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THE PUBLIC POLICY HUB

Policy Brief **11** Children on the move: The Egyptian Unaccompanied Migrant Children 2018

This paper discusses the issue of irregular Egyptian children migration focusing on addressing unaccompanied migrant children (UMC). It firstly provides insight into the manifestations of this problem in Egypt, major factors and reasons why the phenomenon of UMC occurs and highlights the risks of this problem. Subsequently, the actual efforts for solving this problem are analyzed, elaborating on the Egyptian government's policies to cut down on the numbers of unaccompanied migrant children. This paper concludes by providing recommendations and will consider how this crisis could be resolved in the near future.

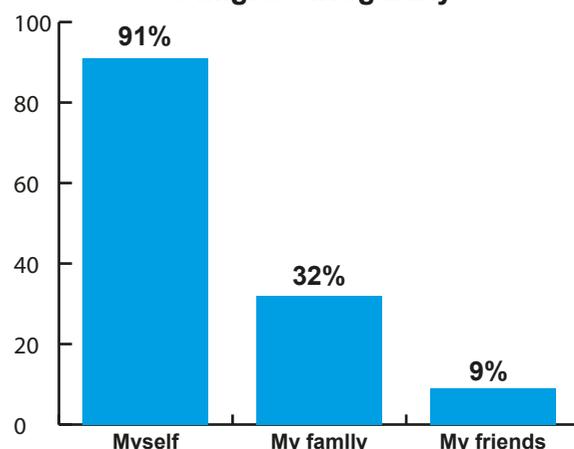
The main finding of this paper is that this phenomenon increases in some of the most deprived governorates in the country. Although there are a number of activities which have been undertaken by some of the key stakeholders relevant to the issue, still more needs to be done to prevent this phenomenon from exacerbating. Finally, the policy paper recommendations, include: raising awareness of children and their families, offering quality education services, making information available, and supporting the labor market to develop more job opportunities.

Introduction:

The illegal migration of children in the Egyptian society has increased significantly. In figures, the percentage of the unaccompanied children reached 28% of the total number of the migrants in 2011, increased to 49% in 2014, then went up to 66% in 2016. The crisis has many causes, most important of which is poverty, unemployment and the families' pursuit of a better life. There are three main categories of unaccompanied and separated children. The first category includes children separated from their families or caregivers during the move, and for this category, it is recommended that civil society, international organizations, and social workers implement needed measures in reception and transit centers to enable prompt family reunification. The second category includes children who started their journey as unaccompanied or separated children and then ended up traveling with other groups of people. Most are males aged 14-17 years who try to avoid registration, or who pretend to be young adults. The third category includes children who have interrupted their migration owing to a lack of resources.

The issue of illegal immigration for young children in Egypt is a serious threat, not only to the receiving countries, but also to the exporting countries. It is difficult to determine the extent of illegal immigration due to the complex nature of the phenomenon.

Decision-making influencers for UMCs to migrate irregularly



Source: IOM, Egyptian Unaccompanied Migrant Children, 2016

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The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors and or editors and do not reflect UNICEF or AUC policies or views. They are published to stimulate further dialogue on issues affecting children in Egypt in an attempt to expose young graduates to practical policy solutions.

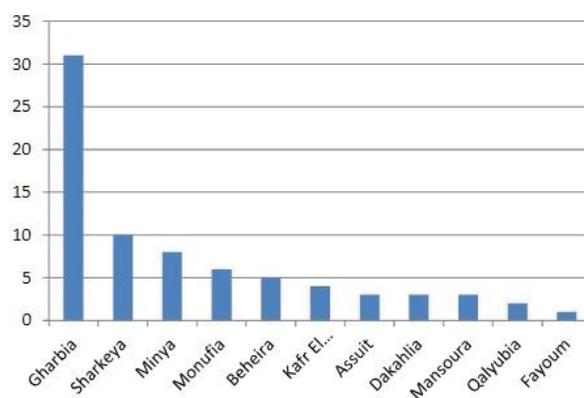


The actual efforts to solve this problem:

The Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the number of Egyptians who tried to reach Italy illegally during the period from 27 October 2012 to 25 September 2013 reached 4,711 including 1,214 minors less than 18 years old.

