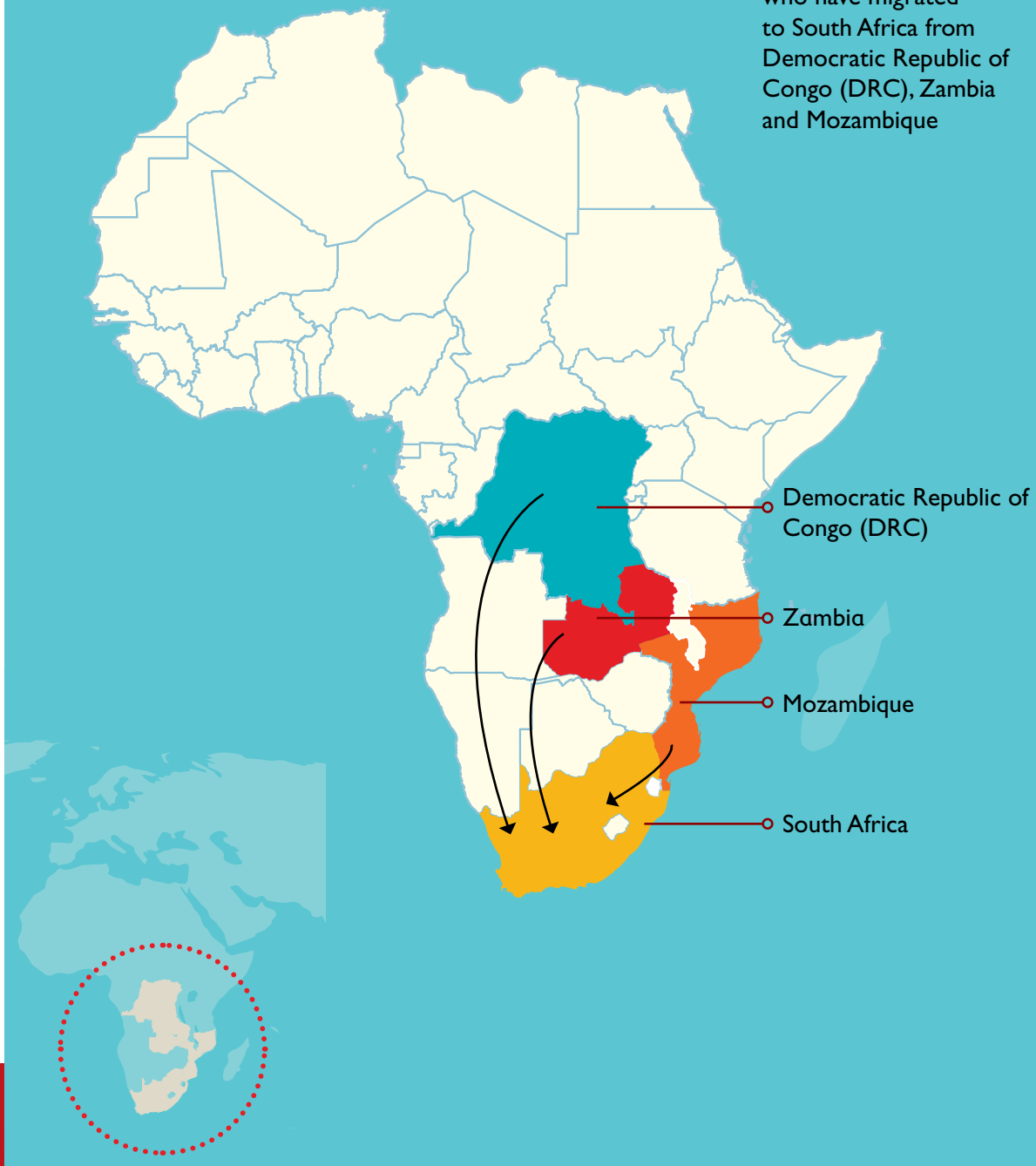
GIRLS ON THE MOVE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Save the Children

A qualitative study with groups of young women who have migrated to South Africa from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Zambia and Mozambique



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research study was commissioned as a collaboration between Save the Children Sweden and Save the Children International's Regional Programming Unit. Research was conducted by Rebecca Walker and Glynis Clacherty. Foremost we would like to thank our partners in the collaboration for this report, Melinda van Zyl, Jenni Wisung and Sara Granath from Save the Children Sweden and Gregor Schnuer from Save the Children International's Regional Program Unit. Save the Children staff at the country offices in the region committed time and expertise throughout the duration of the study to analyse and share access to programmes in the field and contextualise national and regional findings. The authors are especially grateful to Carla Come, Hector Motanto and Ivan Amaral of the Mozambique office; Margaret Phiri and Gladys Musaba of the Zambia office; and Nyika Machenjedze and Patiance Zhou of Save the Children South Africa, for valuable insights and dedicated effort to ensure the success of data collection and trainings.

There are also a number of individuals who helped develop this study and who provided support in a number of ways. The authors' colleague Claudia Xavier worked tirelessly to locate the Mozambican girls, connect with them and ensure that the research was carried out ethically, sensitively and with rigour. We are also indebted to Sophiatown Community Psychological Services (SCPS) for their support of this study and for providing a room and "safe space" where workshops could be held and offering ongoing support to the girls who participated in the study. Thank you to Johanna Kristner, Executive Director of SCPS, Patience O'Kenge, who helped us contact potential participants, and Therese Nyemba who tranlated for us – no easy task with young women who are very sad, but one she did with a sensitivity to words, feelings and silences.

** With the aim to protect the confidentiality of participants, all names and locations in further text are changed.*

Graphic Design: Adéle Prins, www.prinsdesign.co.za

Cover Photo: Save the Children South Africa

January 2020

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AMWCY	African Movement of Working Children and Youth
AU	African Union
COM	Children on the Move
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DoH	Department of Health
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EU	European Union
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IEC	Information, education and communication
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MMC	Mixed Migration Centre
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAPS	South African Police Service
SCPS	Sophiatown Community Psychological Services
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

FOREWORD

> "Migration is not only growing, but it is also becoming more desperate and dangerous."

Migration remains one of the most prominent global political debates and across the world movement within and across borders is on the rise. Even though some of this movement is a reflection of an increasingly connected world, much of the movement is the result of acute pressures: armed conflict, climate change and its devastating impact on livelihoods, political instability, economic stresses, and social discrimination and persecution. Migration is not only growing, but it is also becoming more desperate and dangerous.

This study, which is part of the global series 'Girls on the Move' led by Save the Children Sweden, focuses on the lived realities of girls on the move in the Southern Africa region. This region brings together many of the complexities of mixed migration, with strong economies neighboring unstable governments, natural disasters and changing weather patterns that impact livelihoods and food production and refugees and asylum seekers escaping conflict in adjoining regions.

By exclusively speaking to migrant girls, both those displaced by violence and those in mixed migration flows, this study sheds light on the experiences of one of the most under-researched groups. We hope the insights and recommendations will allow Save the Children and other stakeholders to drive programmes for migrants, especially girls, using a strong evidence base for protecting their rights.

The accounts of the girls show us how gender inequality – and the threats and risks that inherently come from inequality – are not something that young migrant girls leave behind, but are a pervasive and constant reality along their route from origin, to transit and to destination. The research shows how gender fundamentally changes their migratory experience, exacerbating vulnerabilities and presenting specific risks, yet in some rare instances also emboldening resistance to harassment.

> "This study, which is part of the global series 'Girls on the Move' led by Save the Children Sweden, focuses on the lived realities of girls on the move in the Southern Africa region."

By revealing the vulnerabilities, risks, and abuses through the voices of these girls and providing an analysis to guide our programming, this study contributes to closing a knowledge gap and informing our efforts to make gender a key concern in all our work. The study highlights the role played by misinformation in motivating migration, the complex relationship with smugglers and the extreme difficulties faced by girls, who have children of their own and are already mothers.

The need to work towards gender equality as we try to help children on the move has been exacerbated in recent months as the COVID-19 pandemic has taken hold of the region. As borders are closed and incomes are lost, reports of the detention and deportation of children appear next to news about growing sexual abuse and violence against girls and women during lockdowns. The key recommendations

Photo: Save the Children South Africa

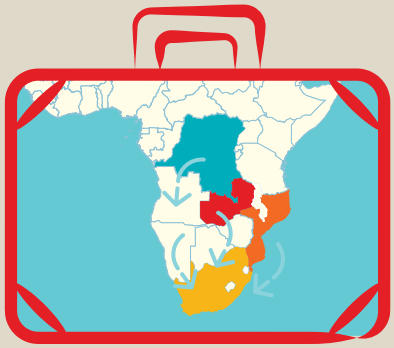
> “It is important to thank the girls who spoke to us about their experiences.”

in this report hold true, now more so than before. The profound impact of documentation needs to be part of our advocacy efforts, including those aimed at the inclusion of migrant children in responses disasters and pandemics. Our work in communities has to respond to the complex social networks, recognizing the role of migrant girls, their families, their peers, smugglers, and officials to ensure their safety. And maybe most importantly: continue to listen to girls, and if we cannot hear their voices, then we must make sure we find them, because this study shows us that they are there, and that they are important.

Lastly, it is important to thank the girls who spoke to us about their experiences. We appreciate them sharing their perspectives with us as well as the trust they have in us to share personal accounts of their journeys. We hope that their voices, together with the presented recommendations, will provoke reflections, conversations and change towards the goal of inclusive and transformative programmes for children on the move.

— Ian Vale
Regional Director for East and Southern Africa
Save the Children

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Very little evidence exists in contemporary migration literature to guide gender-sensitive programming for improving migrant girls' prospects to survive, learn and be protected.

Despite an extensive footprint and clear progress towards achieving realisation of rights for migrant children in Southern Africa, girls remain relatively absent from data and qualitative results published by governments and lead agencies in the region in recent years. This is clearly not due to low numbers of girls in migration flows. In line with overall trends of the 'feminisation' of migration, there are now more girls on the move than boys in Sub-Saharan Africa[1]. 48% of the approximately 271 million international migrants in the world today are female. 14% of this global female migrant population consists of girls and young women under the age of 20. In Sub-Saharan Africa, this percentage is much higher: of the estimated 11,187 459 female international migrants on the continent, approximately 30% are girls under the age of 20.

This report's primary purpose is to recommend evidence-based strategies to improve the relevance and effectiveness of field interventions that target development outcomes for migrant girls in Southern Africa.

To do so, it draws on qualitative action research conducted in Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia in 2019. Methodology comprised rigorous academic review of existing knowledge published to date about the situation for migrant girls, and workshops with field-based Save the Children teams already implementing programmes for children on the move. Most importantly, the research process prioritised listening to 53 girls in three respective border and urban areas, all of whom had or were in the process of making a journey across international borders, and all of whom, therefore, were in a position to share and compare experiences as well as opinions on the ways in which society perceives and supports or obstructs the aspirations and wellbeing of girls on the move.

Listening to children is an essential part of Save the Children's ongoing daily quest to know better and do better for the most deprived and marginalized. The importance of taking a participatory approach to understanding what matters in assisting children in migration is borne out by the growing appreciation of the need for participatory research articulated in various recent migration reports[2]. There is increasing consensus among migration researchers that migrant-centric research approaches are essential to truly make sense of the changing dynamics of migration patterns, processes and consequences, and that women and men, and also girls and boys, respectively, think differently about the realities that affect their respective migration plans and outcomes[3]. For Save the Children, it is imperative that development practitioners identify and address the specific needs of girls, boys, women, and men across the programme cycle if we are to fulfil our vision of a world where every girl and every boy attains their equal right to survival, protection,

SAVE THE CHILDREN'S GLOBAL RESEARCH SERIES ON GIRLS ON THE MOVE:
The Girls on the Move Initiative is a global series of ***action research*** conducted across different regions within existing Save the Children programmes. Each regional study generates targeted evidence to address knowledge gaps in current literature and programme approaches, and engages SC teams to ***immediately strengthen ongoing interventions for girls*** in different stages of migration, notably during transit and arrival. Research for the series was conducted during 2019, in Southern Africa, Latin America, and Greece and the Balkans. Another study is planned in West and Central Africa for 2020.

development, and participation. This process of gender equality integration, or gender mainstreaming, is not only a requirement for donors and partners, but drives positive, transformative results, and is key to sustainable development. And it is vital in the implementation of our 2019 – 2021 Global Work Plan. The 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2020 represents a strategic opportunity as a key moment for accelerating impact for girls across our programming, in line with a renewed focus on the theme of the girl child by Save the Children globally.

Findings

From the currently limited body of work on the migration of girls what is clear is that girls in the region show considerable agency in their choice to migrate, usually to find work and a better life for themselves. They often plan their journeys carefully and ask for help from various trusted intermediaries. They find ways too of coping with the challenges they face in their countries of destination. But they also face specific vulnerabilities and challenges when on the move. These are intersectional in nature and range from access to documentation and healthcare, gender-based violence, exploitation, denial of basic rights and a lack of information and knowledge about how and where to access support. More broadly, these vulnerabilities can be located in a wider context in which the response to girls who migrate is one of territorialisation: of assigning (and confining) girls to a symbolic and physical place where they must stay at home to be safe and thrive.

