackmail and manipulate.



THE RECRUITER AND SPONSOR

F'S STORY

F is a 16-year-old Nigerian girl who lived in Benin City with her family. F's family was in a precarious financial situation and F was an outstanding student. One of her **teachers** told her that if she wanted to help her family, she knew a Nigerian lady who could take her to Italy, and then on to Germany, where she could work as a home help and babysitter in a Nigerian woman's house. In Italy she could continue with high school, meaning she could study and work, wiring her earnings to her family in Nigeria. The teacher made the same suggestion to F's **parents**. A contract was therefore drawn up for a 30,000 euro debt via a voodoo ceremony.

V'S STORY

V. lived in Benin City with three sisters and two brothers. Her oldest sister was married to a man named R, with whom she had a baby daughter. (...) V's **brother-in-law** introduced her to a lady known as **Mama Precious**, who liaised with people already in Europe and arranged the journey.

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In addition, the victim is forced to tighten the bonds and obligations that, on many levels, subjugate her to those exploiting her. The use of rituals, symbols and behaviour codes is typical of mafia-like organisations that aim to secure so-called loyalty from their partners by imposing a code of silence through a bond of complicity.

Nigerian traffickers create this bond by forcing their young victims to swear they will repay a contracted debt through a traditional **voodoo** ritual. This ceremony is conducted by a witchdoctor, who uses the girl's personal items - including fingernails, pubic hair or menstrual blood - to produce a sort of fetish object with magical and spiritual properties (then used as a vehicle for threats and retaliation)⁶³. The aim of this practice is essentially to subjugate the victim through a psychological bond - deeply connected to religion - that makes her feel intimately violated and powerless against her controllers. In this way, the girl is doubly bound, both on a tangible material level (through the debt) and on a purely spiritual level (through the ritual).

VOODOO AND DEBT

V'S STORY

On the day of the oath, in the presence of a **witchdoctor** who was conducting the voodoo ceremony, V. and other girls swore to repay 35,000 euros each to the person who had paid for the journey, another 1,000 euros for the purchase of rich fabrics for Mama Precious (the lady who had recruited them), and 100 euros for the purchase of a goat for the witchdoctor. They swore that if they failed to pay the debt, went to the police or caused any problems for their madam, they would die or become mad. Once they had arrived in Italy, as is often the case, the voodoo ceremony was repeated with specific rituals, in order to reinforce the victims' state of submission. The fear from threats related to the voodoo ceremony was such that, during the very delicate operation to free her from the organisation's control (in which Save the Children staff were involved), V. asked to go back, at serious risk and danger to herself, to the apartment where she had been forced to live with those exploiting her, so she could retrieve her underwear which those exploiting her would otherwise use to carry out a new **voodoo** ritual against her and her family.

Once they have arrived in Italy, the girls come into contact with their local traffickers and they know whom they must approach even within the reception centre where they are placed after landing. The presence of informers and collaborators in CIEs (identification and expulsion centres) and CARAs (asylum-seeker reception centres) reveals the capacity of these criminal

organisations to move inside and outside state facilities for victim protection, and these are even used as strategic meeting points.

As the trafficking victims' stories show, within the criminal network that covers the arrival country, the **madam** plays a key role in the whole exploitation phase. Through absolute control over the children's debt, she governs every aspect of their daily lives, deciding their final destination and any later moves, as well as when, where and how sex work must be carried out (for example, whether a girl has to work a double shift and whether she works at night or during the day).

The **madam** is often a woman who has herself been trafficked and exploited, and who has "redeemed" herself by becoming part of the criminal organisation and established a role and status. This means that she presents herself, or is perceived by her victims, as a model of success to be attained. Among other things, the madam represents one of the few links, or indeed the only link, with the culture of origin in the arrival country, and she is therefore a point of reference for a culture and language that the new arrivals do not understand.

