

# THE MIGRATION ROUTE AND LIVING CONDITIONS OF UNACCOMPANIED EGYPTIAN CHILDREN IN ITALY: **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A SAFE MIGRATION**

RESEARCH REPORT ACTION OF THE EUROPEAN PROJECT  
“PROVIDING ALTERNATIVES TO IRREGULAR MIGRATION FOR UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN IN EGYPT”



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## FOREWORD: THE EUROPEAN PROJECT PROVIDING ALTERNATIVES TO IRREGULAR MIGRATION FOR UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN IN EGYPT

**T**he 36-months Project *Providing Alternatives to Irregular Migration for Unaccompanied Children in Egypt*, is funded by the European Commission DG Development and EuropeAid Co-operation as part of the Thematic Cooperation Programme with third world countries in the areas of migration and asylum. It is coordinated by Save the Children UK and conducted in Egypt and Italy, respectively, in partnership with YAPD (Youth for Population and Development) and Save the Children Italy.

The Project aims at reducing the number of unaccompanied minors from Egypt, children who are at risk of harm and exploitation due to the fact their irregular migration to Italy.

The specific objective of this Project is to improve policies and practice at local and national levels that enable communities to protect children at risk of irregular migration and provide viable alternatives to irregular migration.

The Project will target 52,200 minors at particular risk of irregular migration and their families.

A wider group of 350,000 minors will be the final beneficiaries of the advocacy activities of the Project.

A core group of 420 peer leaders will be effective change agents.

As part of the wider support to the Project, members of Egyptian Child Protection Committees at district and Governorate level, local authorities and Civil Society Organisations will also directly benefit: they will have greater capacity to support children at risk of irregular migration.

Furthermore, links among key stakeholders will be created to support sharing and adoption of best practice for prevention of irregular migration of children at local, national, and international level.

The phasing of activities in the Project is: a start-up phase of research and awareness raising materials development in Italy, and district level inception activities in Egypt in order to create a supportive environment for further initiatives to raise awareness and to build a peer leaders network; a first-phase, in which will be involved 21,600 minors, 14 to 18 years old (at central and district level in Egypt); a second-phase in which will be involved 28,800 minors, 240 peer leaders, 48 members of Egyptian Child Protection Committees at central level and 1,400 volunteers.

## INTRODUCTION: THE RESEARCH REPORT

**T**he Research Report “Migration route and living conditions of unaccompanied Egyptian children in Italy” was created and developed as action of the Project *Providing Alternatives to Irregular Migration for Unaccompanied Children in Egypt*. The information herein has been compiled by Save the Children thanks to Save the Children’s project activities with and for migrant children on the field in Italy. Save the Children conducted a desk review and a participatory research with the aim of ensuring that Egyptian children and their families, in their Country of origin, are adequately informed about the risks and realities that unaccompanied Egyptian children face while migrating to and living in Italy, and that the decision of their migration route is therefore the result of a conscious decision.

Herein, this document provides an initial analysis of the context of the presence of Egyptians in Italy, with specific attention paid to data regarding arrivals and the presence of unaccompanied Egyptian children (chap. I). The emerging scenario constitutes the framework of reference for the participatory research project (chap. II) which was conducted in Milan, Turin, Rome, and Sicily between May and September 2011. This document describes the methodology used to carry out the research (selection of peer researchers and training) and illustrated what has emerged from the research: the places of origin of the unaccompanied Egyptian minors in Italy, motivations and decisions to leave their country, organization and dynamics of the journey, arrival by sea and reception, the risk of labour exploitation and prospects for the future, with specific reference to becoming of legal age.

In the latter part of the Report (chap. III), the final products of the research will be illustrated, the awareness raising materials that will be broadcasted in Egypt: the video “*The Italianaire*”, the key messages and recommendations for safe migration.

Finally, the conclusions offer a prospective continuation of the Project activities in Egypt from the results achieved in Italy.

The following are annexed to this document: the “guidelines” developed and shared by peer researchers as part of the organization of the participatory research, containing useful information and reminders to assist them at the time of the interview, also the interview outline itself.

## I. THE PRESENCE OF EGYPTIAN CHILDREN IN ITALY



**E**gyptian migration to Italy has its origins in the mid 80's. The majority of Egyptians who arrived during that period transferred all of their belongings, family and economic means to Italy. Since then, migration from Egypt to Italy has been steady but not massive, until the second half of the 90's. At that time, emigration intensified, partly as a result of agricultural reforms made by the Egyptian Government, with people travelling mainly to North Italy, and especially to Milan, where for many years there already has been a well-integrated Egyptian community (the Coptic community is especially large), ready to welcome friends and relatives from the Country of origin.

Based on the data of the foreign resident population in Italy<sup>2</sup>, **Egyptians number 42,280 and represent the largest foreign resident population (11.1% of total foreign residents).**

Almost all of the Egyptian community residing **in the city of Milan and its hinterland**, seems to be, apparently, well integrated, although 'less visible' and concentrated, in a fragmented manner with respect to the territory where in some areas of the city, known as transit zones from home to work<sup>3</sup> or as places to spend free time<sup>4</sup>. Other important areas of aggregation are places of worship, such as the mosque and the Coptic Church.

Between May 2008 and February 2009, 1,994 unaccompanied minors arrived by sea to Lampedusa, 25% of whom were Egyptian. Of the 1,860 unaccompanied minors that were transferred from Lampedusa to residential care facilities in the Region of Sicily, 1,119 left. Comparing the ratios between those who left and nationalities, it was found that Egyptian minors left more often: the almost 500 that were placed, over 400 moved to reach family or friends in other parts of Italy, or headed to large urban areas where there are many foreign communities and employment opportunities are greater.

The trend of migration from Egypt to Italy by sea fell between 2009 and 2010 and resumed in 2011, partly due to political and economic contingencies that affected the Arab world and Egypt. The main landing sites are in Sicily (in particular, Agrigento and south-eastern Sicily), in Calabria and Apulia.

In particular, of the **455 unaccompanied Egyptian minors who arrived by sea in 2011 (January to October), being equal to 11.75%, 75% of the total (3,871), all were male and most between the ages of 15-17 years old.** The number of Egyptian adults arriving was 1,077, of which only 2 were women.

<sup>1</sup> Main sources consulted: "Gli Egiziani in Italia Tre casi studio: Roma, Milano, Emilia Romagna di Lorenzo Coslovi, Petra Mezzetti, Laura Pozzoli" for Progetto IMIS Cooperazione italiana-OIM-Ministry of Manpower (Egypt)- February 2005; Working Paper n. 122 2010 "Profilo della immigrazione egiziana in Italia" di Antonio Cortese Collana of the Economics Department of Università Roma Tre. Research carried out under the Progetto IMIS plus financed by Cooperazione Italiana and carried out on request from OIM (Organizzazione Internazionale per le Migrazioni) in Egypt; Caritas/Migrantes, Dossier Statistico Immigrazione, 2010 "L'immigrazione egiziana in Italia, storie di piccole e grandi imprese" pagg. 54 ss.

<sup>2</sup> ISTAT, 22 September 2011 (data updated to 01.01.2011).

<sup>3</sup> Viale Monza-Padova, Maciachini-Affori-Dergano, San Siro and the Calvairate-Molise area (at the fruit-vegetable market in Via Lombroso), P.le Lotto, P.le Loreto, P.le Corvetto, Quartiere Gratosoglio.