This is because they constitute a triple anomaly to hegemonic social orders: as migrants, they are 'out of place' in the system of the nation-state; as females they are outside of the domestic domain assigned to them as their 'natural' place; and as children they are 'unprotected' by the institution of the family. As such, they 'break' with norms of childhood, associated with purity, innocence and passivity; of gender, determining 'appropriate' ways in which girls should act and respond; and of belonging, determining where to rightfully be and where not.

One of the most salient findings of the study relates to the vulnerability of girls who become mothers during the course of their migration journeys, and the way in which motherhood and the "burden" of care can increase girls' invisibility and risk-taking, and impact on development outcomes for their children. There is a tremendous need for support to girls who are "parenting on the move".

"This is because they constitute a triple anomaly to hegemonic social orders: as migrants, they are 'out of place' in the system of the nation-state; as females they are outside of the domestic domain assigned to them as their 'natural' place; and as children they are 'unprotected' by the institution of the family."

[1] UNDESA (2019) Accessed on 10 January 2020, available at: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp

[2] See for instance IOM World Migration Report 2018. https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/country/docs/china/r5_world migration_report_2018_en.pdf

[3] Save the Children (2018) Why Children Stay. resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/why-children-stay

We worked with

53 GIRLS

aged 10 to 23 who had migrated

Other notable findings include:

- **Balancing deception and expectations:** Girls on the move in Southern Africa apply varying degrees of agency in pursuing life aspirations by crossing international borders. In this, the astuteness and sincerity of advice by especially older, male family members was often questioned by participants, who upon arrival in destination cities felt that they had sometimes been somewhat opportunistically deceived by relatives and advisors. This study went on to show how, in many cases, this deception directly resulted in increased vulnerability for girls.

- **Little evidence of human trafficking:** While the gravity of trafficking cannot be disputed, little evidence was of trafficking in girls' experiences. This is elaborated on in the literature review and findings sections, and the report calls for a shift in thinking of development interventions that tend to approach the topic of girls on the move by assuming risk to trafficking as point of departure.

- **Violence in the family as a driver of migration:** Echoing findings in other recent reports by Save the Children[4], this report reiterates the significance of violence in the home as a push factor for irregular migration.

- **Networks and protection in transit:** There is a need to better understand the role that intermediaries play in the journeys of girls in Southern Africa and to contextualize ideas of family and relationships. Girls often rely on the protection of a truck driver to cross multiple borders in one journey. Networks of girls and older migrant women also play an important protective role for girls in planning and executing migration plans. Programming that leverages and addresses complexities of both types of relationships could potentially serve migration outcomes for vulnerable girls on the move.

- **Lack of documentation** remains a significant cause of insecurity and can directly be linked to increased invisibility, higher vulnerability and greater risk-taking behaviour by migrant girls in cities like Johannesburg, South Africa. Additionally, girls with legal claim to asylum continue to forego this right in South Africa, and as a result are unable to complete their education or realize other civic or socio-economic rights such as finding gainful employment.

- **The constant threat of violence and xenophobia** in South Africa keeps girls "underground", even when they are likely to be granted asylum. There is a dire need for training and tolerance-building to eradicate widespread xenophobic attitudes and actions by law enforcement and Home Affairs authorities, in the interests of social cohesion.

4 See, for instance, Why Children Stay, previously cited.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Debates and discourses about girls on the move do not occur in a vacuum. They are shaped by social and political contexts, and create dominant frameworks about children, about gender and about migration. These frameworks also influence perceptions, research agendas and responses to migrating girls. This report attempts to unpack the way these perceptions have enabled or obstructed the migration experiences of the girls who participated in the Southern Africa Research Study on Girls on the Move. Its overall recommendation to all actors within the child rights sector is to **assess, review and investigate critically the way in which we approach girls in the context of mobility. Instead of focusing merely on their vulnerability, it is imperative that we take a critical look at systems, societal norms, perceptions and approaches which shape the environment in which these girls attempt to pursue the realization of their rights.**

“Debates and discourses about girls on the move do not occur in a vacuum. They are shaped by social and political contexts, and create dominant frameworks about children, about gender and about migration.”

Photo: Suzy Bernstein

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

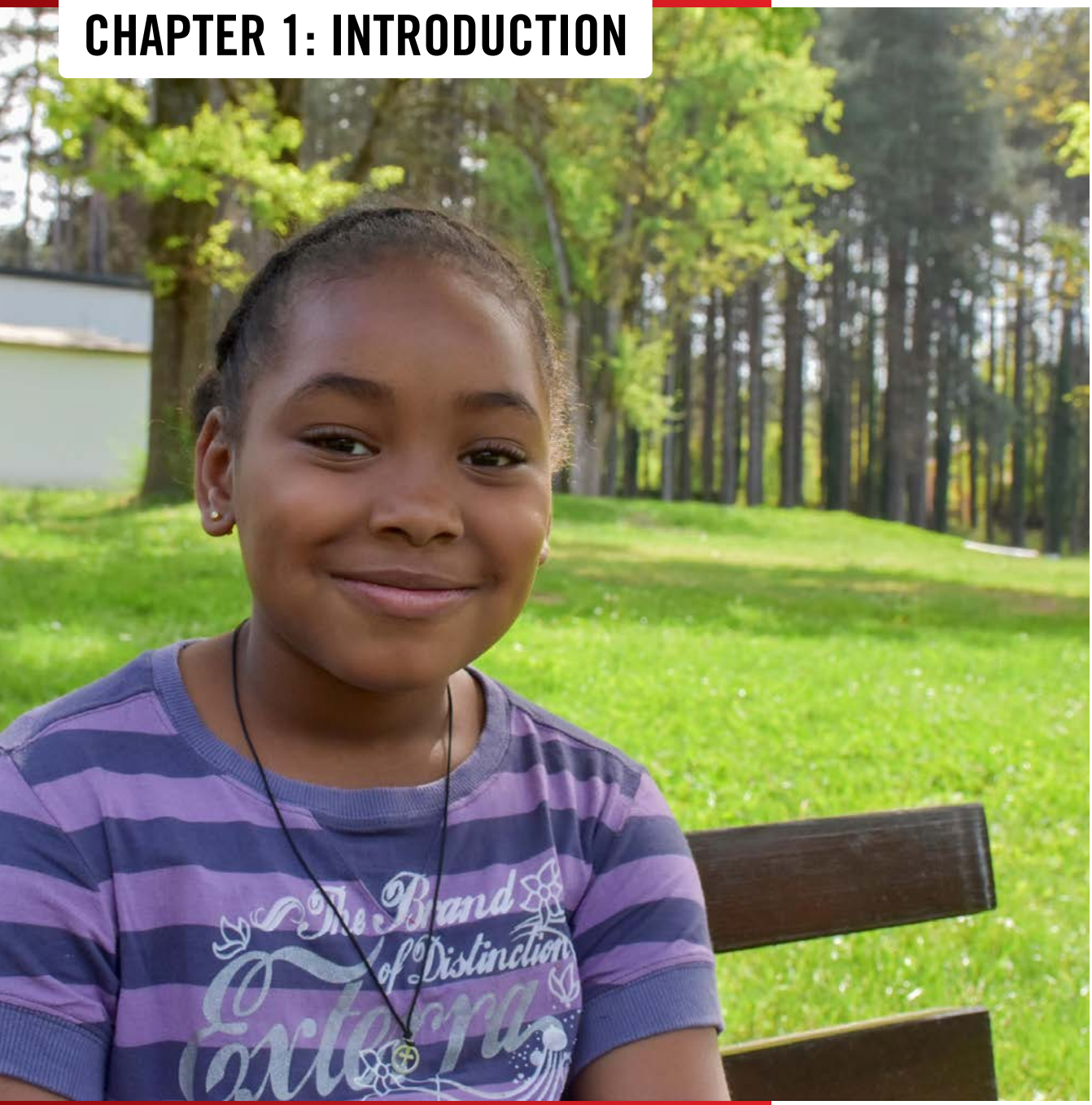


Photo: Save the Children South Africa

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I would not say that we jumped the border like other people. All I know is that we were paying and then they will hide us like in the buses they will put us under the chairs whenever we get to the border, I do not even know the borders. We all do not know the borders. But we were hiding inside the bags, underneath the bags and inside the trucks, we were hiding. Because we did not have papers.

– Ariel, 20, DRC

Save the Children's global ambition is that all children survive, learn and are protected by 2030. To accelerate progress towards this goal for the most vulnerable children, the organisation's 2019 – 2021 Global Work Plan[5] strives to leverage and enhance existing knowledge and expertise to close the gap for five groups of children who are likely to be among the most deprived and vulnerable in any context:

- Girls
- Children with disabilities
- Children affected by conflict
- Children who are migrants or displaced
- Adolescents

Girls on the move are represented in at least three of the five categories listed above, and in some cases, in all five. Despite the well documented ripple-effect of enhanced wellbeing for families and future generations when development or humanitarian efforts invest in girls, interventions which target adolescents or children in mobility often continue to neglect thorough gender analysis during design and monitoring stages, with the result that far too often, girls on the move are absent in programme data and their needs and rights are not sufficiently addressed.

> "Where do the most vulnerable migrant girls reside in the greatest numbers, based on the assessment of risks?"

Photo: Save the Children South Africa

[5] Save the Children (2019) Closing the Gap: Our 2030 Ambition and 2019 to 2021 Global Work Plan. Available at: https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/closing-gap-our-2030-ambition-and-2019-2021-global-work-plan

Reports and lessons learned from even long term extensive migration interventions such as the Children on the Move programme in Southern Africa indicate that girls tend not to be reached as effectively as boys.

This report draws on contemporary migration literature, qualitative field work and programme reviews, to inform gender-sensitive programme development for unaccompanied migrant girls (under 18) who engage in cross-border and circular migration, especially during transit and arrival along known migration corridors between Mozambique, Zambia and South Africa.

"Identify protective factors, which can be strengthened through programming in order to attain gender equality in programme outcomes and better protect and support migrant girls."

The aims of the research were to:

a) Elucidate how gender and gender norms impact girls' decision-making and motivations to migrate from places of origin (for the purpose of this study: DRC, Mozambique and Zambia);

b) Unpack protection risks that girls face during transit, and upon arrival at destination (for the purpose of this study: South Africa), and which coping strategies girls employ to navigate, mitigate and respond to these risks;

c) Identify those sub-populations of migrant girls facing the greatest risk, locating where these most vulnerable reside in the greatest number to effectively reach them.

d) Assess the availability of, and barriers to accessing, gender-sensitive services (protection, education, healthcare including sexual and reproductive healthcare, etc.) for migrant girls along targeted migration corridors;

e) Identify protective factors, which can be strengthened through programming in order to attain gender equality in programme outcomes and better protect and support migrant girls during the different stages of the journey.

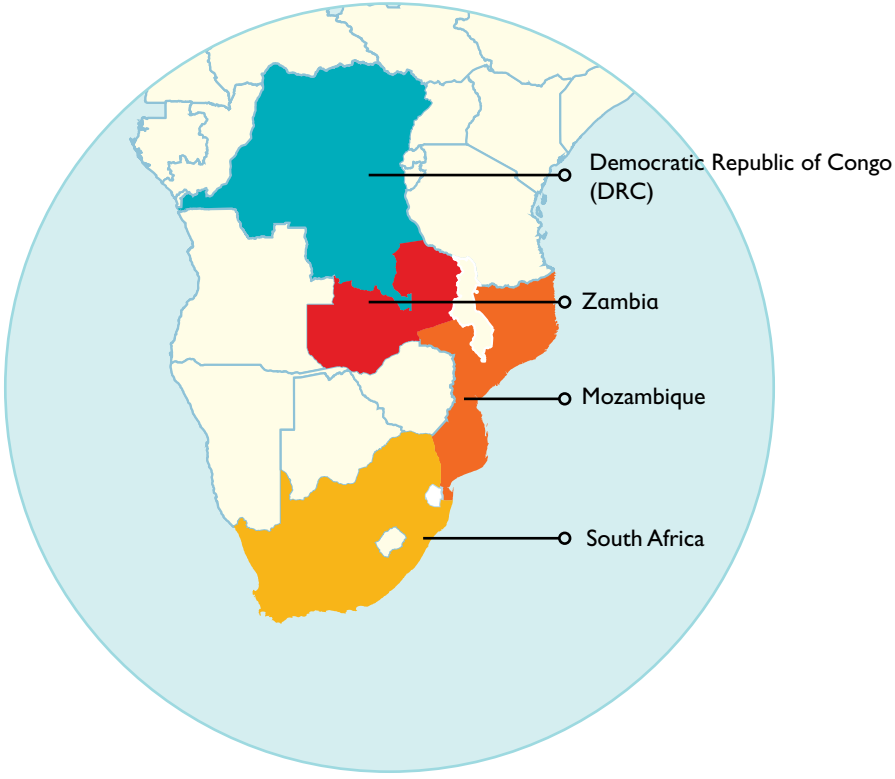
"Assess the availability of, and barriers to accessing, gender-sensitive services: protection, education, healthcare including sexual and reproductive healthcare, etc.) for migrant girls along targeted migration corridors."