F'S STORY

I remember that when I left the CIE I was completely alone and did not know what to do. I called Glory (the **madam**) who told me that she had moved to the Adriatic coast. I went there because I had no one and the only person I knew was Glory. I went to her house and worked on the streets of Bonifica together with her, in the afternoons and at night. I was very tired and sometimes I fell asleep among the reeds and in clients' cars. During my street work I got to know an outreach worker from Associazione On the Road Onlus, a partner of Save the Children, who told me that she could help me.

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In addition, Nigerian victims often live with their madams or, at least, always with other Nigerian sex workers. If the exploiter is not present, the controlling role is given to another female figure. This means, in fact, that victims spend time almost exclusively with fellow Nigerians under a method of peer control that is present both on the street and in the place where they live⁶⁴.

In the Nigerian case, it is increasingly common that the victim's subjugation to the system is facilitated by a romantic relationship with a **boyfriend**, who plays the role of mediator between the girl and the madam. In some cases, the girl's boyfriend is related to the madam (for example her son or brother), or the madam may have a romantic relationship with one of the girl's relatives (for example her brother, father or uncle).

Through these underhand connections (madam/friend or boyfriend/exploiter), the girl is encircled by a whole series of people, to whom she is emotionally attached, who convince her that sex work is the only way to support herself and the people she loves. In this way, over time, the girl is persuaded to become actively involved in the criminal business, controlling and then in turn recruiting her younger compatriots.

3.1.5 ITALIAN OFFENDERS

According to Ministry of Justice projections, 12% of offenders involved in trafficking and exploitation are Italian nationals⁶⁵. In terms of the link between nationality and type of crime, the Ministry reports that a higher than average proportion of criminals have Bosnian, Italian and Serbian citizenship, particularly for the crime of enslavement (to the detriment of Nigerian citizens as to trafficking in persons, and Albanians and Nigerians for the crime of slave trading)⁶⁶. Very often, this type of crime is connected to other criminal acts, primarily aiding and abetting or exploiting child prostitution⁶⁷ and belonging to criminal organisations.

Where the crime of child prostitution is concerned, the most recent data in the possession of the Public Prosecutor's Office indicate a considerable increase in offenders who are Italian nationals.

For example, in the Lazio region, the ratio of Italian to foreign nationals under investigation was reversed in 2014: out of a total of 170 people under investigation, 127 were Italian and 43 were foreign citizens, whereas in 2013 there were 62 foreign nationals and only 38 Italians⁶⁸.

Recent investigations have shed light on the role played by Italian citizens in the process of smuggling and exploiting foreign children and young women. For example, Italian citizens have been arrested in the border regions for people smuggling, being paid by migrants for cross-border journeys using private vehicles which are crammed with people until the border is passed.

A case has also emerged of an Italian citizen who made contact with foreign children and profited from or took advantage of their extreme vulnerability. The children's accounts include proposals of payment from Italian adults in exchange for sexual services.

THE CASE OF AN ABUSIVE AND VIOLENT GUARDIAN, REPORTED BY SAVE THE CHILDREN IN SICILY

The abuser obtained sexual services from unaccompanied children in exchange for accommodation, money and mobile telephones. He held the position of guardian for unaccompanied children in the place where he lived in Sicily. He had been harming many young people for at least six months. The children involved had diverse origins but all were unaccompanied children. The abuser maintained contact with the children using mobile phones, instant messaging and Facebook, sending them pornographic material with proposals of payment in exchange for sexual services.

This case clearly highlights the strength of the mechanism of control exercised by the offender. In fact, the abuse only came to light when one of the children who had been a victim of the abuse left Sicily for Rome, started to go to a Save the Children centre for children and, feeling sufficiently safe, told the workers what had happened. Save the Children was then able to do some cross-checking in Sicily and reported the case to the authorities, who carried out the investigation and subsequently arrested the man, caught in the act.

NOTE

⁴⁷ Vie d'Uscita project partners: Associazione On the Road Onlus; Cooperativa CivicoZero; Congregazione Figlie della Carità di Cagliari; Associazione Welcome; Equality Cooperativa Sociale Onlus - Comunità Mimosa; Nuova Ricerca Agenzia RES Soc. Coop. - Comunità Casa di Mattoni; Comunità dei Giovani; Associazione Giovanni Danieli Onlus; Municipality of Venice.