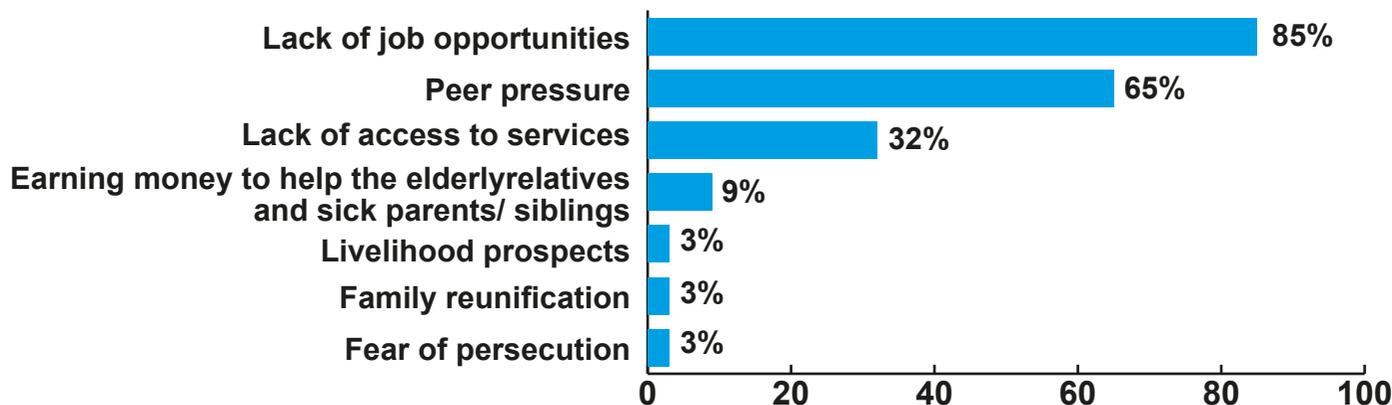
According to the report by the National Center for Social and Criminal Research, on illegal immigration of unaccompanied children published in 2016, all the illegal unaccompanied migrants are males, with the proportion of children reaching 99.9% and increasing in the age group 16-18 (73.2%), while the percentage in the age group 12-15 reaches 25.2% of the total.

Number of interviewed UMCs per governorate of origin



Source: IOM, Egyptian Unaccompanied Migrant Children, 2016

Factors that motivate UMCs to leave Egypt



Source: IOM, Egyptian Unaccompanied Migrant Children, 2016

A large number of Egyptian immigrant children are aware that EU rules allow unaccompanied children to stay in the state, and some other countries recognize the child's right to reside, such as the Italian law.

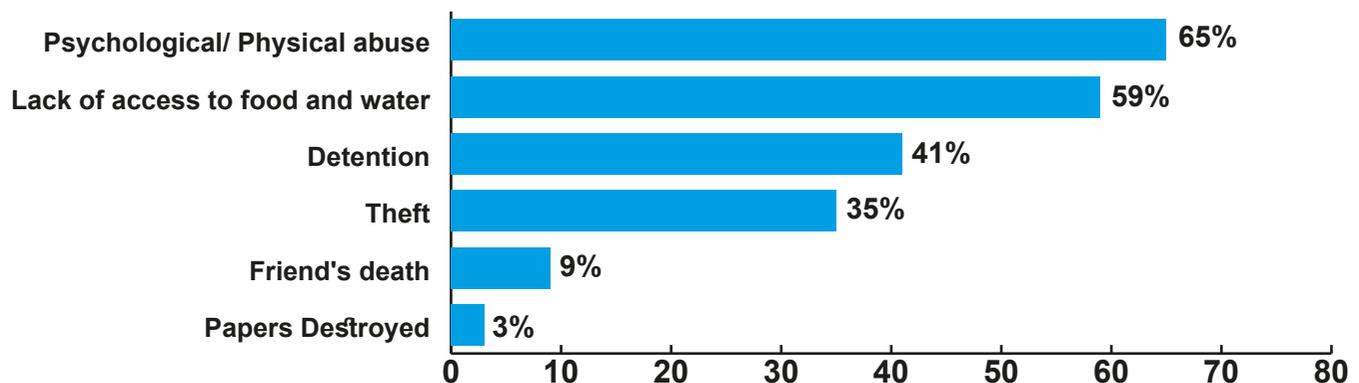
Therefore, a package of measures has been taken by the Egyptian government. These measures varied between the legislative and the procedural measures. The legislative measures include Law no. 64 of 2010 and Law no. 82 of 2016. The procedural measures include the establishment of both the National Coordinating Committee for the Criminalization of Human Trafficking and The National Coordination Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration.