The research consisted of three parts:

1
- A review of recent literature on Girls on the Move with a focus on Southern Africa

2
- A qualitative study with groups of young women who have migrated to South Africa from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Zambia and Mozambique

3
- A review of the present Save the Children COM programming in Zambia, Mozambique and South Africa



CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

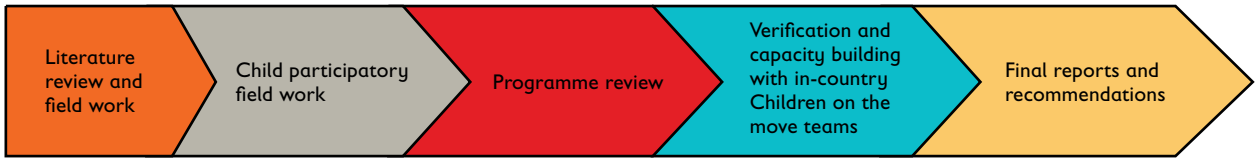
Photo: Save the Children South Africa

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

The Girls on the Move Global Research Series attempted to follow a similar methodology in each respective geographic context where studies were conducted. The methodology can be characterised as qualitative action research. Because the main motivation for the research is to inform immediate changes to programme approaches that improve relevance and reach of the most vulnerable girls on the move in each context, a participatory approach was imperative. This necessitated creation of opportunities for safe and meaningful child participation during the research, as well as opportunity to verify findings with the contextual expertise of field staff as first responders, on the ground. This approach not only enriched final report recommendations but also informed immediate uptake of findings through facilitated interaction with Save the Children implementing country teams.

“Furthermore, it was important to the researchers to find out how specific these experiences were to girls.”

Each study attempted to simulate the following process:



2.1 Approach

The research for the Southern Africa Girls on the Move study was qualitative in nature and aimed at gathering a robust understanding of the everyday realities of migration across borders, including the decision-making process, journeys undertaken and challenges faced, from the perspective of the girls.

To this end, the study started out with a review of existing literature. Taking the findings of the literature review as a basis, an approach was developed for the primary research that could draw from any variation from existing knowledge in the experiences of girls who would participate in this research, and if so, what they were. Furthermore, it was important to the researchers to find out how specific these experiences were to girls and whether the girls themselves could see differences in their migration journeys and the kinds of challenges faced on route compared to those of boys.

Field research took the form of two day participatory workshops with girls who had migrated or were in the process of migrating, in each of three locations: two in Johannesburg, South Africa, and one in Ressano Garcia, Mozambique, at the border with South Africa.

This was followed by verification and gender-sensitization workshops with Save the Children field staff in Zambia, Mozambique and South Africa.

Save the Children staff member in Zambia analysing findings, to verify and learn from information to go into the final research report

Research Area	Number	Ages	Research tool	Countries of origin
Johannesburg - Bertrams	6	14-21	Research workshop	Zambia
Johannesburg - Bertrams	12	10-23	Research workshop	DRC
Johannesburg - Thembisa	16	15-17	Interviews/informal discussions	Mozambique (Maputo Inham-bane, Gaza)
Ressano Garcia	17	14-21	Interviews/informal discussions	Mozambique (Maputo Inham-bane, Gaza)
Total	**53**	**Range: 10-23**		

2.2 Sites, sampling and participants

Description of research participants

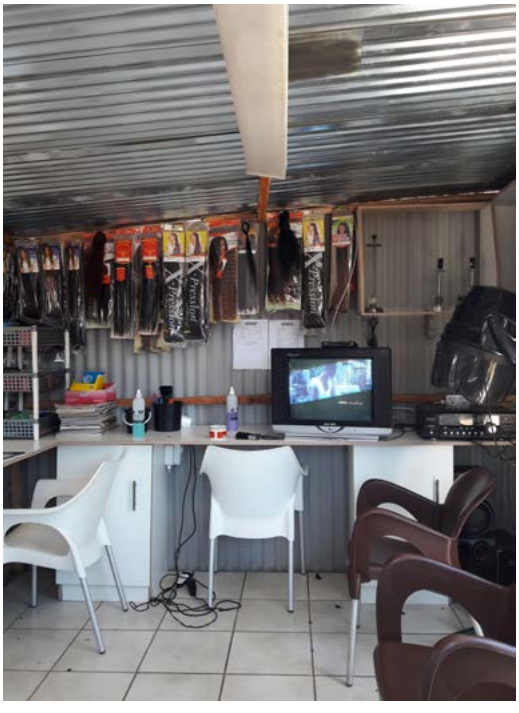
The girls who participated in this study came from three different areas. These areas were chosen based on the need to work with girls who migrated to, travelled through or came from the countries covered by the regional Save the Children's Children on the Move (COM) programme (of which Zambia, Mozambique and South Africa participated in this study). Through the researchers' previous work[6] with young women migrants in Johannesburg they were able to identify two key areas in which young migrants from Zambia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Mozambique live in the city. For the Zambian and Congolese girls, this was the inner-city of Johannesburg, and for the Mozambican ones, Tembisa, a township located between Johannesburg and Pretoria. This meant that through a purposive[7] sample it was possible to work with girls from the DRC who had migrated through Zambia, girls from Zambia itself and girls from Mozambique.

Soweto was also an area that had been initially identified for finding migrant girls from Mozambique. However, building up a network of trust in Tembisa took longer than anticipated so it was decided to capitalise on this network rather than start again in Soweto with limited time to do the work justice. In Tembisa, researchers collaborated with hair salons to recruit research participants as well as facilitate sessions. Chatting in a hair salon while simultaneously drawing was both familiar and comfortable for the girls.

6 Clacherty, G. (2015) The Suitcase Project: Working with Unaccompanied Child Refugees in New Ways 13–30. In I. Palmary, B. Hamber, L. Nùñez (Eds.). (2015). *Healing and Change in the City of Gold.* Switzerland: Springer International Publishing; Walker, R. & Clacherty, G. (2015). Shaping New Spaces: An Alternative approach to Healing in Current Shelter Interventions for Vulnerable Women in Johannesburg. 31-58. In I. Palmary, B. Hamber, L. Nùñez (Eds.) (2015) *Healing and Change in the City of Gold.* Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

7 Mouton, J. (1996) *Understanding Social Research.* Pretoria: JL Van Schaik.

Photo: Suzy Bernstein



Inside the salon
Photo: Suzy Bernstein

Photo: Suzy Bernstein

A cut-out anonymous girl used to discuss difficult topics. Photo: Suzy Bernstein

2.3 Visual methods

The field research sessions with girls drew on a set of simple participatory[8] tools such as maps, social network drawings and timelines of daily life that are often used in work with young people, in order to better understand the reality of the girls' lives.

Previous experience of research with migrant and vulnerable groups has shown that traditional research methods such as interviews and focus groups can be frightening and uncomfortable, particularly if the respondents are recounting sad or painful experiences. The use of visual methods offers a space to work with this difficulty for a number of reasons. One of these reasons is that it avoids directly asking questions about sensitive issues, such as documentation, trading sex for basic needs and resources and boyfriends. Often these come out later, but only once the respondent feels more comfortable and a level of trust has been established. It also creates an opportunity to reflect on past and present experiences with some emotional distance, which is necessary when experiences are raw and trauma palpable[9]. This methodology also allows for a layered approach. As the drawings and discussions develop, for example, the details and complexities of the respondent's lives are able to emerge[10].

Part of a journey map drawn by Loveness (14) showing her home in Zambia and the bus she took to come to South Africa. Photo Suzy Bernstein

[8] Boyden, J. and Ennew, J. (eds.) (1997) *Children in Focus: A Manual for Participatory Research with Children. Stockholm, Save the Children Sweden.*
O'Kane, C. (2000) The development of participatory techniques: Facilitating children's views about decisions which affect them. In Christensen, P. and James, A. (Eds). *Research With Children: Perspectives and Practices*. Falmer Press: London.
Clacherty, G. and Donald, D. (2007) Child participatory research: A reflection on ethical challenges in the southern African context. *African Journal of Aids Research* (AJAR) 2007. 6(2) p147-156.

[9] Buk, A. (2009) The mirror neuron system and embodied simulation: Clinical implications for art therapists working with trauma survivors. *The Arts in Psychotherapy,* 36, 61–74.

[10] White, M. (2005) Children, trauma and subordinate storyline development. *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community* Work, 3 & 4.

2.4 Data analysis

Nearly all of the focus group discussions and interviews were recorded and transcribed. However, as previously noted, some of the girls in Ressano Garcia were reluctant to be recorded and therefore the fieldworker made notes (often after the interview). The researchers then used an inductive content analysis[11] approach, allowing a set of themes to emerge from the data. Initially they looked for "indigenous concepts[12]" which meant that they listened for ideas that emerged from what was said. Then, the process involved looking for themes that related to the literature review and Save the Children's programme activities and objectives. They also applied what Squire[13] calls an "experience-centred approach" which sees narratives as the "means of human sense-making[14]". This enabled an understanding of how the young women make sense of their story of migration and provided information about issues related to mental wellbeing, belonging and identity. This information is important if the subsequent Save the Children programme of support is to connect with the lived realities of girl migrants.

2.5 Challenges and limitations

Overall, research objectives were met and the target number of participants was achieved. However, a number of challenges limited the process and outcomes. These are important to document both in terms of placing the findings within a context of complexities and difficult realities and also in guiding future research of this kind.

The first challenge relates to the sensitivity of the content that girls share when relaying experiences of irregular migration. The data that emerged through the two-day workshops and interviews was so rich that it would have been useful to have more time to explore more of the issues and follow threads of stories as *they* emerged. The Johannesburg research with the Congolese and Zambian girls, for example, unfolded in such a way that much of the first day was spent allowing the girls to feel comfortable with researchers and with each other and, importantly, allowing space for them to recount the stories they wanted to recount. Often these stories were narratives of difficult and painful experiences that the girls had not yet had a chance to share.

The girls made a point about the difference between having to tell their stories to authorities in Home Affairs and other official spaces, compared to being given the space to tell them as they wanted. Therefore, it was important to balance their need to talk and be listened to, with our need for specific information. In addition, while many of the girls were likely traumatised, they had not yet had any form of

> "Previous experience of research with migrant and vulnerable groups has shown that traditional research methods such as interviews and focus groups can be frightening and uncomfortable, particularly if the respondents are recounting sad or painful experiences."

Anne (10) covered her drawing of the truck that brought her from DRC in black pastels as she told how horrible the journey had been. Photo: Suzy Bernstein

[11] Patton, M. (1990) *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
[12] Patton, *ibid.*, p 390
[13] Squire, C. (2008) Experience-centred and culturally oriented approaches to narrative. In M. Andrews, C. Squire, and Tamboukou, M. (Eds). *Doing Narrative Research,* 41–63. London: SAGE Publications.
[14] Squire. *ibid.*, p. 48

Photo: Save the Children South Africa

counselling or support to help them through these heightened and raw emotions. A three- or four-day workshop might have helped with this challenge as it would have allowed more time for sharing and working on the specific narratives.