⁴⁸ European Commission, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. Report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings (2016).

⁴⁹ In 2016 a new European centre, the European Migrant Smuggling Centre, was established to oppose criminal networks involved in smuggling migrants. In Italy, Law 228/2003 created harsher penalties for human trafficking and enslavement, widening the scope of application and specifying the associated procedure.

⁵⁰ Traffickers often instruct their victims to ask for international protection to obtain a residence permit - albeit temporary, as applicants for refugee status - so they can then exploit them openly without worrying about police checks (No Tratta, Vittime di tratta e richiedenti/titolari di protezione internazionale. Rapporto di Ricerca (Victims of Trafficking and International Protection Applicants/Holders. Research Report), Rome, 30 June 2014).

⁵¹ Osservatorio Interventi Tratta (Trafficking Operations Watchdog) - Department for Equal Opportunities, Presidency of the Council of Ministers. http://www.osservatoriointerventitratta.it/?page_id=391

⁵² European Commission, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. Report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings (2016) - period of reference 2013-2014.

⁵³ Italian Ministry of Justice - Directorate-General for Statistics and Organisational Analysis, La tratta degli esseri umani. Indagine Statistica su un campione rappresentativo di fascicoli definiti con sentenza relativamente ai reati ex Art. 600, 601 e 602 del codice civile (Trafficking in human beings. Statistical study of a representative sample of defined cases with sentences relating to crimes under Articles 600, 601 and 602 of the civil code), September 2015, p.3-4.

⁵⁴ Inter-forces data provided by the Central Criminal Police Division (not consolidated for 2015).

⁵⁵ Italian Ministry of Justice - Directorate-General for Statistics and Organisational Analysis, La tratta degli esseri umani. Indagine Statistica su un campione rappresentativo di fascicoli definiti con sentenza relativamente ai reati ex Art. 600, 601 e 602 del codice civile (Trafficking in human beings. Statistical study of a representative sample of defined cases with sentences relating to crimes under Articles 600, 601 and 602 of the civil code), September 2015, p.3-4.

⁵⁶ National Anti-Mafia Directorate, Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2013 - 30 giugno 2014 (Annual report on activities undertaken by the National Anti-Mafia Attorney and the National Anti-Mafia Directorate and on the dynamics and strategies of mafia-like criminal organisations for the period 1 July 2013-30 June 2014).

⁵⁷ State Police, Central Anticrime Division, Central Operations Department, Ragusa Mobile Squadron, Operation "Ju-Ju"; Rome Carabinieri, Operation "Culti", 2014; Catania Public Prosecutor's Office; State Police, Palermo Station, Operation "Glaucio II", "Glaucio III".

⁵⁸ This case saw the first informer among human smugglers, Nuredin Atta (sentenced to 5 years), whose mitigating circumstances - for people who cooperate with the legal process - were recognised by the pre-trial hearing judge.

⁵⁹ Cooperativa BeFree, Inter/rotte. Storie di tratta, percorsi di resistenza (Inter/rupted, Stories of trafficking, paths of resistance). April 2016, Rome.

⁶⁰ National Anti-Mafia Directorate, Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2011 - 30 giugno 2012 (Annual report on activities undertaken by the National Anti-Mafia Attorney and the National Anti-Mafia Directorate and on the dynamics and strategies of mafia-like criminal organisations for the period 1 July 2011-30 June 2012).

⁶¹ Cooperativa BeFree, Inter/rotte. Storie di tratta, percorsi di resistenza (Inter/rupted, Stories of trafficking, paths of resistance). April 2016, Rome.

⁶² With reference to Nigerian trafficking, even the initial journey from Nigeria to Niger (the city of Agadez being a strategic meeting point for traffickers) is a particularly delicate time, during which the victims experience the extent of segregation and submission to those exploiting them.