<sup>4</sup> Parco Sempione, Castello Sforzesco, the Sunday market in San Donato.

On 23 October 2011 **875 unaccompanied Egyptian minors had been reported to the Committee for Foreign Minors<sup>5</sup>**, or 12.3 % of the total number (7097) of unaccompanied minors present in Italy, and were found mostly in Sicily (281), Lombardy (199) and Lazio (159).

**The unaccompanied minors placed in Milan through City of Milan-Emergency Intervention of Minors Unit from the 1st of January to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2011 have been 500, of which 87 were Egyptians.** It is expected that by the end of 2011 the total will count 700. The total number of unaccompanied Egyptian minors that result as covered by the City of Milan were 138. Unlike in Sicily, the number of minors who moved away from the residential care facilities for children in Milan was quite low: only 11 left the residential care facilities for children in Milan where they were placed.

At the same time, an important presence has been recognized, including with the growth of unaccompanied Egyptian minors that have not been transited through the community but subsequently have been entrusted to friends/acquaintances.

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<sup>5</sup> The *Foreign Minors Committee (Comitato Minori Stranieri)* is an inter-ministerial organ created in 1999 based in the Ministry of Labour and Social Politics. It has the responsibility of updating data concerning un-accompanied minors in Italy, monitoring their method of living, cooperating and working with the affected administrations. This organ can promote the identification of family members of unaccompanied minors, also in their Countries of origin or in third countries, and arrange (under certain conditions) the return of unaccompanied minors to their countries of origin. According to a recent change in the law (art. 5 Law 129/2011), the organ must issue an opinion concerning the conversion of a permit to stay (permesso di soggiorno) of unaccompanied minors who have turned 18 years old and have not started a 2-year social insertion program and have been in Italy less than three years.



**Map of Italy.** The main Regions of arrival of unaccompanied Egyptian children are marked in red. The 3 main cities unaccompanied Egyptian minors want to reach are coloured green.



## 2. ROLE OF SAVE THE CHILDREN



**B**ased on its experience regarding the protection and support of unaccompanied children, Save the Children has found that there is a high risk of violation of children's rights due to the condition of irregularity of the journey through Egypt and from Egypt to Italy, as well as after the arrival in Italy.

It is from these considerations that the Project *Providing Alternatives to Irregular Migration for Unaccompanied Children in Egypt* was created and developed. The Project is funded by the European Commission under the "Thematic programme of cooperation with third countries in the areas of migration and asylum", coordinated by Save the Children UK and carried out in Egypt and Italy, respectively, in partnership with YAPD (Youth and Population for Development) and Save the Children Italy.

The Project aims to reduce the number of unaccompanied Egyptian minors who are at risk of exploitation because they are involved migrate under conditions of irregularities and to improve policies, both locally and nationally, and to ensure that the residential care facilities for children who protect minors at risk of irregular migration promote favourable alternatives for them. In order to ensure that the minors and their families are adequately informed of the risks and realities that unaccompanied Egyptian minors face during their experience of migration and are supported in making decisions for their best interests. The Project includes a series of actions, including participatory research in the Italian territory.

## 2.1 ORGANIZATION OF THE PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

Save the Children supported the development of the organization of the participatory research for the purpose of investigating the migration route and the living conditions in Italy of Egyptian unaccompanied migrant children in three Italian cities (Milan, Rome, Turin) and to produce awareness raising materials to inform and raise awareness among minors from three Egyptian territories that have a high level of emigration of minors from Egypt (Alexandria, Beheira, and Gharbeya), coming from the experience of the minors themselves.

### THE PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

The participatory research is one practice that is centred around the involvement in all phases of the project design and implementation of the participatory research, individuals who are personally experiencing the conditions and backgrounds that are to be investigated. In this sense, the peer to peer modality allows the minors themselves to define their conditions and develop strategies to help themselves cope with their situations. They become protagonists of the research instead of the ones being studied.

There are two sides shared in connection with the participatory research.

On the one hand, there is the cognitive objective; in this case it's related to the reconstruction of the experience of the unaccompanied minor in migration from Egypt to Italy, with particular attention focused on the major risks and strategies they must face.

On the other hand, empowerment is a goal for the peer researchers and the others involved directly in the project, defined as obtaining a higher level of awareness of their own experience as well as their ability to consciously decide their own path for growth and life.

For more information: Save the Children, *Tu partecipi, io partecipo - un'analisi dei metodi di lavoro e delle buone pratiche di partecipazione di bambini e adolescenti realizzate da Save the Children Italia*, 2010.

In the end, five Egyptian youths who reside in Italy were chosen, and trained to participate in the participatory peer researchers. These young people received help in planning and carrying out the research<sup>6</sup> and in producing awareness raising materials<sup>7</sup>.

### 2.1.1 SELECTION OF THE PEER RESEARCHERS

In concrete terms, it was needed to build a team of researchers-that means to involve a group of children and young Egyptians who have had experiences similar to those at the heart of the action-research project.

The opportunity to participate in the selection as the final five candidates for the participatory research path was presented in a number of ways: formal and informal networks built in by other activities of the Project and by other members of Save the Children in Milan; contacts with social workers from the residential care facilities for children in Milan that also care for Egyptian minors; contact with Social Workers of Day Centres and other services that intercept minors and young Egyptians.

The current networks in the area had nominated a group of 15 girls and boys who met the following criteria: aged between 14 and 19 years old, interested in research, had time available, skills related to the experience of migration from Egypt to Italy (experienced firsthand or close acquaintances); basic language skills.

The selection was done according to the following criteria: evaluation and motivation of the candidate, availability and compatibility with other commitments like school, work etc.: skills and sensitivity, language skills (with particular attention to Italian and Arabic). Further criteria relative to the group way: to achieve a good level of heterogeneity within a group from the type of migration experience, a specific background, network relationships, current living situations, school, work etc.

At the end of the preliminary phase there were four boys selected and one girl, between the ages of 15 and 19, each with different migration experiences, different family situations, housing and employment.

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<sup>6</sup> See Chap. III.

<sup>7</sup> See Chap. IV.

### PEER RESEARCHERS

Mina B.: 19 years old. He has been living in Milan for 5 years, and is from Asyut. He arrived in Italy to join his family with whom he currently lives, in the area of Giambellino (MI). He wants to be an electrician and is attending school. He has many friends in Milan and hangs out often at the Day Centre that is located in the neighbourhood where he lives, which is also involved in supporting activities for children. He would like to find a good job and continue living in Italy.

Mina Y.: 17 years old (at the start of the research). He arrived in Italy 1.5 years ago from Asyut to join his dad who works at a restaurant in Milan. He lives with his father and brother. He is attending the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of high school, and would like to continue studying even if he is not sure what he wants to do. In the summer he occasionally works at a pizza place with his brother who makes pizza. He is waiting for his mother and sister to come live in Milan, probably in a year's time.

Ilaria: 17 years old. She was born in Milan and her parents are from Alexandria, Egypt. She attends an Artistic High School and loves art and design. She is very creative, competitive, and determined. She goes to Egypt on holiday but does not always want to go. She prefers to spend her holidays with her friends. She has many interests and many friends of all nationalities. She lives in Milan, in Via Padova which is an area where multiculturalism is the norm. She does not know what she wants to do when she is an adult but has lots of ideas.