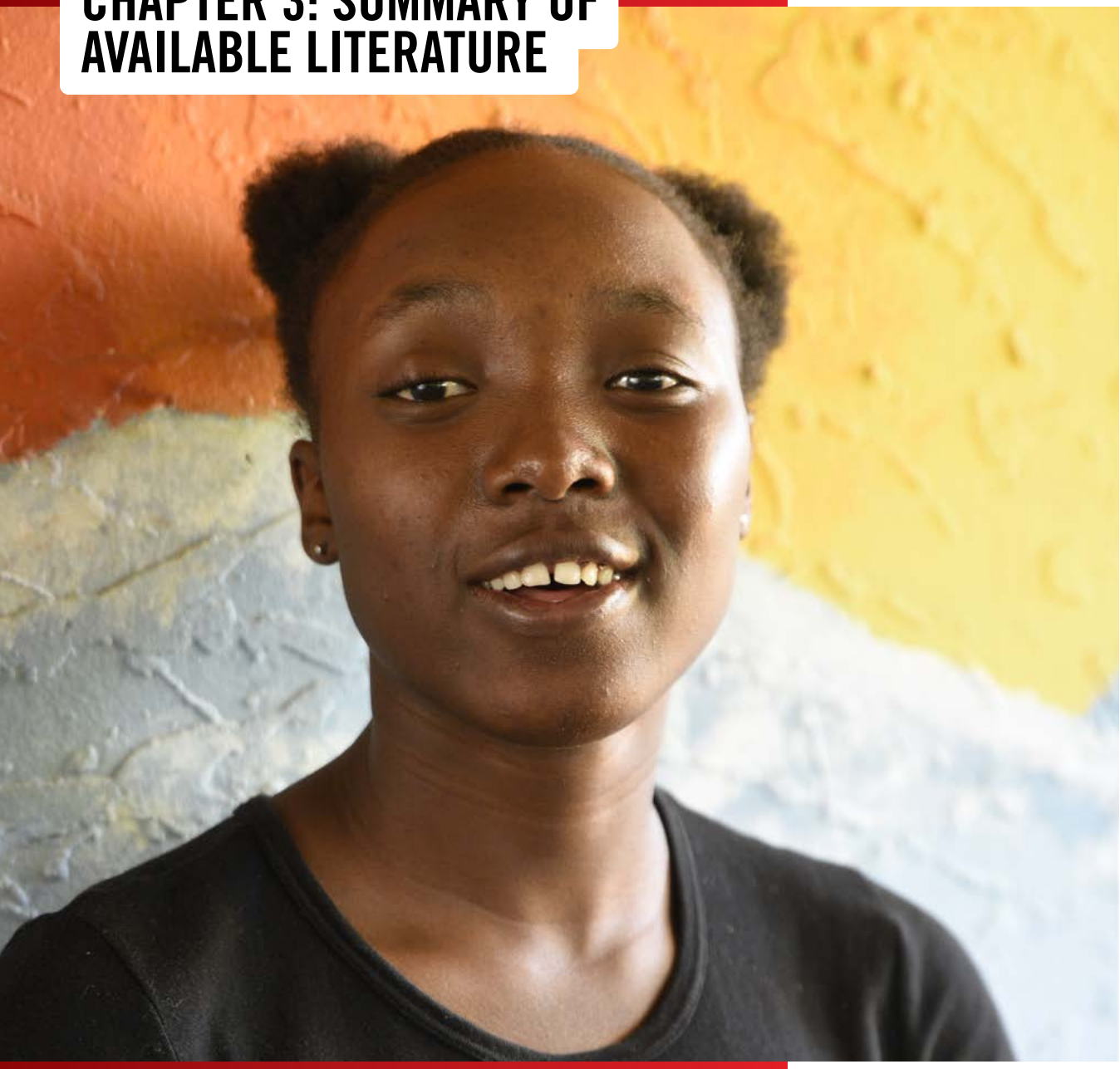
Somewhat related was the challenge of hesitation to share information due to fears around being undocumented and potential exposure or arrest. Although all girls overcame this fear and did eventually share and actively participate in research activities, it took time to establish rapport and convince girls of the authenticity of the researchers' intentions.

Thirdly, there was a high level of expectation from the girls that researchers could assist with their current situations. In particular, they wanted help to find work, with getting documents and a few wanted financial support. While this is a common experience in this type of research and researchers were accustomed to navigating this challenge, it is still an important and difficult issue to acknowledge. It also raises key ethical questions around research responsibility, relationships and particularly positions of power. Working through Sophiatown Psychological services was important because it made it easier to deal with the issue of expectation and responsibility and it also enabled referrals where needed.

"It also raises key ethical questions around research responsibility, relationships and particularly positions of power."

Photo: Save the Children South Africa

CHAPTER 3: SUMMARY OF AVAILABLE LITERATURE



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CHAPTER 3: SUMMARY OF AVAILABLE LITERATURE

A literature review was conducted to investigate existing knowledge in contemporary migration literature about the situation for girls on the move in the Southern Africa region, in order to avoid duplication and inform research instruments for field work.

The literature review explored documented evidence about girls' motivations to migrate, modalities for crossing borders, risks faced and coping mechanisms employed in response to risks and challenges. It also investigated how these topics may differ between different groups of migrant girls in the Southern Africa context, in order to attempt to assess which sub-populations of migrant girls face the greatest risk and where they reside in the greatest numbers. It also investigated normative assumptions guiding official responses to the mobility of girls, and ways in which contemporary official responses can be challenged by existing empirical research. Finally, the literature review represented the first step in the process of this Girls on the Move study to providing recommendations for more relevant, gender-sensitive programming that will more effective respond to the specific needs and realities of girls in migration or displacement in the Southern African context.

> "In line with overall trends of the 'feminisation' of migration, there are now more girls on the move than boys in Sub-Saharan Africa. Of these girls on the move, **all are under the age of 18,** and many are adolescents."

3.1 Women and girls are moving

Many girls move within and across African borders.[15] Predominantly forming part of a larger group of undocumented migrants in Africa, their numbers and mobility patterns are difficult, if not impossible, to assess[16]. However, corresponding to the continent's overall youthfulness, estimates put the proportion of children and adolescents at almost a third of all migrants in Africa[17].

While official data can only provide a limited picture, Statistics South Africa report that 33.5% of all female African migrants in South Africa are under 25[18]. In line with overall trends of the 'feminisation' of migration, there are now more girls on the move than boys in Sub-Saharan Africa[19]. Of these girls on the move, all are under the age of 18, and many are adolescents[20].

> "Most girls migrate voluntarily, based on a decision that was made either on their own or with their strong and active."

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15 Awumbila, M. (2015) "Women Moving Within Borders: Gender and Internal Migration Dynamics in Ghana." *Ghana Journal of Geography* 7 (2): 132–45; Pickbourn, L. (2018) "Rethinking Rural–Urban Migration and Women's Empowerment in the Era of the SDGs: Lessons from Ghana." Sustainability 10 (4), p.1; WHO (2018) "Women on the Move: Migration and Health in the WHO African Region." Brazzaville: WHO, p. 5; RMMS (2016) "Young and on the Move Children and Youth in Mixed Migration Flows within and from the Horn of Africa, p. 10; de Regt, M. (2016) "Time to Look at Girls: Adolescent Girls' Migration in Ethiopia."; Temin, M., Montgomery, M.G., Engebretsen S., and Berker, K. M. (2013) "Girls on the Move: Adolescent Girls and Migration in the Developing World. A Girls Count Report on Adolescent Girls." Population Council

16 Dodson, B. (1998) "Women on the Move. Gender and Cross-Border Migration to South Africa." Southern African Migration Project, p. 1; Sloth-Nielsen, J. and Ackermann, M. (2015) "Foreign Children in Care in the Western Cape Province." Cape Town: Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town, p. 4; RMMS (2016) *op. cit.*, p. 10; UNICEF (2009) "Children on the Move. Unaccompanied Migrant Children in South Africa."

17 Save the Children UK (2007) "Children Crossing Borders Report on Unaccompanied Minors Who Have Travelled to South Africa.", p. 4; Magqibelo, L., Londt, M., September, S. and Roman, N. (2016) "Challenges Faced by Unaccompanied Minor-Refugees in South Africa." *Social Work* 52: 73–89, p. 74

18 Statistics South Africa (2015) Census 2011: Migration Dynamics in South Africa, Report No. 03-01-79, Pretoria: Statistics South Africa

19 Thatun, S., and Heissler, K. (2013) "Children's Migration: Towards a Multidimensional Child Protection Perspective." In *Children on the Move*, 95–105. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, p. 97-98

20 Save the Children UK (2007) *op. cit.*, p. 4

> "They constitute a 'triple anomaly' to hegemonic social orders: as migrants, they are 'out of place' in the system of the nation-state; as females they are outside of the domestic domain assigned to them as their 'natural' place; and as children they are 'unprotected' by the institution of the family."

3.2 Why do girls migrate?

Girls migrate for many different and often overlapping reasons: to overcome poverty, to get away from an abusive home, to find work, to further their education, to experience adventure, to escape political or other forms of oppression, to be reunited with their family or to take on new responsibilities after changes in the family structure, for example the death of a caregiver[21].

Most girls migrate voluntarily, based on a decision that was made either on their own or with their strong and active involvement[22]. An earlier Save the Children study found that '*most of the young girls we spoke to made this decision for themselves, putting to rest the notion that all young children leaving home are coerced into doing so. However, having said this, many of the girls felt they did not have other options*'[23].

3.3 Gender, mobility and vulnerability: the invisibility of girls on the move

Debates and discourses about girls on the move do not occur in a vacuum. They are shaped by social and political contexts, and create dominant frameworks about children, about gender and about migration. These frameworks also influence perceptions, research agendas and responses to migrating girls.

At the most fundamental level, the response to girls who migrate is one of territorialisation: of assigning (and confining) girls to a symbolic and physical place where they must stay to be safe and thrive. This is because they constitute a 'triple anomaly' to hegemonic social orders: as migrants, they are 'out of place' in the system of the nation-state; as females they are outside of the domestic domain assigned to them as their 'natural' place; and as children they are 'unprotected' by the institution of the family. As such, they 'break' with norms of childhood, associated with purity, innocence and passivity[24]; of gender, determining 'appropriate' ways in which girls should act and respond; and of belonging, determining where to rightfully be and where not.

This triple anomaly in relation to dominant norms of belonging, gender, and childhood powerfully restricts knowledge production and sustains the 'invisibility' of girls on the move in research. Normative ideas about the nature of women and children as domestic, dependent and non-economic actors has meant that they were not assumed to migrate independently of men and/or for work[25]. This has shaped the nature and type of research questions, definition of 'working age' and

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21 Save the Children (2017) "Study On Unaccompanied Migrant Children In Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia And Zimbabwe.", p. 108; Busza, J., Mtetwa, S., Chirawu, P. and Cowan, F. (2014) "Triple Jeopardy: Adolescent Experiences of Sex Work and Migration in Zimbabwe." *Health & Place* 28 (July): 85–91, p. 87; Mixed Migration Centre (2018) "Experiences of Female Refugees & Migrants in Origin, Transit and Destination Countries. A Comparative Study of Women on the Move from Afghanistan, East and West Africa."; Grabska, K., de Regt, M., and Del Franco, N. (2016) *Time to Look at Girls: Adolescent Girls' Migration in the South*, p. 5; Ford, K. and Hosegood, V. (2005) "Aids Mortality and the Mobility of Children in Kwazulu Natal, South Africa." Demography 42 (4), p. 766; Clacherty, G. (2003) "Children in Musina Their Experiences and Needs." Research undertaken by Jessie Kgomongoe, Musa Dlamini, Kgethi Matshai and Glynis Clacherty of Clacherty and Associates With the help of peer educators from the Centre for Positive Care, Corridors of Hope Project in Musina, p. 12; WHO (2018) *op. cit.*, p. 5; Save the Children UK (2007) *op. cit.,* p. 4; Thatun, S., and Heissler, K. (2013) *op sit.*, p. 97-98; RMMS (2016) *op. cit.,* p. 1

22 Save the Children (2009) "They Say: 'I Am Lucky To Have A Job'. A Participatory Study with Migrant Girls Who Do Domestic Work in Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa.", p. 15; Temin, M., *et al* (2013) *op. cit.*; Simkhada, P. (2008) "Life Histories and Survival Strategies Amongst Sexually Trafficked Girls in Nepal." Children & Society 22: 235–248, p. 246

23 Save the Children (2009) *op. cit.*, p. 14

24 Burman, E. (2008) *Developments: Child, Image, Nation.* London: Routledge

25 Thatun, S, and Heissler, K. (2013) *op. sit.*, p. 97-98; de Regt, M. (2016) *op. cit.*; RMMS (2016) *op. cit.;* Temin, M., et *al* (2013) op. cit.

age groups in surveys and a lack of disaggregation of migration data by gender and age[26]. Normative frameworks about people and place have led to a focus on international migration (across borders), which is considered more problematic than internal movement, despite the known relevance of the latter in the African context. In Southern Africa especially, female migrants in particular are strongly represented in internal (e.g. from Limpopo to Johannesburg in South Africa) migration flows[27].

Understanding how and why the triple anomaly is sustained in societal perception, is a vital prerequisite to understanding state and other responses to girls on the move, and to designing and implementing programmes which effectively build and strengthen gender-sensitive child protection systems.

> "Is it movement itself that puts girls emotionally and physically at risk or the social, economic and legal conditions under which their movement takes place?"

3.4 Agency and victimhood

Exposing normative frameworks that are typically so deeply embedded they are rarely questioned, helps not only to identify blind spots in research and programming to support migrating girls, but also to challenge norms and assumptions currently curtailing the rights of children, women and migrants more fundamentally.

Few disagree that girls on the move face considerable risks during all stages of their movement. However, the nature of their vulnerability is contested. The main points of contention centre on two interrelated questions. The first concerns agency: are girls on the move active decision-makers, masters of their own fate pursuing better opportunities elsewhere or are they victims compelled or deceived into movement by harmful forces beyond their control? The second question concerns the source(s) of potential harm and danger: is it movement itself that puts girls emotionally and physically at risk or the social, economic and legal conditions under which their movement takes place?

> "The reality is much more complex: experiences of agency, empowerment and seizing opportunities exist alongside experiences of exploitation, hurt and the curtailment of freedom."

On the one hand, official discourses as well as the work of many activists is overwhelmingly premised on the assumption that the migration of girls is more or less involuntary in nature. This approach frames girls who migrate primarily as victims – of conflict, of impoverished livelihoods, of smuggling and of different forms of oppression and exploitation. Within this, human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is often a key lens through which girls on the move are seen[28] [29]. Protection interventions which originate in an anti-trafficking paradigm are predominantly geared towards intercepting mobility or sometimes, towards preventing it from happening in the first place.