⁶³ National Anti-Mafia Directorate, Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2013 - 30 giugno 2014 (Annual report on activities undertaken by the National Anti-Mafia Attorney and the National Anti-Mafia Directorate and on the dynamics and strategies of mafia-like criminal organisations for the period 1 July 2013-30 June 2014). Roberto Beneduce, Voci di Corpi Fluttuanti. Il disagio psichico delle vittime di tratta (Voices from Bodies in Flux. The psychological distress of victims of trafficking), Gruppo Abele, Turin.

⁶⁴ Cooperativa BeFree, Inter/rotte. Storie di tratta, percorsi di resistenza (Inter/rupted, Stories of trafficking, paths of resistance). April 2016, Rome.

⁶⁵ Italian Ministry of Justice - Directorate-General for Statistics and Organisational Analysis, La tratta degli esseri umani. Indagine Statistica su un campione rappresentativo di fascicoli definiti con sentenza relativamente ai reati ex Art. 600, 601 e 602 del codice civile (Trafficking in human beings. Statistical study of a representative sample of defined cases with sentences relating to crimes under Articles 600, 601 and 602 of the civil code), September 2015.

⁶⁶ Idem.

⁶⁷ Article 600 Bis of the Penal Code.

⁶⁸ Italian Parliamentary Commission on Childhood and Adolescence, meeting of 21 June 2016, p. 24.

CHAPTER 4

**NEW LEGISLATION,
POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

2016 began with some important news for the fight against trafficking and exploitation in Italy. By resolution of the Council of Ministers on 26 February 2016, the country finally adopted the **National Action Plan against trafficking and severe exploitation of human beings (PNA)**. This key initiative, taken under Article 9 of Legislative Decree 24 of 4 March 2014 (implementing Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims), aims to define multiyear intervention strategies for 2016/2018 to prevent and tackle the issues of human trafficking and severe exploitation, together with activities that support awareness-raising, social prevention, and the identification and social integration of victims.

The PNA has included and acknowledged many of the recommendations and reflections provided by Save the Children and other NGOs and civil society organisations that deal with trafficking. In particular, the PNA has recognised the validity of the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for protecting children and of the tools for identification, risk self-assessment and awareness-raising developed through international projects supported by **Save the Children** together with other organisations: **AGIRE** - Austria, Greece, Italy, Romania - **Acting for stronger private-public partnerships in the field of identification and support of children who are victims of and at risk of trafficking in Europe** and **PROTECTION FIRST** - **Early identification, protection and assistance of children who are victims of and at risk of trafficking and exploitation**.

The PNA was drawn up by the Department for Equal Opportunities within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, and it aims to restructure the actions of government and make them more rational. This is mainly to encourage a collaborative, **comprehensive and coordinated approach** across the central, regional and local administrative bodies concerned and the resources available; it is also needed because so many public policy remits are involved in the fight against trafficking. The high number of remits stems from the four areas on which any systematic anti-trafficking strategy, including an international strategy, must be based: I) prevention, II) prosecution, III) protection, and IV) partnership.

The PNA also recognises the importance of ensuring **cooperation between state institutions and NGOs and civil society**. Promoting this is described as a key element in building the Italian strategy, in terms of maintaining and strengthening public-private networks that involve workers on the ground, with a focus on so-called multiagency work⁶⁹.

Finally, the introduction to the plan states that the development of an Italian strategy cannot ignore the picture taking shape in Europe and internationally, particularly the **EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012–2016 – COM (2012) 286 final**, the **Warsaw Convention** (ratified in Italian legislation by Law 108/2010), the **Recommendations of GRETA**, the **OSCE** and the **United Nations Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons**, especially women and children, and the **Recommendations accepted by Italy during the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review**⁷⁰.

4.1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN AGAINST TRAFFICKING AND SEVERE EXPLOITATION OF HUMAN BEINGS (PNA)

The PNA aims to restructure the actions of government and make them more rational. This is mainly to encourage a collaborative, comprehensive and coordinated approach across the central, regional and local administrative bodies concerned and the resources available; it is also needed because so many public policy remits are involved in the fight against trafficking. The high number of remits stems from the four areas on which any systematic anti-trafficking strategy, including an international strategy, must be based: **I) prevention, II) prosecution, III) protection, and IV) partnership.**

The PNA therefore has two main objectives:

- **Strategic objective:** to improve the national response to trafficking in line with a common European approach based on prevention, prosecution of crimes, and protection and social integration of victims, respecting human rights and the principle of non-discrimination, from a gender mainstreaming perspective and protecting the rights of children.
- **Operational objective:** to set out a coordinated and systematic national policy for intervention, involving the competent central and regional administrative authorities, with a collaborative approach aimed at optimising financial resources⁷¹.