Moustafa: 16 years old. He is from El Sharkia. He lives with his father and older brother in Milan. His mother is still in Egypt. He faced a long and dangerous journey to arrive in Europe then Italy, but now he is happy to be here. He dreams about playing football and becoming a professional footballer. Perhaps in the near future he will have this great opportunity.

Mohamed: 16 years old. He lived with his family in Egypt and dreamt of being a construction worker with his father. He arrived in Italy 1.5 years ago. He is attending an apprenticeship programme with help from the residential care facilities for children where he lives and hopes to become a construction worker in Italy. Sometimes he dreams about returning to Egypt.

### 2.1.2 TRAINING

Training for participatory research project, as well as the research itself, was conducted through using appropriate methods for the age and characteristics of the teenagers that were selected. These workshops promoted understanding and reflection on their part on the issues being researched and the emersion of their contribution. The course took the teenagers through some learning techniques, teamwork and producing materials.

**Team-building:** The first phase of the training was devoted to the forming of the group. Different types of games and activities (*icebreakers, energizers, etc.*) allowed researchers and trainees to work on three main aspects of team building: mutual understanding between young people and Save the Children staff, sharing past experiences, the significant transitions of one's own life, projects and dreams, shared definitions of useful guidelines and rules for harmonious development of group dynamics and focusing on the best ways of working together; presentation and discussion of tools to help keep track of their work, starting from their individual journals. The team was not set up in a specified time span, but instead was worked on throughout the project by Save the Children staff giving it special attention and preparing formal and informal moments (like dinners, trips or breaks to just chat) that had allowed the participants to see themselves as a group.

**Understanding migration from Egypt to Italy:** The second phase of the training dealt with the sharing of participants' interpretations of the processes and specific issues central to the action research, or migration

of children (especially unaccompanied children) from Egypt to Italy. The participatory approach resulted in constant dialogue regarding the knowledge and experiences brought by the Save the Children staff (sharing of qualitative and quantitative data on the phenomena in question, the reconstruction of a historical migration from Egypt to Italy, working from topographic maps, the visualization of photojournalism, previous stories from professional experience) and those brought by the peer researchers (personal experiences, reported stories, their first memories of the opportunity, challenges and risks of the migration experience) to help them to focus on themes of travel and migration. The results of this phase displayed the main passages of an ideal-typical logical and chronological view that gave shape to a journey and migration, the possible players involved, the possible motivations at stake, unforeseen events and the transformation of trajectories of individual lives.

**Stories collected:** The third phase of the training was job-related skills and the required sensitivity needed to collect, understand and share stories told by others. Through reasoning about real and invented stories the group has focused on different dimensions (the analysis of the various logical and chronological steps of the stories collected, understanding the underlying motivations of the different players involved and their changes over time, focusing on relevant details and key players, work on the symbolic reasons connected to the journey) and implemented with the different levels of analysis through maps and storyboards. The skills acquired were enhanced both in the meetings with their peer researchers who were to be interviewed, and also during moments when the group was dedicated to the analysis of the materials' collected.

**Communication, listening, interviewing:** Training sessions were dedicated to specific examination of some central aspects of how to understand qualitative social research. First, the team worked on interpersonal communication and concentrating done through activities and games of various kinds, the use of verbal and nonverbal language, active listening, communication effectiveness and other issues related to the challenges and difficulties of how to interact actively, respectfully, and non-judgmentally in a research context. Secondly, the team focused on the development of an interview outline that would be taken into account for the interview and how the team needed to collect information on what the research is about but also learning styles and approaches related to communication. Together with the peer researchers, an interview outline with "guidelines" was produced, containing useful information and reminders to the peer researchers at the time of the interview<sup>8</sup>. During analysis of the materials collected, these two documents were used as a reflection outline for work-method development and the sensitivity needed to work as a researcher.

**Audiovisual Production:** Intensive training sessions were designed in the related skills for the use of audiovisual techniques, focusing on both the theoretical and the practical aspects (starting from experiments in independently creating short video clips)<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Annexed to this Report.

<sup>9</sup> With contribution from Fish Eye Digital Video Creation [www.fisheyeweb.it](http://www.fisheyeweb.it)

### 2.1.3 INVESTIGATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

Investigations in the field represented the most significant moments during the Project, from the point of view of the information collected. The peer researchers conducted investigations independently, or accompanied by Save the Children project staff. Some took place in Milan, the base city for the participatory research, while others were concentrated in three excursions to Turin, Rome, and Sicily. These discoveries in the field were of great importance both for experiential reasons (travel and visiting another area as a transformative experience for those involved, as an opportunity to strengthen bonds in the group, and as an opportunity to combine work with recreational experience), for cognitive reasons (to find out different stories and contexts that were new to the extent that they were not linked to the reference points related to the specific backgrounds of origin and of the life of the young researchers involved) and for the methodology (to lose the usual framework of daily life and question one's own point of view, to put aside prejudice, to look beyond oneself and find oneself constructively challenged and eager to learn).

During the research, the peer researchers interviewed 28 Egyptian minors in various cities in Italy: Milan, Turin, and Rome and in some parts of Sicily, in the province of Catania (Caltagirone, Pachino and Rosolini). The choice of these cities for the survey was linked to the presence of Egyptian minors met there<sup>10</sup>.

The children interviewed originated from different regions of Egypt, and with different migrations route (there were kids that arrived in Italy illegally by sea or by air, others through family reunification with parents or relatives already living in Italy) there were also different levels of education and living standards amongst them: however, they were mostly unaccompanied minors; there were minors who belonged to peer researchers' network, others knew Save the Children staff from Save the Children and attended a Day Centre for minors<sup>11</sup>. Unaccompanied Egyptian minors met in Sicily had been there for less than a month and were placed in residential care facilities for children.

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<sup>10</sup> See Chap. I.

<sup>11</sup> Rome, CivicoZero; Turin, Oratorio San Luigi.