Research with girl migrants themselves often challenges these dominant narratives of victimhood. Studies exist which document the complex reasons why girls move

[26] O'Connell Davidson, J. and Farrow. C. (2007) "Child Migration and the Construction of Vulnerability." Save the Children. University of Nottingham, p. 10-11; Hertrich, V., Lesclingand, M., Jacquemin, M. and Stephan, M. (2012) "Girls' Labour Migration in Rural Mali." Working Paper Prepared for the Project "Adolescent Girls' Migration", Population Council, New York, p. 3; RMMS (2016) op. cit., p. 10; Muanomoha, R.C. (2008) "The Dynamics of Undocumented Mozambican Labour Migration to South Africa." PhD thesis, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, p. 67

[27] Temin, M., *et al* (2013) *op. cit.*

[28] Thatun, S, and Heissler, K. (2013) *op. sit.*, p. 97-98; O'Connell Davidson, J. and Farrow. C. (2007) *op. cit.*, p. 10-11

[29] The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (Palermo Protocol 2000) defines trafficking in persons as the "recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons using coercion or force, or the recruitment, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for exploitative labour including prostitution, forced labour, slavery or the removal of organs".

> Rather than being dependant, defenceless and helpless, many girls on the move consider themselves 'social and economic actors'.

and which highlight their considerable agency and resilience in doing so[30]. Research has also shown that the *curtailment* of movement directly causes and exacerbates, rather than alleviates many of the risks faced by children and girls on the move[31]. It follows from this line of reasoning, that protection should not focus on preventing or intercepting mobility, but on supporting, empowering and safeguarding girls during all stages of their migration journey.

Evidence of agency amongst girl migrants rarely features in official discourses, policy frameworks and the work of many activists and civil society interventions[32]. Instead, responses are guided less by empirical evidence (of which a robust and growing body of work exists) but more often by normative assumptions about what it means to be a child, a woman and a migrant. Framing girl migrants as victims, rather than actors, serves to restore the social orders of control that girl migrants disrupt and to keep (or put them back) 'in their place': at home, with their family, in their country, on their continent.

> The curtailment of movement directly causes and exacerbates, rather than alleviates many of the risks faced by children and girls on the move.

While official discourses have considered the migration of girls predominantly as detrimental to their emotional and physical development, the reality is much more complex: experiences of agency, empowerment and seizing opportunities exist alongside experiences of exploitation, hurt and the curtailment of freedom[33]. As with other forms of migration, girls on the move are a heterogeneous group and the boundaries between 'voluntary' and 'forced' mobility are typically fluid[34]. Similar to what Kihato[35] describes in the context of women migrants in urban Africa, the lived experiences of girls 'are too complex to fit neatly into binary constructed categories of 'victims' or 'victors'. Yet, research consistently indicates that – all things considered – most children, including girls, feel that the benefits of migration outweigh its disadvantages, even amongst those facing considerably adverse circumstances[36].

Research into the experiences of migrant girls, challenges many of the notions commonly associated with childhood. This emphasises that 'childhood is a

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[30] REACH (2017) "Youth on the Move. Investigating Decision-Making, Migration Trajectories and Expectations of Young People on the Way to Italy."; Mahati, S.T. (2012) "Children Learning Life Skills through Work: Evidence from the Lives of Unaccompanied Migrant Children in a South African Border Town." In African Children at Work: Working and Learning in Growing up for Life. Zürich: LIT Verlag; Boyden, J. (2009) "Risk and Capability in the Context of Adversity: Children's Contributions to Household Livelihoods in Ethiopia." Children, Youth and Environments, no. 19: 2; Christiansen, C., Mats, U. and Henrik, V.E. (2006) "Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood : Social Becoming in an African Context." Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet

[31] Navarro, K.E. (2017) "Protect the Children! Boys and Girls Migrating Unaccompanied from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, 2014-August 2017." ICMC, p. 28; Dottridge, M. (2008) "Kids Abroad: Ignore Them, Abuse Them or Protect Them? Lessons on How to Protect Children on the Move from Being Exploited." Terres des hommes, p. 46

[32] Deshingkar, P. (2015) "Does Anti-Trafficking Policy Protect against Forced Labour and Exploitation or Harm? The Ban on Migration for Domestic Work in Ethiopia and Ghana."; Simkhada, P. (2008) *op. cit.*

[33] Hertrich, V. et al (2012) *op. cit.*; IOM (2011) "Unaccompanied Children on the Move."

[34] RMMS (2016) *op. cit.*, p. 10

[35] Kihato, C.W. (2009) "Migration, Gender and Urbanisation in South Africa.", p. 206

[36] Temin, M., et al (2013) *op. cit.*, p. 3; Save the Children (2008) "Our Broken Dreams. Child Migration in Southern Africa. Published by Save the Children UK and Save the Children Norway in Mozambique.", p. 105; O'Connell Davidson, J. and Farrow. C. (2007) *op. cit.*, p. 10-11; O'Neil, T., Fleury, A. and Foresti, M. (2016) "Women on the Move. Migration, Gender Equality and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." Overseas Development Institute, p. 1; Save the Children UK (2007) *op. cit.*, p. 4-7

construction which varies with time and place'[37]. Rather than being dependant, defenceless and helpless, many girls on the move consider themselves 'social and economic actors'[38].

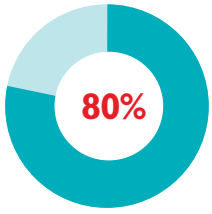
Overall, therefore, research indicates that children's and girls' mobility is more an expression of agency and empowerment than one of victimhood and exploitation[39].

In addition to the issue of agency and empowerment, in contrast to dominant normative assumptions about home and family as guarantors of safety and development, being away can, *for some girls* improve protection and access to opportunities[40]. There are girls for whom the short-term risks of the journey typically outweigh the long-term risks or constraints faced at home. Caregivers at home may be ill-equipped to look after them. In cases of domestic violence or other abuse, family members may actually be the reason *why* children leave in the first place[41]. Magqibelo et al. found that 'at least 80% of the participants left their country of origin because they had been exposed to abuse and exploitation, either in places of work or by family members[42]. A 2009 Save the Children study also documents abuse as a driver of migration that 'was mentioned by at least a third of the young girls interviewed'[43].

Research has also challenged common associations about the notion of being 'unaccompanied': that girls are completely on their own during their journeys and isolated at their destinations. Instead, the movement of girls is often deeply embedded into social and family networks that not only facilitate the journey itself but also the integration and survival strategies at the place of arrival[44].

Family structures and processes of collective decision-making are also maintained across time and space. While translocal family networks may often be, at least in part, the result of constraints, they are also based on 'strategic considerations, preferences, and choices that households make around living arrangements and child care'[45]. However, being part of a family network can also mean taking on huge responsibilities and burdens, where girls report that 'if they went home with nothing they would feel embarrassed and it would reflect as failure on their part. They also felt that they will not be received well by their family members'[46].

At least



of the participants left their country of origin because they had been exposed to abuse and exploitation, either in places of work or by family members.

"There is a need to better understand the role that intermediaries play in the journeys of girls in Southern Africa and to contextualise ideas of family and relationships."

[37] Holloway, S.L. and Gill, V. (2000) "Children's Geographies and the New Social Studies of Childhood." In Children's Geographies: Playing, Living, Learning. 1–26. New York: Routledge, p. 5
[38] Thatun, S, and Heissler, K. (2013) *op. sit.*, p. 104
[39] Pedraza, S. (1991) "Women and Migration: The Social Consequences of Gender." Annual Review of Sociology 17 (1): 303-25; Hertrich, V. *et al* (2012) *op. cit.*; Alber, E. (2012) "Kinderhandel in Westafrika? Eine Neue Bayreuther Studie Konfrontiert Internationale Kampagnen Mit Den Lebensverhältnissen Und Sichtweisen Minderjähriger Jugendlicher Mädchen." Universitaet Bayreuth; Mixed Migration Centre (2018) *op. cit.*, p. 19; REACH (2017) *op. cit.*, p. 17
[40] Dottridge, M. (2008) *op. cit.*, p. 49
[41] RMMS (2016) *op. cit.*, p. 16; UNICEF (2009) *op. cit.*
[42] Magqibelo, L. *et al* (2016) *op. cit.*, p. 79-80
[43] Save the Children (2009) *op. cit.*, p. 14
[44] Gagnon, A.J., Carnevale, F., Mehta, P., Rousseau, H. and Stewart, D.E. (2013) "Developing Population Interventions with Migrant Women for Maternal-Child Health: A Focused Ethnography." BMC Public Health 13 (1): 471; Clacherty, G. (2003) *op. cit.*; Hashim, I, and Thorsen, D. (2011) Child Migration in Africa. London: Zed Books
[45] Hall, K. (2016) "Maternal and Child Migration in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Evidence from the NIDS Panel Study." University of Cape Town. SALDRU Working Paper Number 178/ NIDS Discussion Paper 2016/5. Cape Town: SALDRU, p. 25
[46] Save the Children (2009) *op. cit.*, p. 14

> "Age, the contexts of where girls reside at their destinations, routes and modes of travel, their networks, reasons for leaving, contexts of departure and arrival are all factors that shape the experiences of different girls in different ways."

Intermediaries including family members and friends of the family who assist the travel of girls play an important role[47]. While they may sometimes prove untrustworthy, the assumption that a girl is being trafficked if she moves with an adult intermediary hides the protective role that intermediaries can play, particularly if they are close to the family. It can also indicate a limitation on understandings of "family" – and how those who are not blood relatives can be described as such. There is a need to better understand the role that intermediaries play in the journeys of girls in Southern Africa and to contextualise ideas of family and relationships. Temin et al. highlight that we need more research beyond the worst case scenario (which is mostly when girls become visible): 'understanding the weak points in girls' routine migration journeys, [could] provide pointers for programme planners to prevent transit problems before they occur'[48].

A cautionary note is that girls migrating with intermediaries are not automatically protected on route or at the destination. This is especially the case where the intermediaries have similar vulnerabilities as migrating girls do, for example due to being undocumented[49].

Peer networks also challenge the idea of being 'alone'. These networks amongst children were consistently mentioned in the research as extremely important. Clacherty, for example, highlights the importance of considering 'the coping strategies that migrating children are already exploiting' and one of the most important is the support of peers such as children who were in a similar situation.

Boyden also highlights the ways in which the children worked collectively rather than individually[50]. Clacherty, thus concludes: 'This means that any intervention needs to build on the groups that exist'[51]. A study by Save the Children[52], although looking at girls finding work at their destination, also supports the importance of networks: 'networks usually consisted of people they knew back home. These networks provided girls with a safety net in the event of the work conditions becoming difficult. The girls felt they would be supported if they left a difficult work situation and until they managed to find alternative employment'[53]. The report also describes how the girls used the networks to find work, i.e. if they had not arranged work before arriving in their host country they would often rely on their networks to help them. In some cases friends had an influence on the girls' decision to leave home. They created the 'impression that finding work and making money was easy and made the prospect of leaving home to work very attractive'[54].

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[47] Whitehead, A. and Hashimm, I.M. (2005) "Children and Migration." Background paper for DFID migration team. London: DFID
[48] Temin, M., et al (2013) *op. cit.*, p. 41
[49] O'Connell Davidson, J. and Farrow. C. (2007) *op. cit.*, p. 10-11
[50] Boyden, J. (2009) *op. cit.*, p. 129
[51] Clacherty, G. (2003) *op. cit.*, p.42; Gagnon, A., et al (2013) *op. cit.*; Temin, M., *et al* (2013) *op. cit.*, p. 3
[52] Save the Children (2009) *op. cit.*
[53] *Ibid*, p. 14
[54] *Ibid*, p. 16

Photo: Save the Children South Africa

Interestingly, Matshaka also found that Zimbabwean migrant women themselves socialise each other into 'acceptable female behaviour'[55], making networks amongst girls a potential entry point into understanding (and tackling) the effects of restrictive and limiting patriarchal norms.

Finally, migrating girls are not a homogenous group[56]. Age, the contexts of where girls reside at their destinations, routes and modes of travel, their networks, reasons for leaving, contexts of departure and arrival are all factors that shape the experiences of different girls in different ways. These differences result in different types of vulnerabilities, abilities and strategies to succeed, cope with adversity and mitigate risk[57]. This recognition makes the case for contextual reading of findings to ensure that experiences are properly understood and that the right help can be targeted in the right way. If, however, children are framed uniformly, this results in simplistic ideas about their exploitation and vulnerability without a clear understanding of empirical realities.

> "The report also describes how the girls used the networks to find work, i.e. if they had not arranged work before arriving in their host country they would often rely on their networks to help them."

[55] Matshaka, N.S. (2013) "Mobile Women: Negotiating Gendered Social Norms, Stereotypes and Relationships."