THE FOUR AREAS OF THE PLAN

I) Prevention

Joint continuing training for all professionals in the sector is key to a strategy aimed at exposing the phenomenon.

Who?

Training for **local police**.

- Joint training for **professionals** in anti-trafficking units and professionals in the international protection and unaccompanied children's systems, to develop procedures and partnerships for identifying victims of trafficking and methods for referrals between the respective systems.

What?

Specific training plans on developments in trafficking and all the related issues with a **particular focus on gender issues**, with ad hoc training modules on sex trafficking and labour trafficking as well as domestic exploitation of women and children.

How?

Evaluations before, during and after the training ensure that it is effective and continues to improve.

- In **countries of origin**, information and awareness activities and programmes with special emphasis on unaccompanied children, covering risks related to the journey, living conditions in the host countries and forms of exploitation that could affect them.
- In **destination countries**, awareness-raising activities, specific training, information campaigns, and joint activities with NGOs and civil society organisations to raise awareness of forced labour.

Who?

Activities targeting **entrepreneurs' associations, trade unions, citizenship organisations and the most vulnerable groups**, including children, in an appropriate language, making use of information campaigns and regional involvement.

Specialist training for the police forces, magistrates, social workers, caseworkers, labour inspectors, **most vulnerable groups, including children**, in an appropriate language, making use of information campaigns and regional involvement.

Specialist training for the **police forces, magistrates, social workers, caseworkers, labour inspectors**, professionals involved in the asylum system and all professionals who deal with the phenomenon first hand, including training covered by Article 5 (Training Obligations) of Legislative Decree 24/2014.

Training for **Italian National Health Service staff** on trafficking, severe labour exploitation and domestic slavery.

A campaign raising awareness of trafficking, safety, rights and obligations for seasonal workers in rural areas.

Distribution **at national level** of information on rights at work, social rights, victims' rights and migrants' rights.

Cooperation with NGOs and civil society to implement initiatives raising awareness of the use of forced labour, including a **register of companies** who adopt corporate social responsibility policies and adhere to ethical certification rules, promoting the use of a reward system.

II) Prosecution

- Adopt shared procedures and strengthen **multiagency cooperation** (e.g. coordination between labour inspectors in their policing roles, ordinary public prosecutors and district anti-mafia prosecutors to identify links between smuggling, exploitation of prostitution and trafficking).
- Promote and develop multiagency agreement protocols (with other judicial authorities, institutions, bodies and voluntary associations operating in the gender violence sector).
- Ensure **emotional and psychological support for unaccompanied children at every stage and level of the case**, from suitable persons indicated by the child, as well as non-governmental organisations, associations, foundations or groups (with proven experience in the child support sector and listed on the register under Article 42 of the Consolidated Act on Immigration, subject to the child's consent, and where agreed by the judicial or administrative authority overseeing the case).

III) Protection

- Establish a contact person at public prosecutors' offices and police stations for application of the **Single Programme for Emergence, Assistance and Social Integration**.

How?

Make arrangements, in regional social services departments and NGOs and civil society organisations carrying out projects in the provincial capitals, for taking care of victims of trafficking supported **through the Single Programme for Emergence, Assistance and Social Integration**.

Organise local **Street Units** in partnership between social services, NGOs and civil society

organisations supporting/implementing the Single Programme and the health service.