### 3. THE MIGRATION ROUTE AND LIVING CONDITIONS OF UNACCOMPANIED EGYPTIAN MINORS IN ITALY





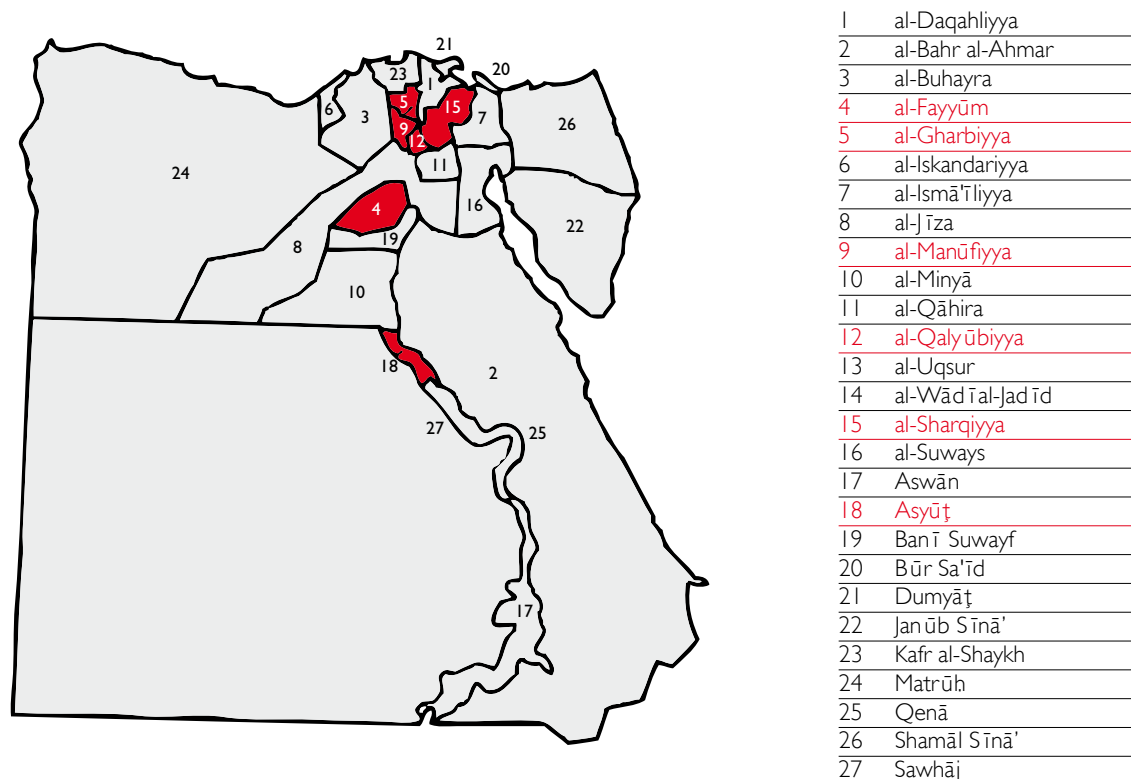
**W**ith no intention of minimizing the complexity of the stories that were collected during the interviews conducted by peer researchers, below is an outline of the information acquired about the migration route and the living conditions of migrant children from Egypt in Italy, further Save the Children thank to projects activities with and for migrant confirmed and added to thanks to Save the Children's project activities with and for migrant children on the field in Italy.

### 3.1 PLACES OF ORIGIN

Unaccompanied Egyptian children that are present in Italy predominantly come from rural areas that are located along the Delta Nile, and in particular from Kalioubia (Kanatir), Al Fayum (Tatun), Al Gharbia, Shibin el Kom (Monufeia), El Sharkeia, Asyut<sup>12</sup>.

The boys predominantly come from poor backgrounds and often have a low level of education.

**Chart:** The Territories of Egypt. In red are the main Governorship provinces from which unaccompanied Egyptians minors come to Italy.



<sup>12</sup> Interviews conducted by Save the Children staff during the Praesidium Project showed that Alessandria and Cairo are also cities of origin of unaccompanied minors arriving in Italy from the sea.

## 3.2 THE JOURNEY

### 3.2.1 REASONS AND THE DECISION TO LEAVE

The increasing number of Egyptian children pushed to face the long journey to Italy is mainly economically motivated: the crises and political reforms implemented in the recent years, which had affected mostly the rural areas of Egypt, leading to extreme poverty, encouraged the search for a better life abroad in order to help support their families.

The choice to leave is never for oneself, it does not stem from the simple observation of what one has or what one is, but it is created from a comparison between what one has and what others have. The choice to leave must be looked at in the context. Behind it is the setting and network of relationships transmit information and images of how things could be, for which purpose and goals they are deemed socially desirable, and the standard of living considered acceptable. In particular, it is the vision of economic success achieved by their fellow countrymen that have been already living in Italy for some time, such as home improvements, buying a new home for families that remained in Egypt or other tangible assets, such as a car, that provides the main incentive for young Egyptians to leave for Italy. The stories and representations about migration and the destinations, and particularly those told by people who live or lived Italy, have a significant impact on generating the incentive to begin a journey.

The minors know their peer researchers, friends and schoolmates or co-workers who have already left. The vision of *fashkara*, i.e. those who live in Italy, is created when they return on holiday in Egypt flaunting their financial success (but failing to tell the difficulties they encountered). It creates a sort of “envy” in those who remained in Egypt. In fact, these minors often perform menial jobs in Italy and are far from having achieved success, but that is not publicly admitted. Thus, the perception of those who live in Egypt compared to the life in Italy continues to be distorted.

The decision to leave for Italy is generally agreed upon by the young Egyptian with his family. He can migrate regularly, reconnect with a relative already in Italy, or he can choose, or be forced to choose, the road of irregular migration. In the majority of the cases, the family agrees to deal with the expenses necessary for the organization of the journey to Italy.

However, even if the family does not agree with the decision of the child to leave for Italy this is not an obstacle: in these cases, the boys tend to turn to friends or acquaintances who have had experience in migration and help them create their first contact with a *b'saffar* (the broker), who is usually found in larger towns of the regions of departure.

### 3.2.2 TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

The first step in migrating is to contact the *b'saffar* (the broker) through relatives, friends or acquaintances who already know him. The facilitation and mediation methods that the network of smugglers uses take different forms from time to time and changes in various stages of preparation and implementation of

the journey. In some cases they simply ask for favours and to pay service providers, others blindly trust on informal or even illegal agency that takes care of all of the steps from their town in Egypt to the Italian coast. Apparently it is quite clear that any negative opinion about the network of the brokers/mediators is not linked to the conditions of the illegality in which they operate, which they are generally aware of. The *b'saffar* (who organizes the journey, the top of the organization) and his *mandoub* (spokesperson/mediator) are the only or best possible alternative, and they rarely are seen as antagonists or obstacles to the journey. Negative opinions emerge rather when the broker does not comply with what was agreed upon, such as when travelling conditions were different than predicted, when a different amount is asked for, or they arrive at a location other than that was predetermined.

The mediator of the journey (el b'saffar) took a lot of my money....

M. Kalyoubia-Turin, 17 years old

The minors that decide to leave often know how the scheme works, though not completely trusting the brokers/mediators, they know they do not have an alternative.

I trusted the travel mediator (el b'saffar) and he robbed me...

M.K. Gharbia-Rome, 16 years old

The initial contact with the broker/mediator (who is part of a small organization of 5-6 persons) takes place in an area near the place of residence of the adolescents and often in the presence of the person who created the initial contact. They provide information on the journey, the travel time, documents, and the rules for living in Italy (often false or incomplete).

The travel mediator (el b'saffar) had spoken very well when he was at my house,  
but as soon as we started the journey he cheated me.

K. Kalyoubia-Turin, 17 years old

The broker must also communicate the price to pay for the voyage ranging from 4,000.00 to 10,000.00 Euro depending on the place of departure, arrival and the historical and political context at that time.

In order to provide for the payment sometimes the families have to sign a contract with the broker for the sale of goods or a promissory note, or even mortgage their homes to obtain loans.

Thus, if the children's parents do not respect the contract or honour the promissory note the broker can file an appeal, and the court may proceed to take their assets (e.g. arranging the foreclosure of the home) or, if they have no property, they may be imprisoned for defaulting on payment.

What worries most the child and the family most is the shame of not being able to pay the debt, rather than the consequences of the risks of fines and imprisonment.

There are families that are forced to borrow money from friends or relatives to pay the broker, in these cases, the family continues to still be liable (with risks described in the event of default), even though there are various creditors.

The broker, depending on the route that will be chosen for the journey, either give directions to the children

as to which Egyptian city they must travel to independently within an agreed amount of time or arrange their desert crossing in the direction of the Libyan border.