[56] Montgomery, M.R., Balk, D., Liu, Z. and Adamo, S. (2012) "Urban Migration of Adolescent Girls: Quantitative Results from Developing Countries.", p. 28; Temin, M., *et al* (2013) *op. cit.*, p. 3

[57] Temin, M., *et al* (2013) *op. cit.*; Palmary, I. (2009) "For Better Implementation of Migrant: Children's Rights in South Africa." United Nations Children's Fund. Johannesburg: Forced Migration Studies Programme, p. 3; Save the Children UK (2007) *op. cit.*, p. 4; Gomez, L. (2015) "Migration and Its Impact on Children's Lives: A Literature Review." B.A. Thesis Faculty of Social Work, University of Iceland; Clacherty, G. (2003) *op. cit.*

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

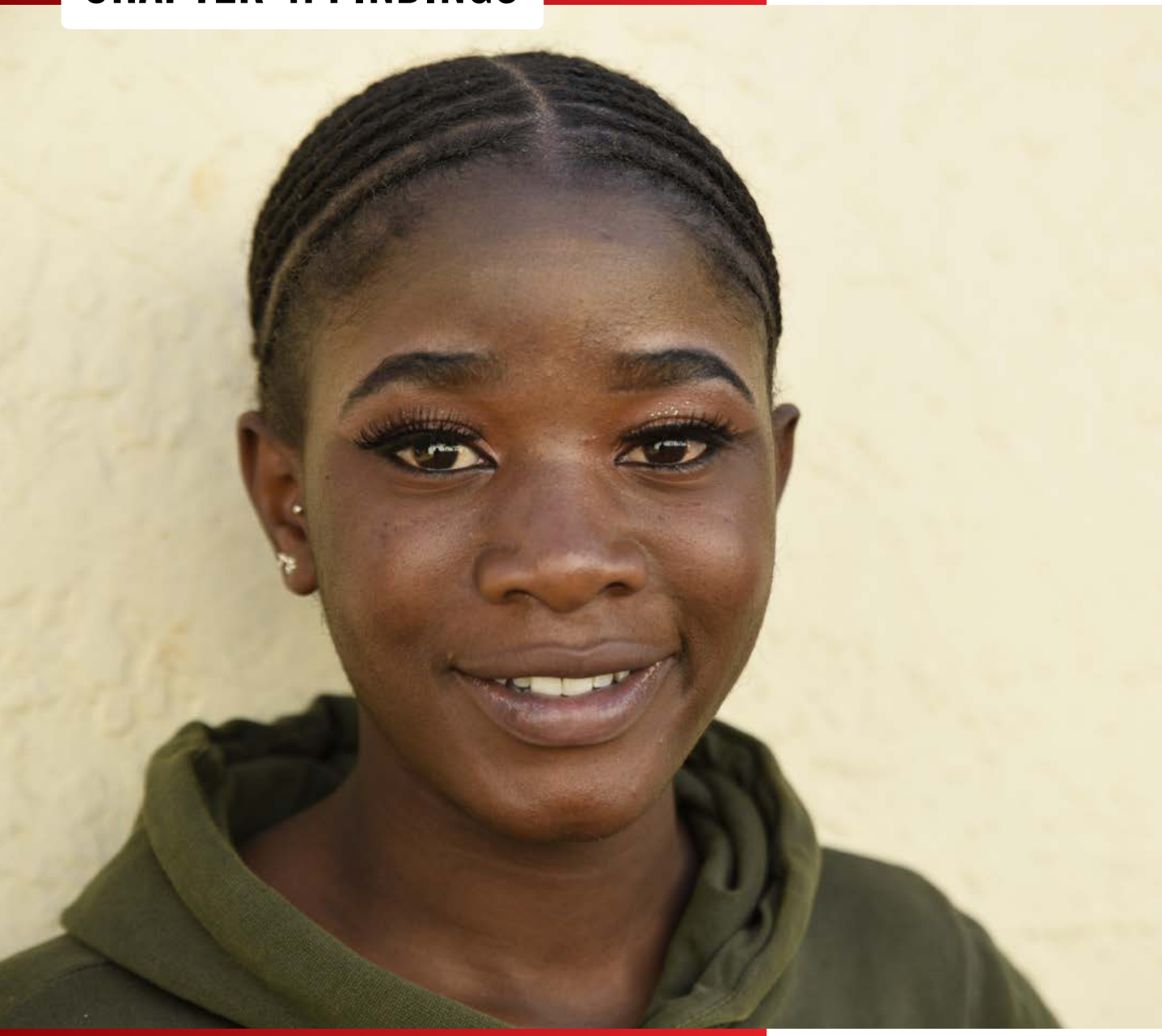


Photo: Save the Children South Africa

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

For ease of use, findings from the original research are reorganized here by theme according to their relevance at each stage of the migration journey. Findings build upon themes and prevailing frameworks of interpretation presented in the literature review.

For each of the themes that emerged from this study, this section provides a short discussion drawing on key points made by the girls, illustrated with quotes from the field work. This section also attempts to highlight the areas where girls' experiences seem to differ from those of boys, in particular where girls themselves made distinctions between their own and boys' experiences.

4.1 Pre-migration

4.1.1 Balancing deception and expectations

"Girls are an investment. You bring them to do house chores for you, she will also bring like – be an investment. Will a boy take care of my children?
– Ariel, 20, DRC

We came here because we wanted money. They told us there's no work in Mozambique, we can only find work in South Africa.
– Wendy, 18, Mozambique

Some girls described what they were told by family and friends before and during their journeys to South Africa. These were primarily lies or 'half-truths'. The term 'half-truths' is used here to suggest that partial information about life in South Africa was given and other information deliberately left out. 'Half-truths' were about the type of support the girls were told they would receive, including places to stay, access to work and education and, more generally, the kinds of lives they could have. This played into the expectations the girls had of being able to change their lives and find something different and better.

The girls talked about the significance of returned migrants who showed off their riches and talked about Johannesburg as a great city, which the girls said they now knew was not true.

"They used to tell us that in South Africa there's a lot of work. You can find money easy."
Researcher: "So, who told you that?"
"The people that came to South Africa already. Some people in the neighbourhoods. Those people used to tell us that it's easy to find nice clothes in South Africa at a

'Half-truths' were about the type of support

the girls were told they would receive, including places to stay, access to work and education

and, more generally, the kinds of lives they could have.

> Girls suggested that it is often older members of their families that keep the deception alive, not peers, girls or boys.

> Many of the girls were angry they had been lied to and all of them, when asked what they would say to other girls thinking of coming said they would tell them "never to come".

lower price. With little amount of money, you can buy many, many clothes. So, I also heard that, and I used to see my friends, they built houses, so I became eager and I wanted to try it as well. We came here because we wanted money. They told us there's no work in Mozambique, we can only find work in South Africa." – Girls, Mozambique

This description of returning migrants telling stories of money and work is not uncommon. There is pressure on migrants to pretend they have "made it" while showing that they can provide for families back home. For the girls the situation was different as none of them had been able to go home and were not able to work to send money to family but the role of deception in shaping their expectations and choices around leaving home and migrating is clear. Girls suggested that it is often older members of their families that keep the deception alive, not peers, girls or boys. A few of the Mozambican girls in Tembisa spoke about family members who had come to South Africa in the past – a father, a grandfather, two had uncles who were presently working in South Africa.

Many of the girls were angry they had been lied to and all of them, when asked what they would say to other girls thinking of coming said they would tell them "never to come". However, when explored further it was also clear that the girls generally did not see another option and that they probably still would have come even if told not to.

The girls were very clear in stating that girl migrants face more risks in terms of being seen as an "investment" by other family members.

In this situation the family stands to benefit from encouraging a girl to come to South Africa. One of the girls compared this to boys, whom she stated *"will come for like two months and then at 16 he gets a job even as security (guard) and move out*". Girls recognise that they are more "useful" to family members than boy migrants and, that they can be exploited in many ways. This pattern was also clear in Ressano Garcia, Mozambique, where some girls had come to work for relatives.

Girls face multiple and intersecting challenges and risks once they have moved and often because of the ways in which they have been convinced to leave home and search for a better life.

"Many of them – friends and family members, they call you to say here in South Africa it is better – something like that. They make it so you think you should come here. After coming you stay in the house, they treat you like … I do not know … maybe you are not given food and there are many reasons why you go out and look for a man to take care of you. After that you find yourself pregnant. He says it's your business and then you give birth … then it is not easy and to find a job here is hard"
– Hope, 18, Zambia

Many of the girls who participated in this study understood that the deception set them on a trajectory of exploitation, including trading sex for basic needs and services, and vulnerabilities, such as early pregnancy.

These risks tend to be heightened when the girls had not prepared themselves for coming to South Africa and had not made plans about where to live or how to support themselves. Some of the girls from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) described having no idea where they were going and simply running away because of the threat of war and violence around them.

"I was 16 or 15 … I was just following people … I did not know if we are going where and where. Just following people until I find myself here in South Africa."
– Sarah, DRC

A few of the Zambian and Mozambican girls (who had almost all crossed into South Africa as over-14s) indicated that they had more of a plan and idea about where they wanted to go and how to get there and for them, the vulnerabilities seemed less. They had ideas of where to access support and how to tap into existing networks. One of the patterns that emerged for the Mozambican girls was that many were orphans, or without a dedicated caregiver at home. Many of the girls interviewed in Ressano Garcia were also orphans and had come to work with extended family members at the border or were on their way to South Africa to earn money for family, such as brothers and sisters.

Clearly, deception and "half-truths" can have severe consequences. In many of the cases described here, they direct girls into spaces of risk or leave them in situations for which they are not prepared and do not have the skills and tools to handle on their own.

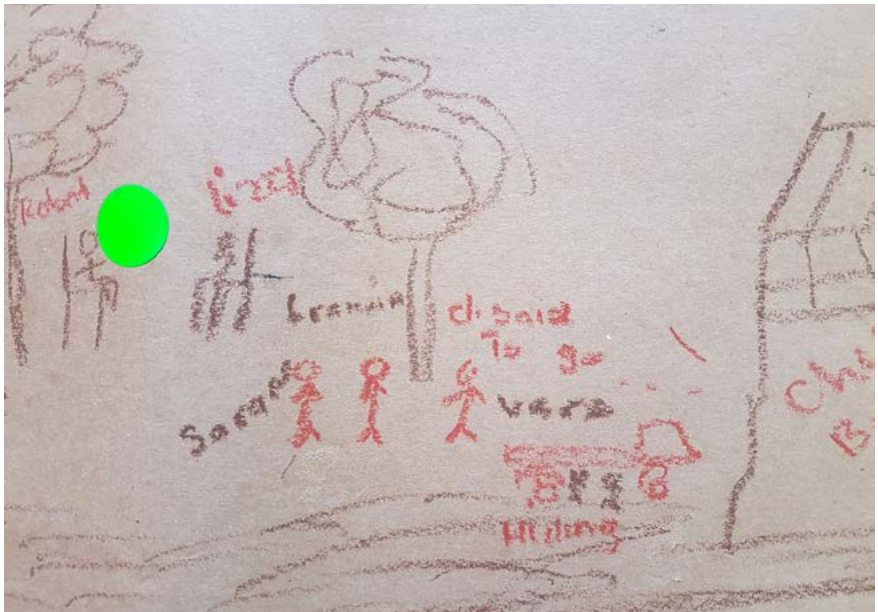


Photo: Suzy Bernstein

Out of
53 GIRLS
who participated in the study, only
1 case
of possible trafficking was discovered.

4.1.2 Little evidence of human trafficking

Despite the finding that many of the girls who participated in this study felt they had been lied to and in some cases, coerced into migrating to South Africa, this study found very little evidence of human trafficking. Out of the 53 girls who participated in the study, only one case of possible trafficking was discovered. This shows that girls on the move migrate in many different ways, face many vulnerabilities – and that trafficking, while one piece of this picture cannot be the dominant lens.

There were many other cases of smuggling and of sexual exploitation reported, that were not trafficking. This is important because, as noted in the literature review, trafficking is often conflated with smuggling and with sex work and sexual exploitation and used as a "catch all" term to described forms of irregular migration. This not only clouds a sense of the true numbers of trafficking victims but also misrepresents the realities of girls on the move.

Many of the participants reported selling or exchanging sex on their journeys from their home countries or, once in South Africa as a means to cross borders and make ends meet. For example, Hope left her three-year-old daughter with her grandparents when she moved, first to Zambia, and then on to South Africa in search of employment. She describes,

"I came here … I do not have any transport to come to South Africa. I make a friend to the bus people and the bus driver … if he sleeps with me so that he can bring me to South Africa… I was hoping to find a job but I couldn't find … then you got to sleep with the men …"
– Hope, 18, Zambia

It is important to note that the exchange or sale of sex by girls under the age of 18 cannot be labelled as sex work. Nor can it be viewed outside of the context of gendered power imbalances and exploitation that they face as they try to migrate. That said, it is clear from the findings that for girls on the move the sale or exchange of sex became a part of the many vulnerabilities they faced on their journeys and, sometimes was seen as the strategy to be used in order to be able to move. This comes down to a lack of options and choice – often created through vulnerabilities such as lacking documentation and safe means by which to cross borders and enter another country.

Violence in the family, including domestic abuse, acted as a push factor for some of the girls who participated in this study.

4.1.3 Violence in the family as a driver of migration

Violence in the family, including domestic abuse, acted as a push factor for some of the girls who participated in this study. Notably, a few of the girls in the groups from DRC and Mozambique who were also young mothers, mentioned experiences of violence and severe abuse by men.