- Find adequate mechanisms for quickly **identifying victims of human trafficking** (with reference to Annex 2 to the Plan, “Guidelines for establishing a mechanism for rapid identification of victims of trafficking and severe exploitation”).
- Give due consideration to **all potential forms of exploitation** that can involve **children**. Thus, in addition to sexual and labour exploitation, adequate instruments and mechanisms of protection will also be considered for begging, exploitation in illegal activities, illegal adoptions, organ removal and forced marriages.
- Locate and identify the **key places in each region** where potential victims may **land, spend time or pass through** and then intervene with qualified professionals.
- Make it easier to expose trafficking and thus identify victims at the **points of first contact** (street units, police stations, airports and landing sites, counselling centres and social services, reception centres).
- For children, use the standard operating procedures (SOPs) drawn up by the **AGIRE** project as part of the European Commission DG Justice “Prevention Of and Fight Against Crime” programme (Annex 4 to the PNA), and the tools for identifying potential victims of trafficking or severe exploitation, intended for professionals in children’s care facilities and developed through the **PROTECTION FIRST** project (also funded through the “Prevention Of and Fight Against Crime” programme; Annex 5 to the PNA).
- **Accommodate and protect children who are victims of trafficking.**

How?

Ensure **emotional and psychological support for unaccompanied children at every stage** and level of the case, from suitable persons indicated by the child, as well as non-governmental organisations, associations, foundations or groups with proven experience in the child support sector and listed on the register under Article 42 of the Consolidated Act on Immigration, subject to the child’s consent, and where agreed by the judicial or administrative authority overseeing the case.

- **Provide for the active and direct participation of children** in all cases that concern them, in compliance with the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- **Promote care and ongoing support for children who are particularly vulnerable** (victims of trafficking and exploitation, asylum-seekers, etc.) and encourage comprehensive support with social integration, the right to education, and employment for those who are nearing the age of majority.

IV) Partnership

- **Policies and guidance developed by the Steering Committee, which consists of institutional actors, may be supported by proposals and in-depth studies from NGOs and civil society** and trade unions for key dialogue with local areas and to develop ongoing and effective dialogue between all parties involved.
- **Guidelines** adopted within the Steering Committee should also identify how the respective systems for safeguarding victims of trafficking and safeguarding asylum-seekers⁷² and the reception system for unaccompanied children will be coordinated.

To ensure faster **exposure, identification and assistance for children who are victims of trafficking and exploitation** and full implementation of their **rights**

Save the Children Italy recommends:

1. **Department for Equal Opportunities within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers:** quickly implement the commitments set out in the new National Action Plan against trafficking and severe exploitation of human beings, including **a proportion of the overall funds dedicated to children** to ensure that children's services (safe houses, mobile units, cultural mediation, legal and psychological counselling, routes to autonomy) are sustainable. **A single national protection network should also be developed throughout the country** to harmonise and link initiatives for identification, protection, safeguarding, social/employment integration and routes to autonomy for victims of trafficking and exploitation, trialling an **integrated holistic approach**. The priority for this type of initiative is to guarantee protection and counselling for children, and support and individualised routes to autonomy for the most vulnerable (including children, pregnant women and women with dependent children), providing long-term solutions until victims are able to support themselves independently and thus avoiding a potential return to exploitation⁷³.
2. **Department for Equal Opportunities within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers:** also ensure that the Article 13 first assistance programme and the Article 18 social assistance and integration programme (which, according to the PNA, will be merged into the single emergence programme), the **freephone number and the 'regional operations units' always meet the needs of children who are victims** of trafficking and exploitation, providing an adequate number of filled posts and a government/NGO/civil society joint initiative that guarantees children are immediately cared for. Rapidly relocate victims from the place of their identification and escape, thus reducing the risks to them and their vulnerabilities, and ensure that children who are victims of trafficking and exploitation are **protected even if they do not yet feel ready to report those who have been exploiting them**.
3. **Italian Parliament:** approve private member's bill AC 1658 "Amendments to the Consolidated Act in Legislative Decree 286 of 25 July 1998 and other provisions concerning protective measures for unaccompanied children" at high risk of trafficking and exploitation. This proposal was submitted by Save the Children on 25 July 2013 and is supported by many safeguarding organisations that regulate the protection and reception of unaccompanied children.
4. **Italian Government:** approve the Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers on mechanisms for ascertaining the age of foreign children who are victims of trafficking and on provision of the necessary funds to implement the system. Italy does not yet have a consistent, standardised and multilevel procedure for ascertaining age, which is key to preventing situations where children state they are adults or are identified as adults and vice versa.
5. **Italian Government:** also guarantee an **effective national policy** on interventions to safeguard victims of trafficking and exploitation. It is crucial to have a **national coordination system for combatting and preventing these issues that involves ongoing dialogue with** - or even includes - members and representatives of NGOs and civil society and the Steering Committee described in the PNA (as shown by the National Anti-Trafficking Platform and the GRETA Report⁷⁴, produced by a European group of anti-trafficking and exploitation experts).
6. **Ministry of the Interior:** ensure that highly specialised first reception facilities and asylum-seeker/refugee centres have appropriate abilities and skills to guarantee adequate initial care and ongoing support for migrant girls who are victims of trafficking. In addition, guarantee that the number of places available in reception facilities is in line with trends in arrivals, and provide the necessary resources for psychosocial, legal and medical assistance, taking victims' needs into account.