Usually the young people are given contacts who can assist them in the early stages of the journey.

The number of Egyptian unaccompanied migrant children who leave for Europe from Libya has decreased since March 2007, when the land border between Libya and Egypt was closed: to obtain an entry visa into Libya from Egypt one must have a contract for work and for this reason the Egyptian migrants that arrive in Italy from Libya have already been there for work reasons. In the event of crossing the Libyan border, if the minors are able to pay they are brought to a hotel for a few days before departure by boat to Italy.

Otherwise, they are brought to a house with other people in it, where they could remain waiting for up to two months pending departure.

However, if the departure is directly from the Egyptian coast, the wait is shorter but the procedure is the same.

In both cases, closer to the departure date they are picked up and taken to some warehouses in the country near the coast, where they could stay for up to two weeks waiting for the right moment to set sail.

Usually the transfer from these warehouses to the boat occurs in small groups (10 to 25), with the minors normally needing to get on a small boat which transfers them to the vessel.

When I boarded the small boat to reach the vessel I thought I'd go back. We were on top of each other...we were in danger of sinking in the water.

K. Kalyoubia-Turin, 17 years old

This can be repeated several times if there is not a successful transfer the first time (e.g. in the case of the Egyptian authorities intercepting)<sup>13</sup>.

### 3.2.3 DYNAMICS OF THE JOURNEY

#### *By plane*

There are cases where the minors arrive by plane in Italy and other European Union countries as holders of tourist visas and accompanied by an adult who say to be authorized by the family to accompany the minor.

If they arrive in other European countries crossing through the borders of Italy alone (by train or by car) they try to meet up with relatives and friends in the territory to get help with obtaining documents and to have a place to stay.

This way requires a higher economic means and therefore is less likely to be viable.

Minors who arrive in Italy in this way tend not to consider the journey as a central moment of their experience of migration.

#### *By sea*

The majority of Egyptian minors interviewed had arrived in Italy by sea. The children reported that during the journey by sea, once they reached the vessel that would take them to Italy, minors and adults were placed in the holds, and the smugglers confiscated their mobiles and often their documents too (few were able to conceal them to avoid seizure).

<sup>13</sup> Source Egyptians migrant children's evidence gave to Save the Children staff operating at the Southern border of Italy in the framework of the Praesidium Project.

On the ship we had no value. The smugglers could even throw us in the water.

M. Assiut-Milan, 17 years old

The travel conditions are often very critical and dangerous.

It was many days at sea without being able to urinate and the salt water burned me.

M. Assiut-Milan, 17 years old

The voyage was a traumatic moment in the migration route, with strong impact in ones' own experience: poor conditions, hunger, violence, the memory of fear, the first contact with death.

In the ship they gave us water from the cap of a bottle and expired food and stale bread.

S. Assiout-Milan, 17 years old

Many Egyptian unaccompanied migrant children tell of travelling companions that fell into the sea, the terrible weather conditions, lack of food and water, the difficulty of going to the bathroom, the mistreatment of people by the smugglers, the deep fear of dying<sup>14</sup>.

I saw death more than once during the voyage.

M.S. Fayoum-Milan, 17 years old

Not everyone found the journey so dramatic, but the majority of the young people interviewed about their trip by ship stated clearly that they could not go back to repeat the experience.

The voyage can last from 4 to 8/10 days, depending on the routes. The main migration routes from Egypt to Italy by sea require the departure from an area in the city of Alexandria, or directly from the coast between Lake Burullus and Dumyat or the Port of Burg Mghizil. The departures of migrants from Libya to Egypt have declined, but some minors that arrived in July 2011 reportedly left from the cities of Shallum (on the border with Libya) and Marsa Matuh.

The minors interviewed reported that the smuggling of migrants often occurs with the help of ship owners and captains of vessels used for the voyage. The fishermen who work the vessels, however, revealed at times that they were unaware of the true nature of the voyage, or discovered that they were to transport migrants only when the sea was high and in the direction of Italy. They are not able to retaliate, or they could risk jail time in Egypt, which the owners would denounce them, or risk heavy retaliations by the smugglers. The vessels depart from the coast of Egypt or Libya, carrying only the crew, but once on the high seas they are joined by rubber dinghies full of migrants and the fishermen are ordered to proceed to Italy.

Once we leave the vessel we are born again.

M. Fayoum-Milan, 17 years old

<sup>14</sup> On 23 October 2011, a boat with 120 Egyptian migrants landed in Bari. Fifty-four were unaccompanied minors. During interviews conducted by Save the Children staff who work there for the Praesidium Project, the minors told about a migrant who died at sea due to lack of air and bad travel conditions. They also told of the drowning death of a minor among the 21 Egyptian minors travelling by sea to the coasts in Calabria on that day.

### 3.3 ARRIVAL BY SEA AND RECEPTION IN ITALY

The main landing site are in Sicily (in particular, the area of the Agrigento and South-East Sicily) and in the Calabria and Apulia Regions<sup>15</sup>.

**Where the vessels are not intercepted**, smugglers transport the migrants to isolated farmhouses, where they stay for a few days waiting to be accompanied to the nearest railway stations<sup>16</sup>.

The Egyptian unaccompanied migrant children are almost all adolescents (males between 15 and 17 years, but also younger ones) unaccompanied and therefore tend to either rely on adults they have met on the voyage, or travel together in groups of 4 or 5 minors to the place of destination.

When they arrive at railway stations, if they have some pocket money, they buy train tickets for a destination where relatives or friends await, or, more precisely, where they hope to have relatives and acquaintances waiting for them.

It does sometimes happen that minors get caught in the train stations or on trains by controllers who notify Law Enforcement agencies to assist in further identification and the placement in a residential care facilities for children.

There have been incidents in which groups of adolescents coming directly from Egypt to Sicily were kidnapped by people who extorted additional money from their families before allowing them to travel to family members or friends in the North of Italy. They were held or taken out of residential care facilities for children (placed there as a result of identification) and abducted by people apparently not connected to the circuit of the smugglers.

**However, if the vessel is intercepted**, Law Enforcement officers officially register the migrants (this is known as the identification phase). At that time, the migrant is fingerprinted and the date of arrival is registered.

If the migrant declares to be a minor, Law Enforcement registers the person as such or, if they have doubts about the declaration of being under age, they conduct further assessment.

Recognition as a child is the prerequisite for a migrant to benefit from protection provided by the Italian law for minors, being first and foremost the right not to be expelled<sup>17</sup>.

**Age assessment** should be undertaken only in the case of reasonable doubt and the use of medical tests (e.g. anthropometric examination of the wrist or x-ray) should only be done when it is otherwise impossible to determine the age of the migrants (this type of medical examination has a margin of error of up to 2 years). For this reason, in case there is doubt about the age declared, the Law Enforcement should ask if the migrant has proof of identity with him/her or if there is a possibility to have it sent, and, if so, they should grant the migrant time to receive the documentation, before proceeding in a way that may violate his/her rights (such as push-back or repatriation).

<sup>15</sup> See Chap. I.

<sup>16</sup> For example, recently (in October 2011) Save the Children staff in Apulia working on the Praesidium Project learned, from interviews with unaccompanied Egyptian minors who were not intercepted at arrival, of the arrival migrants by sea in the Foggia area. The youths said that they stayed for a few days in an isolated house in the middle of the fields and many of them left the house in the days after landing to go towards central and northern Italy.