4.2 Girls in transit

4.2.1 Networks and protection in transit

The truck driver was kind. He made sure we had food and water.
– Rachel, 10, DRC

The girls described the role of adult others (not relatives or those known to them) on their journeys who provided support and protection and often facilitated their journeys. The role of adult others appeared most significant among a few of the Congolese girls, especially the younger ones who had not had a plan to leave and were following instructions from adults such as neighbours or community members. Truck drivers were, for the Congolese girls in particular, significant, helping them hide in their trucks, providing food and helping them navigate their routes. They also often went beyond their duty in providing advice to the girls on how to cross borders and what to do. For example, Genoria described how the truck driver told her to make it look like she was carrying a baby on her back so that the border officials would let her through. The truck driver also helped them in other ways, hiding girls, keeping them from being detected and even buying them food. Similar experiences were described by Zambian girls traveling across Zimbabwe and crossing into South Africa.

> "The truck driver told her to make it look like she was carrying a baby on her back so that the border officials would let her through."

The Mozambican girls in the group said they were protected by taxi drivers who are part of a particular association.

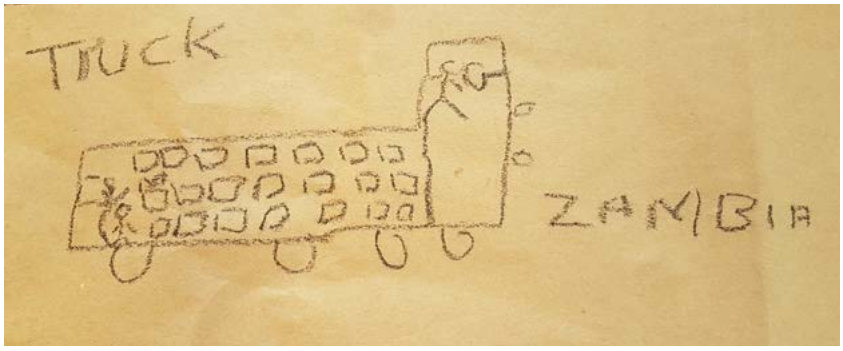
"It's not easy to be raped by the driver because those drivers are driving cars that are not theirs. They have the owners of those cars that they're driving. So, if you know the owner, or the house of the owner, if something goes wrong during the trip you can go to the owner and report and then he will be punished."
– Mozambican girls, 18 to 20

The girls generally seemed to have felt more protected on their journeys than they did in their current situations in Johannesburg. It was also interesting that many spoke of the support and kindness of these strangers in comparison to neglect and abuse by family or communities as illustrated in the discussion around deception and expectations.

4.2.2 Border crossings and transport strategies

When the girls described their journeys to South Africa the majority of them spoke about the challenge of crossing borders. During the workshops and interviews we got detailed accounts of how girls cross borders from Congo to Zambia, Zambia to Zimbabwe and then into South Africa. We found, however, that the Congolese and Zambian girls mostly spoke about crossing the Zimbabwean border and less so about the Mozambican and Zambian borders.

There is no good things on the roads. Because we are suffering, maybe someone can give you food for free but it is not easy to get things. It is not something good.
– Faith, 14, Zambia



Fatima's drawing of her and a friend travelling in the back of the truck with goods.
Photo: Suzy Bernstein

This could be because the Zimbabwean border was the last border they crossed before reaching South Africa and also because they tended not to know they had crossed the other borders, as shown in the quote from Ariel below. For the Zimbabwean border, however, the girls often left the trucks and crossed the river, climbing under or over the fence on the other side. Rachel from the DRC, who crossed at the age of seven remembers digging under the fence and how difficult it was. She notes that she was very scared. Meanwhile Sarah remembers seeing elephant and buffalo in the "jungles" as they skirted the river. She was also very scared.

The girls highlighted the important role of transport, particularly trucks, in ensuring that they could move from one country to another, even without documentation. As the quote below shows, often the girls did not know they were even crossing a border as they were hidden inside trucks.

I would not say that we jumped the border like other people. All I know is that we were paying and then they will hide us like in the buses they will put us under the chairs whenever we get to the border, I do not even know the borders. We all do not know the borders. But we were hiding inside the bags, underneath the bags and inside the trucks, we were hiding. Because we did not have papers.
– Ariel, 20, DRC

Mozambican girls in Tembisa gave detailed accounts of the border crossing. It seems that the cost of crossing is related to the kind of documentation girls have.

Some people talk to the owners and some talk to the taxi driver. What happens is this. The owner may say for people who doesn't have passport, for example, it's R500. Then the taxi driver will tell the people who doesn't have passport that it's R1,000. Do you understand? Then the person would say I have R800, then the taxi driver will take you all the way through the mountains, you see. That's when you go all the way through the mountains but if you give them the R1,000 you will pass through the border gates.
Researcher: Because the taxi drivers uses some of the money to pay the border guards or what?
Yes.
Researcher: Did you come with the easy way?
No, through the mountains. It took only 30 minutes at night. It was not very difficult. We were five. It is like the taxi takes you to the mountain road and then the Mariana (local name for agent/smuggler) that helps you pass is well known by the taxi driver and the owner.
So, it's dangerous for girls if they don't know the taxi driver and they don't know the Mariana because they have nowhere to report.
– Girls, 17-20, Mozambique

They are those people, they call themselves agents, like a travelling agent. They can lie to you, they say I am going to take you to South Africa. Maybe in Zimbabwe or Zambia they drop you there they go the other way.
– Ariel, 20, DRC

Not all "agents" – individuals who took money to facilitate their travel – were trustworthy. Sometimes they cheated them and stole their belongings. "Agents" could also be described as smugglers. As Ariel notes, All of the girls that we spoke to had crossed into South Africa with the help of smugglers at some point in their journey. Some of them were involved with pre-arranged travel and others had been used when they were met on the way. It was clear that there is a strong and well-organised ring of "agents" working to facilitate informal movement across borders but also exploiting the desperation of migrants and particularly girls.
Of her journey Ariel also notes how the agent put them on the last truck from Mozambique to South Africa and told them that their luggage would follow them and they could collect it after they had crossed the border,

"… but by the time we get to South Africa … there was nothing. We arrived here with only what we were wearing. They take everything…"
– Ariel, 20, DRC

The role of agents/smugglers is important in terms of the help given to cross borders. It is also important to distinguish this from trafficking as the girls spoke clearly about the arrangements made and money paid. While they were not deceived into moving to South Africa, as this was their intention, they were often exploited and tricked. While the lines between trafficking and smuggling are blurred, and one can often turn into the other, what is important here is how the girls crossed in terms of the challenges, negotiations and strategies rather than simply why and for what.

While many of the girls showed resilience and tenacity in how they dealt with the journey to South Africa, the fact that they were girls meant that they were often not in a position to negotiate and had to depend on others. Below, Katherine describes, for example, how agents facilitate crossings but at the same time take advantage,

He is pushing you … they are pushing you because they know you do not know the way. So there is one who make, who show you the way until you reach there … they can even make sure no one is at the border. They close the immigration office and they say give me more money.
– Katherine, 14, DRC

"The findings show that Mozambican and Zambian girls support each other – with children, in sharing rooms, sharing earnings to buy food, sharing information and through emotional support."

The girls described the agents as mostly men but also as "older people". Some women were involved too, "mothers". Asked if they trust these agents more because they are older, the girls responded " The problem is, you want to come here … now what can you do? You have to trust them" (Sarah, 20). Ariel added, "You do not trust them 100 per cent … they have a sweet talk…but you can lose everything".

Of the other details of their journeys the Congolese and Zambian girls mostly spoke about the hardship of the travel, of feeling cold, not having food and the fear as they hid at the border. One spoke about children dying in their truck from hunger and the cold and others feared for their lives as they spent weeks hiding – sometimes only coming out at night to stretch their legs and look for food. Rachel, the youngest of the girls we spoke to who had travelled to South Africa with her sister when she was seven years old described being scared on the truck and cold. She repeatedly told us "it was so cold and I was crying". Her older sister confirmed this by describing how Rachel was small enough to get on the floor of the truck and try to keep warm by crouching underneath other people. Ariel also described learning how to fast on her journey from the Congo to South Africa because she spent so much time without food. She notes that the times when she did get food were usually when she and her siblings were helped by truck drivers and other people with whom they were travelling.

4.3 Arrival/destination: The need for inclusion and social cohesion

This study focused on South Africa as the site for researching experiences in host communities during and after arrival and targeted two urban areas (the township of Tembisa, as well as inner-city Johannesburg) as field sites. Although findings may vary from context to context, and may well look slightly different in more rural border areas or areas where external factors such as local unemployment are not as severe, the findings in this section generally point to a disconcerting lack of integration in South African society. It is clear that being a migrant girl in this context comes with gendered implications which restricts inclusion in government-

provided health, education and other essential services – more so than for migrant boys of the same age. Both girls and boys negotiate xenophobia and violence on a constant basis – not only as a threat, but in fact in many instances, in its full force as daily reality and accepted part of what it takes to interact in the host society. For the sake of social cohesion, and stability of host communities, this set of findings suggest the need to urgently and very seriously consider strategies to promote tolerance, alleviate tension between host communities and migrants, prevent violence against migrant girls, address xenophobic attitudes among authorities interacting with child migrant populations, and in general, advance progress towards the Sustainable Development Goal targets that apply[58].

4.3.1 Support networks in host country

The findings show that Mozambican and Zambian girls support each other – with children, in sharing rooms, sharing earnings to buy food, sharing information and through emotional support. Older women from the same country of origin also support younger ones. This was evident, particularly with the older Mozambican women, most of whom were encountered in the hair salons. One older woman described how she had made sure her daughter-in-law (who was 18) had journeyed with a taxi association known to protect girls.

Marlena here she knows us as she is from Maputo too. She advises us.
– Sharon, 17, Mozambique

Support was less evident with the Congolese girls. Their situations, which were generally more desperate and difficult, meant that they focused on themselves and were unable to lean on others. They also showed high levels of distress that made them depressed and afraid and less able to seek out help from peers.

It is important to note that the girls wanted to talk to someone. This became most apparent in the workshop with the Zambian and Congolese girls. Towards the end of the first day, when the researchers realised the extent of distressing and painful experiences amongst the girls, especially those from the DRC, the girls were asked if it was too difficult for them to share their experiences and if they would prefer to stop telling stories. They were all very clear in their response – they did not want to stop and that this was an important process for them.

> “The girls wanted to talk to someone.”

Researcher: These are hard stories? Shall we stop because people are very tired. There are two stories left. We can stop.
Girls: No, no.
We are not tired, we are interested in stories.
Researcher: You are interested in stories?
Girls: Ja. It is like other people also had the same thing as me. It makes me not to feel alone.
– Girls, DRC

This emphasises how alone some of the girls feel, and how much they need social interaction as well as, in some cases, psychosocial support.

[58] See recommendations for a breakdown and suggested action plan.

"I have a problem of going to sleep because of no paper."
– Rachel, 10, DRC

4.3.2 Lack of documentation

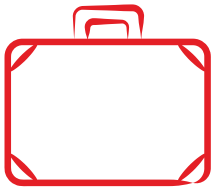
Lack of documentation emerged as a critical factor shaping the migration experiences and migration outcomes of all girls who participated. It obstructs access to services, such as healthcare and education, and causes high levels of anxiety and fear.

In summary:

- Younger girls were less likely to be documented, and less prepared for migrating
- Lack of documentation restricted asylum access, even for girls who would otherwise qualify
- Adolescent mothers face the additional challenge of obtaining documentation for babies or toddlers
- Lack of documentation effectively halted any possibilities of age-appropriate education and development for girls as young as 10, initiating a period of limbo during which they could not access school or health services, and were home-bound without prospects for psychosocial support or interaction with peers
- Girls often do not know how to redress their undocumented status. There is a need for targeted knowledge and awareness of how to regularise legal status, including for girls who are likely to qualify for asylum

"It seemed that younger girls had been less able to access information and advice about needing documents such as birth certificates and passports when they planned to travel and were therefore far less prepared."

Younger girls in Johannesburg were less likely to be documented. Some of the older teenagers had applied for asylum or had arrived with documents like birth certificates, or even a passport, but younger girls were more likely to have travelled without papers and some are now living in South Africa with no documents at all. This meant that accessing school, healthcare and any other form of support was difficult if not impossible. It seemed that younger girls had been less able to access information and advice about needing documents such as birth certificates and passports when they planned to travel and were therefore far less prepared.



"We can't get to school because we don't have the paper."
– Faith, 14, Zambia

Case study: How lack of pre-migration information can impact legal status

Rachel (aged 10) and Genoria (aged 18), two sisters from the DRC who had travelled alone to South Africa to find their grandmother described how, although people from their local community put money together for them to travel to South Africa, after their parents were killed in the war in DRC no one had discussed documentation.