7. European Commission and Ministry of the Interior: implement the provisions of the European Agenda on Migration, adopted on 13 May 2015, which sets out relocation as one of the key instruments of European co-responsibility⁷⁵. This would stop unaccompanied children from leaving the system and thus avoid the risk of exploitation and abuse. Despite this, to date there is no procedure that allows unaccompanied children to relocate.

8. Ministry for Foreign Affairs: fund information and awareness-raising activities and programmes in the countries of origin, with special emphasis on children, covering risks related to the journey, living conditions in the host countries and forms of exploitation that could affect them.

4.3 SAVE THE CHILDREN PROJECTS THAT PROTECT CHILDREN WHO ARE AT RISK AND THOSE WHO ARE VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION

One of Save the Children Italy's main initiatives is the Vie d'Uscita (Ways Out) project, launched in 2012, which covers the Veneto, Le Marche, Abruzzo, Sardinia and Rome regions, in collaboration with the Municipality of Venice, Associazione On the Road Onlus, Cooperativa CivicoZero, Congregazione Figlie della Carità di Cagliari, Associazione Welcome, Equality Cooperativa Sociale Onlus – Comunità Mimosa, Nuova Ricerca Agenzia RES Soc. Coop., Comunità Casa di Mattoni, Comunità dei Giovani and Associazione Giovanni Danieli Onlus.

This project aims to strengthen protection for children who are victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation through pathways for reception and social reintegration, with bursaries and/or internships and support for living independently. Vie d'Uscita also carries out first-contact activities with children who are victims of trafficking and exploitation in the form of information, legal advice, accompaniment to local, health and social services, and linguistic and sociocultural mediation. In 2015 the project helped more than 350 girls, and this year it continues to guarantee shelter and support for children and young adults in extremely vulnerable situations.

Vie d'Uscita came about with the support of Profumerie La Gardenia, and Profumerie Limoni added their backing in 2013. Since September 2014, the project has also been funded by L'Oréal Paris.

The patron of the initiative is the artist **Rossella Brescia**, whose work represents the strength of will of all those who, despite living in extremely difficult circumstances or situations of subjugation, try to look to the future and find their own way out, choosing the path of commitment, awareness and action.

Between 2013 and 2015, Save the Children also carried out the European project Protection First. This aimed to promote faster identification of children who are at risk or who are victims of trafficking in Italy, the Netherlands and Romania, as well as to raise children's awareness and increase their capacity to evaluate risks related to trafficking and exploitation.

During the project, an investigation was carried out into the trafficking and exploitation of children in Europe, with in-depth studies and interviews in Italy, Romania and the Netherlands. Following the research phase, and with the active participation of these children, innovative tools were developed to identify children who are victims of or at risk of trafficking. These tools are now available (in Italian, English and others languages) on the Save the Children Italy website at http://www.savethechildren.it/IT/Page/t01/view_html?idp=337 and in the Annexes to the National Action Plan published by the Department for Equal Opportunities.