<sup>17</sup> Art. 19 T.U. Immigration (Law Decree 286/1998).

Otherwise, it could happen that the wrist x-ray will be systematically arranged, even if the migrant is obviously a minor, and that a copy of proof of identity without a photograph is considered invalid. Furthermore, cases of suspected legal age and cases of alleged minors are not always given the same level of attention, therefore the procedure is to ascertain the age of migrants who say they are minors, not vice versa. Considering that between Italy and Egypt there is an agreement for a quick repatriation<sup>18</sup>, the risk that unaccompanied Egyptian minors are misjudged and then returned as adults is very high, even though, although not in possession of proof of identity, they are often able to provide copies on request by fax from family in Egypt.

To avoid repatriation, there have been Egyptian youths who claimed to be Palestinians, but were later found by Law Enforcement officials to be Egyptians. However, this phenomenon seems to be diminishing because of the potentially serious consequences that could result from false depositions provided to Authorities, including criminal complaint.

### 3.4 THE RISK OF EXPLOITATION

The Egyptian unaccompanied migrant children that have just arrived in Italy are in a state of great vulnerability: they do not know how the law provides for their protection and the only information available to them is provided by their fellow countrymen. Based on the evidence collected by Save the Children staff and the peer researchers, there are adults who ask for money from the children to accompany them to social services, the police or in court, or to get an appointed guardian. In cases like these, especially in the case of strangers who let themselves act as guardians instead of other fellow countrymen that would qualify for the guardianship of the minor, it is believed that there is a real risk of exploitation of minors and their vulnerable status.

Another element that it has to be consider is the Egyptian unaccompanied migrant children are at particular risk of exploitation due to the debt that the family received have incurred for them to arrive illegally in Italy. To repay the debt is the main goal of the Egyptian unaccompanied migrant children after arriving in Italy then to work, regardless of the conditions offered for work, it is considered the primary means to achieve paying off the debt.

The involvement of Egyptian minors in illicit activities is indeed very low: from 2005 to 2009 there were never more than 25 per year unaccompanied Egyptian minors that were considered to be offenders and since 2007 the most common offense , was making false statements (22 complaints in 2008, 17 in 2009).

When assessing job opportunities and working conditions, they are very much influenced by the ultimate goal of making money, so much so that they have very high thresholds of tolerance. This unfortunately makes the problem of **labour exploitation** unnoticeable to the children. For them, accepting difficult working conditions (risking their lives or their health for little compensation, which happens particularly in the construction sector) is not more shameful than not helping the family to repay the debt that allowed them to leave.

<sup>18</sup> Re-admission agreement of 9 January 2007.

Even the unaccompanied Egyptians minors who have no contacts in Italy and decided to stay in residential care facilities for children may be subjected to do some work activities, which alone could be labour exploitation: consider, for example, the agricultural work that immigrants undertake in the Southern Regions of Italy (which is also where migrants arrive). The risk increases when the minor is not paid pocket money by the residential care facilities for children.

However, it is mainly those who do not live in residential care facilities for children who devote their lives exclusively to work.

Only thing you earn in Italy is money...but you lose your youth.

R.S Assiut-Milan, 17 years old

These boys rarely interact with people who are not their fellow countrymen and family, and tend to view their guardians, not as exploiters, but as real benefactors, even when those same guardians employ them in restaurants, bars and pizzerias. They do not consider it exploitation either working in the fruit and vegetable markets for many hours a day only compensated with ridiculously low salaries (up to 15 Euros per day). For this reason it is not easy to intercept these children in outreach activities or to put them in contact with social services, although recently there seems to have been a turnaround due to the increased number of arrivals this last year and the impossibility of relatives/friends to take care of the minors. In these cases, the minors are directed to residential care facilities for children directly by their contacts in Italy so that the structure can help them in obtaining documents. Lastly, from the information gained during the research, it appears that there has been an increase in attendance by unaccompanied Egyptian minors to Day Centres. This has resulted in increased youth aggregation allowing them to make acquaintances with other minors who have already been in Italy for a long time, which helps the recently arrived minors to understand the new situation through increased social interaction.

#### EGYPTIAN UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN IN MILAN

Interviews conducted with minors by Save the Children staff working in the Southern border of Italy in the framework of the Project Praesidium revealed that unaccompanied Egyptian minors that arrived by sea were heading directly for Northern Italy, mainly to Milan, the city where the Egyptian community has a good level of integration into society - also because the Egyptian community has been present for many years thanks to strong local connections.

The majority of unaccompanied Egyptian minors who arrive in Milan ask to be placed under the guardianship of relatives and/or acquaintances, even though there is an increasing demand to be placed in residential care facilities for children when it is impossible for those adults to care for them, often it is because the minors do not have real contacts to be considered points of reference.

Based on the evidence that was collected by Save the Children staff, and peer researchers in Milan, unaccompanied Egyptian minors who do not live in residential care facilities for children, usually share a flat or a room with other countrymen. When it is not their guardian (but also sometimes in these cases), but with other fellow countrymen, the minors are forced to contribute to the costs of room and board.

From the point of view from the guardians, they think they have done a huge favour for the family of origin and the boy who asked for guardianship, therefore, they do not feel obligated to accommodate them or to provide for their well-being, or perhaps they do not have the resources, and are living in small flats with their own families. If they guarantee the well being of the minor they make an agreement that once he becomes of age that he must pay back the guardian.

Egyptian minors who do not have family ties or other contacts in Milan or other cities and who do not live in a residential care facilities for children are usually found living in abandoned houses, factories, train carriages or public dormitories.



### 3.5 EXPECTATIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE: BECOMING OF LEGAL AGE

The analysis of the testimonies gathered during the participatory research showed the boys' expectations about their future in Italy when they become of legal age<sup>19</sup>.

Amongst the interviewees there were Egyptian children already in an integration programme that, if properly followed, would enable them to obtain, when they become of legal age, a resident permit that could be converted for work or study purposes; if the boy was already in a family setting (e.g. due to family reunification or residence permits for family reasons) they would be allowed to live with them in Italy and to be considered a regular resident alongside their families after the age of 18.

However, there were interviewees that are destined to a life without documents in Italy.

There are those who have never been in contact with the Italian institutions and that, consequently, were never able to obtain a residence permit while under-age. Then there are others who arrived in Italy when they were close to turning 18 and were able to obtain the residence permit for minors, but at the time of asking for the conversion they could not get it for various reasons (e.g. failure to initiate the bureaucratic protection procedure, not meeting the requirements of the Italian law, etc).

Despite the diversity among the individual stories and future prospects of each, when the boys were asked what they expected from their future, the majority of them confirmed that they intended to stay in Italy anyway, even if they do not obtain documents.

As already mentioned, in fact, for them it was more bearable to be without documents in Italy than to return to Egypt prematurely, which would be considered a real failure on their part.

Of course, the nostalgia of Egypt was strong for each of the boys that were interviewed, as well as the dream of being able to return, but only after obtaining personal and financial success. In fact there were recurring stories about how they desired to help their families in Egypt, but none of the boys interviewed thinks that he would be able to do so by returning to his country.