The risks of this problem:

During their migration journey, UMC migrating to Europe from Egypt face trauma in the form of exposure to a variety of stressors. They face various types of violence in their home country, during their migration journey, and once they arrive in the hosting countries. They cannot find water to drink and only small amounts of edible food are usually available. Additionally, they may be exposed to verbal and/or physical abuse at the hands of smugglers, and their belongings may be robbed.

Hardships faced by UMCs during irregular migration journey



Source: IOM, Egyptian Unaccompanied Migrant Children, 2016

Conclusion and recommendations:

Major causes of the unaccompanied migrant children problem in Egypt are diverse and complex. This diversity and complexity in causes require a strategic multidimensional intervention to tackle. The four recommended pillars of intervention are the preventive approach, the protective approach, the prosecution approach, and the partnership approach.

This paper recommends developing an **awareness-raising campaign** throughout Egypt with a special concentration on the governorates with the highest rate of child migration. This campaign needs to be continued and repeated for a long period. NCCM, NCCPIM, UNICEF, IOM, and Mediterranean countries should be key actors in this activity led by the NCCPIM. Aiming to shift the individual and family attitudes towards the irregular migration of children by changing their beliefs through media releases in TV and radio channels, can also be incorporated. This is urgently needed to tackle the social and behavioral parameters. Movies and TV shows could directly/indirectly address this issue and its repercussions in the scenarios and scripts. Community leaders such as Imams in mosques, priests in churches, and teachers in schools should be well trained to inform the community members about the negative consequences of child migration. Those persons will advocate for changing the widespread misconception that migrating irregularly will lead to a better life.

Offering **fair access to quality education** is a focal option. There is a pressing need to increase the investment in education in the target governorates. Building new schools and providing an education system responsive to the labor market is critical. Hence, there should be a combination of educational opportunities and employment opportunities to entice children to stay in Egypt. At the same time, the returnees should find a place in the education system. One of the best ways to reintegrate returnees is to enroll them in school in order to provide them with the needed skills for the labor market and also to rehabilitate them in the community. This quality education is the base to build a capable community caring about its children and sustained in its development.



This policy paper emphasizes the importance of the **availability and validity of information and evidence-based research** adequacy. The returning and reintegrating program should be based on strong knowledge and well-done research, especially on community needs. This policy paper recommends extending the margin of policy research in the field on unaccompanied migrant children and suggests policies aimed to address the different stakeholders, with recommendations and options from their perspectives. The focal actors such as NCCM and NCCPIM are urged to provide integrated databases collecting the available information, statistics, research, and insights about the phenomenon and making it available to all researchers, think tanks, and decision-makers in order to enhance the effectiveness of the intervention activities.

The **private sector is a key stakeholder**, from the angle of the funding of educational projects and supporting of the labor market by establishing new business opportunities. There is a need for a unit for facilitating corporate social responsibility and managing the relationship between the private sectors' efforts and the economic policy direction in the target governorates. Establishing this unit in the administrative structure of the governorate under the supervision of the governor will give it the power to manage the available resources and the chance to reach the maximum benefit. These units should be mandated to help the companies who are willing to help the community find the right way and the right beneficiaries for their projects and programs. Needs assessment, coordination, advocating and matching are the basic mandates of this unit.

“Together we can work on combating the problem of unaccompanied migrant children.”

The Public Policy HUB Where Rigour Meets Creativity

The Public Policy HUB is an initiative that was developed at the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy (GAPP) in October 2017. It was designed to fill in the policy research gap. It provides the mechanism by which the good ideas, plausible answers, and meaningful solutions to Egypt's chronic and acute policy dilemmas can be nurtured, discussed, debated, refined, tested and presented to policymakers in a format that is systematic, highly-visible and most likely to have a lasting impact.

The Public Policy HUB provides a processing unit where policy teams are formed on a regular basis, combining experienced policy scholars/mentors with young creative policy analysts, provide them with the needed resources, training, exposure, space, tools, networks, knowledge and contacts, to enable them to come up with sound, rigorous and yet creative policy solutions that have a greater potential to be effectively advocated and communicated to the relevant policy makers and to the general public.

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