WORKING WITH UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AT THE SOUTHERN BORDER AND IN ITALY

Since May 2008, Save the Children has worked on a programme specifically for children who arrive by sea in Sicily, Puglia and Calabria. Specifically, Save the Children provides information, legal advice and cultural mediation for child migrants in all landing areas on the southern border; identifies their protection needs, helps to raise awareness of the conditions of reception, and is helping to develop an effective system for identifying, protecting and referring foreign children.

Since October 2008, Save the Children has supported the CivicoZero project in Rome - now run by the social cooperative with the same name - which provides support, orientation and protection for migrant boys and girls (and, where present, their immediate families) who are socially marginalised, as well as children at risk of exploitation, violence and abuse, working to improve their living conditions and to have their rights respected.

The following interventions take place in the CivicoZero day centre and through activities on the ground in strategic places where vulnerable children are present: reception and basic services, information, legal advice, art therapy workshops, and cultural and social mediation.

In December 2011, the **A28 Centre** was opened in Rome, a night shelter for unaccompanied children that is managed by Save the Children, the CivicoZero cooperative and Intersos. The aim is to provide protection and overnight accommodation for unaccompanied child migrants in vulnerable situations, and especially children in transit.

CivicoZero has also had a day centre in Milan since 2014, which carries out protection activities and Italian language teaching for unaccompanied children who live in or are in transit in the city. Also since 2014, Save the Children has operated near Milan Central Station with support and assistance activities for family groups and unaccompanied children in transit.

These activities include a **Child-Friendly Space** where the youngest children, with the help of specialist teachers, can play, socialise and regain a sense of normality; help from a volunteer paediatrician; and protection activities for unaccompanied children.

In 2015, another CivicoZero centre was opened in Turin in partnership with the Municipality.

In July 2016, Save the Children launched a dedicated telephone **Helpline** offering support and signposting for unaccompanied children in Italy, providing information about their rights, legal and psychological help, and referral to local services. The Helpline also seeks to be a reference point for the families of these children living in Italy and other countries, caseworkers in facilities and communities, civil servants, volunteers and citizens.

The multilingual telephone service (Italian, Arabic, English, French, Tigrinya, Somali and Farsi) is open from Monday to Friday, 11am to 5pm, and can be reached on **freephone number 800 14 10 16** (for Lycamobile: **351 2 20 20 16**).

NOTE

⁶⁹ Piano nazionale d'azione contro la tratta e il grave sfruttamento 2016-2018 (National action plan against trafficking and severe exploitation 2016-2018), adopted by the Council of Ministers at the meeting of 26 February 2016, p.3.

⁷⁰ Idem.

⁷¹ Piano nazionale d'azione contro la tratta e il grave sfruttamento 2016-2018 (National action plan against trafficking and severe exploitation 2016-2018), p.5.

⁷² In application of Article 10 of Legislative Decree 24/2014 and Article 17, paragraph 2 of Legislative Decree 142 of 18 August 2015 - Implementing Directive 2013/33/EU laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection, as well as Directive 2013/32/EU on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection.

⁷³ The Stability Act 2015, Article 1, paragraph 184, allocates 8 million euros for 2015, out of the ordinary budget allocations of the Presidency of the Council, for implementation of the Single Programme for Emergence, Assistance and Social Integration of foreign victims of the crimes of enslavement and trafficking and victims of violence or severe exploitation of human beings.

⁷⁴ The Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA).

⁷⁵ European Council Decisions 1523 of 14 September 2015 and 1601 of 22 September 2015.



Save the Children

believes every child deserves a future. In Italy and around the world, we give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. We do whatever it takes for children - every day and in times of crisis - transforming their lives and the future we share.

Save the Children Italy was founded in late 1998 as an ONLUS (non-profit organisation) and started its activities in 1999. It is now an NGO recognised by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In addition to its significant international work, Save the Children Italy has spent more than ten years developing programmes that aim to improve the lives of boys and girls living in Italy, with initiatives targeting child poverty, the protection of children at risk of exploitation (such as unaccompanied children), education and schooling, the safe use of new technologies, and safeguarding children during emergencies.



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