<sup>19</sup> Based on Egyptian legislative provisions (Egyptian Constitution, art. 44 of the Egyptian Civil Code) legal age – understood as the acquisition of the full capacity to act – is reached when a person turns 21 years of age, while according to Italian law (art. 2 Italian Civil Code) people become of legal age when they turn 18.

#### 4. AWARENESS RAISING MATERIALS - FINAL PRODUCTS OF THE PARTECIPATORY RESEARCH ACTION: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAFE MIGRATION



**T**he last phase of the research has to do with the final stages of the process, but has affected the entire course. It is centred on building information for awareness raising that will be broadcasted in Egypt and require an intensive preliminary job on several fronts: a critical analysis' of the material collected and focus on current scenarios regarding migration of minors including the desirable aspects: reflection on the recipients of the message, their sensitivity about it and their preferences, the context (also cultural in the broadest sense) in which they are immersed, and the detail to defined content and the form of the final message, choosing from possible alternatives of criteria of great relevance, appropriateness and usefulness. The starting point (and to some extent control) in the preparation of these materials and the basic question that has been raised about the ability to provide effective and useful tips to guide the route of other boys, which would stress come criticism yet inform on migration issues . It has been a very complex issue which the Save the Children staff and peer researchers have discussed within their peer group and with the wide circle of actors that had been contacted for the interviews and to give testimonies.

Awareness raising materials, understood as final products of the participatory research project, are a fundamental element for reflecting on the people involved. These materials help summarize what has been done, and look at it through a less involved viewpoint compared with the engagement in a continuous flow of information and experiences. They help identify essential elements starting with the necessary operations of summarizing. Also, they are a natural result of events in the initial planning phases, both from the standpoint of the inspiring principles, and from that of the specific goals of change, and from that of the themes discussed. They were produced in a process that was as engaged as possible, not only in the content design phase, but also in the concrete production phase according to the technical, artistic and communication combinations that were chosen.

Lastly, these final products and their distribution allows those who are involved in the participatory research to move from a private viewpoint (even though it has a wide range) to a public viewpoint (which is related to people that one has never met, unexpected uses, ideas and feedback that cannot be controlled).

During the research, the peer researchers took pictures and produced video and audio tracks<sup>20</sup>. Some of these products were made during the training phase and therefore have the purpose of learning to use the available equipment (video camera JVC Hd, 2 digital cameras, 2 high resolution microphones). A selection made by the youths was included in the main final product: the video "The Italianaire".

#### 4.1 VIDEO "THE ITALIANAIRE"

The main final product of the participatory research project was a video entitled "The Italianaire". Starting with material collected during the training and then during the research, the peer researchers held a group discussion about **what format and content the video should have** to succeed in educating their peer researchers in Egypt about the risks of irregular migration. The peer researchers insisted firmly on the need to use simple language that is popular and of strong impact.

<sup>20</sup> About 150 photos, taken in Milan, Turin, Rome and Sicily; 208 video files (not mounted and of various natures and durations); 28 audio tracks corresponding to 28 interviews.

For the **format**, the peer researchers insisted on the need to make an **animated cartoon**, despite the possible technical difficulties of such a production. They all agreed on the fact that their peer researchers would appreciate this format, also considering the circulation of successful animated cartoons in Egypt. They decided to avoid giving the production too much of a documentary-style slant (considered too boring and not very effective) or a fictional story (the children did not like the idea and the acting part would have been very difficult to do).

For the **content**, all peer researchers agreed on the choice of a **quiz show**<sup>21</sup>. They also took some ideas from suggestions found in video contributions shown during the training phase on theories and techniques of audio-visual communication<sup>22</sup>. In deciding which type of quiz to adopt as a model, they considered which television programs are liked best by Egyptian viewers. They took inspiration from one of these and modified its name, “The Millionaire”. That is how “The Italianaire” was created: in an Egyptian television studio, the quiz show presenter of “The Italianaire” greets viewers and presents the next contestant: *Saber*, an Egyptian boy who is very young and probably very poor, but very nice, intelligent and shrewd. He comes from the country, where he works as a farmer. His dream is to help his family build their future. After a brief introduction that focuses on the image that Italy has in the minds of many young Egyptians, the presenter asks 10 questions about:

1. the reasons why many Egyptians leave their home country to go to Italy
2. the money necessary to make the trip
3. the methods that Egyptians have for arriving in Italy
4. the necessary things that a person must do before leaving for Italy
5. the *b'saffar* (the broker)
6. the dangers of travelling by sea
7. arrival in Italy
8. work in Italy
9. illegal work
10. dreams of Egyptians who emigrated to Italy

The young contestant uses stories heard from friends and relatives who have emigrated from Egypt to Italy (through flashbacks – live contributions) and some help from home to answer all the questions correctly. In conclusion: if one day Saber decides to leave for Italy, he can do it knowing the risks and the alternatives.

The **choice of subjects for the 10 questions** took a few very intense days by the peer researchers. Evaluating the interviews they had done, the peer researchers identified the recurring themes, the more critical points that interviewers had mentioned and the advice that they gave. Each of the peer researchers also brought their own points of view, and shared everything with the group. On the basis of feedback received, they went on to reformulate the individual points of view starting with converging and diverging elements. From here, they negotiated and decided what to use by employing efficiency criteria in consideration of the target group, quality of the final product and feasibility. The 10 questions encompassed all of the themes that the peer researchers thought were important for raising awareness (motivation, the journey, arrival, work, family and fear).

<sup>21</sup> Some peer researchers had initially suggested using “aragoz”, which are traditional Egyptian puppets, to impersonate the characters in the stories.

<sup>22</sup> By Fish Eye Digital Video Creation [www.fisheyeweb.it](http://www.fisheyeweb.it). Among the contributions shown, also “Slumdog Millionaire” by Danny Boyle.

In **choosing the characters**, it is important to know that the peer researchers expressly requested that the presenter look like a famous Egyptian presenter, and that Saber was a typical Egyptian country boy just like most Egyptian unaccompanied migrant children.

By using **flashbacks**, which help the protagonist to give the right answer, viewers hear voices and stories from Egyptian **unaccompanied migrant children interviewed by the** peer researchers. Original audio tracks were used, mounted on images of the kids taken from behind. Some of the kids shown were interviewed by the peer researchers but in two cases, the peer researchers themselves appear. In fact, not all of the minors interviewed wanted to be filmed. The choice of the parts of the interviews took a lot of listening work to choose the right material from all that had been collected. In fact, based on the script, the peer researchers chose the parts of each interview that were best suited to the questions and answers. This part of the work was very hard for the peer researchers, and forced them to make decisions about the selection and summary of difficult material.

One of the peer researchers and the Save the Children cultural mediator are the voices of the protagonists; two other peer researchers dubbed the “viewers from home”.

Lastly, the peer researchers, and the producers of the video, thought that it was useful to introduce a **visual description of the possible answers** which offered ideas for humour to attract the attention of younger viewers, helping the viewer to memorise the information. For this reason, they used **cartoon images**. The work on the images was prepared in a few work sessions with the producers of the video, when they created an actual storyboard to represent the main events in a migration route from Egypt to Italy.

## 4.2 KEY MESSAGES: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAFE MIGRATION

Starting with explicit and implicit indications contained in the interviews collected by peer researchers, they also defined some “recommendations for safe migration”. The kids who were interviewed gave their own suggestions to their hypothetical peer researchers about different aspects of migration, from the motivations to the type of journey, expectations about work and questions centred on family and relationships, legal questions and warning signals to identify illegal work and exploitation.

- Remember: Italy isn’t always as you’ve heard it described.
- Do you have a job in Egypt? Why leave it? Why underestimate the difficulty of finding a job in Italy?
- Do not leave in a boat: it’s dangerous and you have no rights on the boat.
- Don’t trust the *mandoub* and *el b’saffar* or the boat captain!
- If your friends and relatives in Italy cannot help you, always remember that you can stay in a residential care facilities for children.
- It’s important to have documents. Having documents means that your rights are protected also in the workplace.

The children themselves also specified that, in their opinion, it was going to be very difficult to make Egyptian youth listen to them. Everyone does their own thing, they said, and most kids will not even listen to the warnings of an elder brother who went through the difficult journey by sea.

## CONCLUSIONS

**T**he knowledge gained during the research conducted in Italy participated in the European Project *Providing Alternatives to Irregular Migration for Unaccompanied Children in Egypt*, together with information gathered through the desk review and the development of project activities with and for migrant children in the southern border and in northern Italy by Save the Children, provides a valuable framework of the migration route and the living conditions of unaccompanied minors Egyptians in Italy.

In particular, analysis of what motivates children to leave, from the description of the journey and arrival in Italy, it is clear that children are so unaware of the dangers and difficulties they will face facing an irregular migration, the highly oriented towards a single goal: to be able to improve their living conditions and their families.

The video “The Italianaire” and key messages developed by the peer researchers aim to help children acquire the Egyptians and their families a greater awareness of the risks that involves irregular migration, the actual reality as experienced by migrant children in Italy, often characterized by marked profiles of exploitation and to stimulate reflection on the alternative that life could be in Egypt.

These products will be disseminate in Egypt and shared by Save the Children Italy on a website available for all stakeholders and periodically updated following consultations that will take place in Italy once a year to review the migration paths of Egyptian children and improve the information from Italy to Egypt regarding the phenomenon.

In this way, any decision to migrate illegally in Italy will be better weighted and it will be a real conscious choice.

## ANNEXES TO THE PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH: INTERVIEWS OF EGYPTIAN CHILDREN

As part of the training which was created by the children's interview outline and combined with the “guidelines” which contained useful information and reminders for the peer researchers at the time of the interview as is shown below.

### ANNEX 1A: Guidelines for conducting interviews

#### Before the interview:

Confirm the appointment a few hours in advance, arrive on time, check the batteries in the recorder, make sure that you have printed the material you need, turn off your phone (if you put it on silence, do not respond and do not read the messages when they arrive).

#### Starting, Conducting and After the interview:

Relax and try to put people at ease in front of you. Be courteous, friendly and pay special attention to ending the interview in a pleasant way. Before starting and after finishing continue to chat with the person you have interviewed, in this way you avoid giving the impression that you were only interested in their personal history. The interview should be an enjoyable experience for you and the interviewee, not a police interrogation!

Try to find the right balance between joking (relaxed and informal) and being sincere (you are professionals and you need to take the things they say seriously and give them due consideration).

Remember that you are at the interview's disposal, not that he or she is at your disposal and obliged to follow the outlined interview as you wish. Meaning that you should not jump between the questions, but ask questions that are related to the person you are with and their responses. Change the subject when you hear the interviewee has said all that he wants to say. Listen carefully to his/her responses which will help you prepare for the next question. Remember that a bad response is usually the result of a badly put question.

Remember to keep the questions: open-ended (not closed, you do not just want yes/no), simple (short and clear questions) and centred (keep on the topic).

Pay attention to your non-verbal communication: the way you sit, the way you react to the things that the interviewee says, the way you look at him/her while they are talking and following his/her disclosure. A person who feels that he/she has your attention will be more comfortable and willing to give his/her time.

You must know the outline, but do not seem mechanical about it. A good interview is like a pleasant conversation between two people in a calm and serene manner. The outline is your mental map, but always

be ready to sway from the outline to follow the flow of the conversation.

Have patience, patience to listen to the whole answer without interruptions and without speaking while your interviewee is speaking. It sometimes can be difficult, but even if you are bored and tired you must stay concentrated on the task at hand.

Do not judge the answer. Even if you would like to express a positive assessment in the way you think, or even negatively make a judgment. The one that you are interviewing needs to be responsible for what he/she says and think, but more so have the ability and the competence to say what they want and the way they think about it.

### **ANNEX 1B: Interview outline**

Hello,

my name is “.....” and with my colleagues I am collecting stories about young Egyptians who came to Italy in recent years. The aim of our work is to understand the most memorable and difficult parts of their journey, in order to build useful tips to those who want to leave Egypt in the future. We would like to hear your story and opinions. Your name will not be mentioned, but feel free to answer or not answer any questions that we will ask you.

- Tell me when was the first time you thought about leaving for Italy?
- What did you know about Italy?
- Why did you desire to leave?
- Who had you spoken with? How did you come to the final decision?
  - How did you prepare for the journey?
  - Did you contact a bi'saffar? How did you meet him? What did you do together?
  - What did you think about him?
  - Did you know the Italian laws? What documents did you have?
  - How much money did they ask for? Who asked you for money? How did you get the money?
  - Before leaving for Italy did you have to go to another city in Egypt? Can you tell me about the transfer from one city to another in Egypt?
  - Did you pass through other African countries?
  - From where did you leave to arrive in Italy?
  - What was the type of transport?
  - How was the journey?
  - Who were you with, who did you see, what did you do?
  - Was the journey dangerous?



- How was the reception when you arrived in Italy? Where was it? What was there? Who came to get you?
- Have you been in a Centre (*salib*)? How was it?
- Then where did you go?
- How do you like it in Italy?
- What do you do now in Italy?
- Who do you live with?
- What do you do in your free time?
- Who do you hang out with?
- Have you been able to get documents?
- Have you been able to find a job?
- What type of work is it? Have you got a contract? How did you find the job?
- What do you think about working under the table (black labour market) without having documents?
- Are you in contact with your family? How is the relationship? Are you able to help them from here?
- What are your future projects?
- If you could return, would you redo it all again in the same way?

*Think again about your journey.*

- What was the best thing that happened to you?
- What was the worst thing that happened to you?
- Has someone or something taken advantage of you?
- What advice would you give you other young Egyptians that want to leave Egypt in the future?

Thanks a lot, and you have been very kind.

Can we return in the future to ask some questions about your work?

The Research Report “*Migration route and living conditions of unaccompanied Egyptian children in Italy: recommendations for a safe migration*” was created and developed as action of the 36-months Project **Providing Alternatives to Irregular Migration for Unaccompanied Children in Egypt**, funded by the European Commission DG Development and EuropeAid Co-operation as part of the Thematic Cooperation Programme with third world countries in the areas of migration and asylum.

The Project aims at reducing the number of unaccompanied minors from Egypt children who are at risk of harm and exploitation due to the fact their irregular migration to Italy. The specific objective of this Project is to improve policies and practice at local and national levels that enable communities to protect children at risk of irregular migration and provide viable alternatives to irregular migration.

The Project **Providing Alternatives to Irregular Migration for Unaccompanied Children in Egypt** is coordinated by Save the Children UK and implemented in Egypt and in Italy in partnership with YAPD and Save the Children Italy.



**Save the Children**



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