Genoria's drawing of her father's death in DRC.
Photo: Suzy Bernstein

My father was killed when he was cutting wood and bringing it on the river and my mother went to look for him and she did not come back. So we sell things for the house. In the area where we are staying with people, we also ask them keep the money, I think I was fourteen. No one said about papers and Rachel and I were too young so we did not know.
– Genoria, 18, DRC

Genoria explained that the girls could not go to Home Affairs to claim asylum seeker status as they had no papers – not even their birth certificates. She also told us that her younger sister, Rachel should be on the grandmother's asylum application due to her age but that they had been told they needed a birth certificate to do this. She wondered, "maybe if I go to the embassy if I just give my name and the hospital I was born maybe they can help."

Like Rachel and Genoria, many of the other younger girls from DRC had very little idea about how to get documented and what documents they required. This could be related to the way in which many of the younger Congolese girls came to South Africa. They had not pre-planned their journeys but had been forced to run from home and therefore arrived unprepared and not knowing how to make things work. Some of the older Congolese girls had also escaped war and they too usually had no documents. However, some had planned and prepared their trip to South Africa, often coming to family, a boyfriend or husband. In these cases they had passports and could claim asylum seeker status.

Some of the older Congolese girls had also escaped war and they too usually had no documents.

The Zambian girls also seemed to have come without documents. Most of them had come to South Africa very young. They were most often encouraged to come by an older family member who had not told them to bring birth certificates or to try to get a passport. Older members of the family also tended to be undocumented and operated in an 'underground, out of sight' mode in South Africa. Most had also come from remote rural areas where there was no media or other information on migration so their source of knowledge was extended family.

The pattern was similar among the Mozambican girls in Ressano Garcia. Most of the younger ones had little understanding of the need for documentation before they left home and did not have documents. The older girls in Ressano Garcia, many of whom planned to move on to South Africa, had a passport, or at least knew how important documentation was. The Mozambican girls in Tembisa, however, all knew that a passport was important (they tended to be older when they had migrated). This is because having a passport is linked closely to the cost and method of crossing the border. In fact, it was so central to their lives that they described and categorised fellow Mozambicans by their documentation status – either "with passport" or "no passport".

All of the older girls (Congolese, Zambian and Mozambican) who had travelled to South Africa with children described the challenges they faced in trying to get their children documented. This included being asked to take a DNA test at the hospital. One girl noted that the cost of a DNA test is R3000. She explained,

"…the problem is that we are orphans here, we don't have money. How could I afford R3000 because how to pay? If it was free it is going to be okay, you see, that is the problem, a big problem."
– Mary, 19, DRC

Crucially, the existence of papers and, especially, having the correct documentation when in South Africa can determine a girl's experiences once in South Africa. The younger Zambian and Congolese girls without documents were in a state of absolute limbo. Not being able to go to school meant that they were stuck at home without any social interaction beyond immediate family and/or friends and crucially did not know where to start in terms of trying to get documented, and without intervention, they are unlikely to re-enter the formal education system and at risk of dropping out entirely of formal education.

4.3.3 Barriers to inclusion and access to services

- Even when girls have documentation which legally entitles them to work, xenophobic attitudes and employer ignorance about legality of employing asylum-seekers, restrict access to decent work
- Socio-economic exclusion increases vulnerability, of especially adolescent mothers to sex work, as well as to trading sex for basic needs and services which often pose the only reliable avenues, for a means to paying school fees, buying food and providing for children
- Girls who are mothers are more at risk of being socio-economically vulnerable when they do not have viable childcare options

Access to decent work

Girls who have settled in Johannesburg want to work. Most of the girls who participated in this study wanted to work to earn money to look after themselves, send money home or care for their children. For many a need to earn money was a defining factor in their reasons for leaving home. Barriers to decent work included lack of identity documentation, legal status, child care duties for young mothers, xenophobic attitudes or employer ignorance about labour laws, and not speaking the local language (or English). Such barriers forced girls to settle for exploitative and/or menial jobs, where pay was low (or withheld) and conditions unregulated, and in some cases, unsafe.

"I was just sitting there (in Maputo). I decided at least to try and get work here. To pay for my two children." – Girl, Mozambique

The older Congolese girls described the difficulties of securing work, even with an asylum permit. Even when a girl knew her rights, she was left with no negotiating space due to being a non-national and the assumptions made by prospective employers about asylum permits. This highlights the extreme levels of precarity that girls in Johannesburg experience in terms of job security and being able to support themselves as well as the extent to which (lack of) documentation weaves through all their everyday experiences.

It is also why many of the girls end up working within the informal sector for low wages and sometimes are exploited by not being paid having to trade sex for basic needs and services.

The Mozambican girls in Tembisa described how they knew there was work for women in the local factories but they could not access this as they needed some form of identification to get a job – it seemed that many young men got contract work by showing their Mozambican passports but the girls did not even have these so they did laundry for neighbours or worked in a hair salon.

In some cases, the girls also saw that older girls (over 18) who engaged in adult sex work were able to mitigate some of the financial challenges they faced and that in reality, sex work offered a viable option. Research shows that for migrant women, often without documentation and without the required qualifications to work in the informal sector, sex work can offer a means to pay rent, school fees and provide for their children[59]. At the same time, research also shows that sex workers, particularly in criminalised contexts such as Southern Africa, face high levels of violence from clients, the police and community-members, as well as discrimination and stigma. One of the girls participating in this study noted the extreme risks posed by sex work for her as a young mother, particularly in a context where migrants and refugees who sell sex face heightened risks due to being non-nationals (and often undocumented)[60].

"Research shows that for migrant women, often without documentation and without the required qualifications to work in the informal sector sex work can offer a means to pay rent, school fees and provide for their children."

"It is clear that a lack of options make girls on the move vulnerable to exploitation."

[59] Walker R. and Oliveira, E. (2015) 'Contested spaces: Exploring the intersections of migration, sex work and trafficking in South Africa'. Graduate Journal of Social Science, Vol. 11 (2)

[60] *Ibid*

Therefore, it is clear that a lack of options make girls on the move vulnerable to exploitation. Within this vulnerability strategies such as selling sex become attractive despite the risks leading to more risks and possible exploitation. Furthermore, risks can also come from family members and known adults and sometimes, the same lack of options for girls can lead them into relationships that they cannot easily escape.

"None of the girls interviewed had been able to return to school."

Access to education

Access to education was expressed as very important for the younger Congolese and Zambian girls but very difficult to achieve without documentation. None of the girls interviewed had been able to return to school despite many of them desperately wanting to learn.

Healthcare

The findings show that once girls arrive in South Africa they often need access to health services for themselves and their children, yet they faced challenges in accessing health care. This was reflected in their descriptions of being mistreated in government clinics and charged upfront for care. In particular, they highlighted challenges when accessing reproductive and maternal healthcare, including neglect and abuse when giving birth. Given the fact that many of the girls interviewed had become mothers at a young age, these challenges are particularly concerning.

"The girls also noted that there is a clear difference in terms of healthcare needs for girls and boys."

Some girls went on to state that fear of this type of treatment and of being charged meant that many women and girls chose not to go to the clinic and would rather stay at home and deliver their babies alone. Meanwhile other girls will work out which clinics and hospitals are 'foreigner-friendly' and ensure that they only go there rather than their local clinic.

The girls also noted that there is a clear difference in terms of healthcare needs for girls and boys. They described the boys as not having the same health needs and being able to manage without attending a clinic. When boys do need to see a health professional the girls stated that it was easier for them as they could move around more and do not have to think and plan in the same way that women and girls do. This issue is important because it shows that although girls do make a plan and learn to navigate challenges in accessing healthcare that they still face considerable difficulties and this could result in them avoiding treatment.

"We don't speak Zulu so then they don't want to speak to us in English and they help the next person."

Language

Not being able to speak local languages other than English often obstructs access to essential services to which girls may rightfully be entitled, such as access to justice, or primary healthcare services. In many cases, this was often because of deliberate (unlawful) discrimination by authorities responsible for providing government services.

The girls described that the police would not give them any time, even if they went to report a crime and that this was often because of language, "even if you go to

the police, police say if you want help then talk Zulu". In clinics, nurses would often insist that the girls speak in Zulu and when they couldn't they would not attend to them, "we don't speak Zulu so then they don't want to speak to us in English and they help the next person" (Fatima, 20, DRC).

Language also impacted on job opportunities. The girls told us that if they could not speak isiZulu nobody would employ them for retail or in the food industry.

As a result of this discrimination, some girls tended to stay at home and thus reduced social interactions beyond those of their own nationalities and ethnic groups. This further impacted their opportunities to engage and learn a local language. Such isolation can have a very negative impact on self-confidence and a sense of self. This came across quite clearly with some of the Zambian and Congolese girls who participated in the study, as they were at first very shy and introverted. While some eventually felt comfortable enough to speak, others remained visibly withdrawn.

Younger girls stated that it was easier for them to learn the local languages as they listened to people that stayed around them and shared their rooms.

While it was not made explicit whether this was different for boys, findings suggest that due to being on the streets more and mixing in broader circles boys may have more opportunities to learn the local languages than girls. Girls spoke a lot about isolation and being indoors, with responsibilities and dependants, and contrasted this to boys being more free and able to do what they want. Therefore, it seems that language barriers add to the levels of isolation that girls may feel and at the same time they struggle to break through this while they stay hidden and in fear of going out.

> "Girls spoke a lot about isolation and being indoors, with responsibilities and dependants, and contrasted this to boys being more free and able to do what they want."

4.3.4 Violence and xenophobia: the constant threat

A number of the girls described being targeted by the police on the streets of Johannesburg and having to run from them and/or hide. Even those with documents still lived in fear of being arrested for being "foreigners". Fear of the police came up many times in the workshops and interviews. This meant that their daily lives were shaped by constant fear and having to work out safe and unsafe spaces in which they could or could not move. When asked how it was to live in Johannesburg without papers the girls responded, "It is hard … you can't move up and down because you are scared they [police] will get you".

This issue is linked to the threat of violence from police. Girls in Tembisa described how the police grabbed and mishandled them when arresting them and the biggest fear was being put into the cells at the police station. One girl described how they had kept her friend in prison for two weeks.

It was clear from interviews that violence against migrant girls is often perpetrated by officials of the state and is not only neighbourhood or interpersonal violence.

Importantly, the girls noted that, although they were scared, they thought it was worse for boys than girls to be visible on the streets, particularly in terms of encountering the police.

> "It was clear from interviews that violence against migrant girls is often perpetrated by officials of the state and is not only neighbourhood or interpersonal violence."

> They described watching officials take bribes and also beating other migrants waiting in the queue.

Photo: Suzy Bernstein

Case study: Migrant boys are more visible, hence more easily targeted for harassment

I had to fight with the police and state my case for my brother. After I even given them the paper they still wanted to take him … but they found that me, this one they can't mess around with! They found me that I am something else, like I won't take it. Like I had to fight with them. I stood half naked (in my pyjamas) … he had done nothing wrong but he was arrested going to the shop … I told them you'd rather shoot me now. I am not scared of you guys, I studied here, I know the law in South Africa. Shoot me but my brother you don't take him anywhere. If I was timid they would have taken him and take money for it so I think boys have it worse.
– Ariel, 20, DRC

What is clear here in the targeting of a young migrant boy on the streets in Johannesburg is that boys are more likely to be arrested because they are visible. Boys, the girls argued, are out on the streets more, interacting more and looking for work and so the chances of them being targeted are much higher.

While girls also face this risk, the Zambian and Congolese girls seemed to think that the police were less likely to arrest a girl. For example, one of the girls from Zambia described the police stopping her in the street and asking to see her papers. She told us with a smile that she didn't have papers on her but since she was on the way to church she showed them her bible instead. While the other girls in the workshop were laughing about the idea of her bible being her form of documentation they also noted that, "the police didn't arrest her because she is a girl".

But the girls in Tembisa painted a slightly different picture.

Older woman: There is another girl who lives near here but she did not want to come and talk to you. She's afraid of being arrested.
Researcher: Does it happen that girls get arrested?
Girl 1: Some people tell the police that people which lives in the towns have no passport. They arrest you then they investigate wanting to find out who did you come with; how did you come. They take you to the nearest police station. If you have money you pay them; if you don't have they take you.
Girl 2: My friend, ah, they kept her in the cells for two weeks.
Older woman: Sometimes they arrest you when you are living with your husband. He went to work when he comes from there he misses you. You're gone, and he has no money to pay so that they will release you.
Girl 1: I am afraid of that so I stay in the house and don't go out alone.
Older woman: They won't arrest her, though because she's pregnant.
– Girls, aged 16-20 with an older Mozambican woman, Mozambique

The girls also stated that they thought boys faced more risks when they interacted with police and Home Affairs officials. They noted, "I think now when it comes to police stations, Home Affairs and the clinics, for boys it is more difficult. I think for boys they treat the boys very bad" (Ariel, 20, DRC) and "At Home Affairs and the police they [boys] get treated worse." (Sarah, 22, DRC).

Negotiating Home Affairs

For the asylum-seeking girls who participated in this study, having to negotiate the South African Department of Home Affairs caused high levels of anxiety and distress[61]. They described the challenge of the long queues, the corruption and bribes by officials and security and the unsympathetic attitudes and unwillingness of the Home Affairs officials to listen to their (often traumatic) stories about why they needed asylum because they were escaping war.

The girls described Home Affairs as a distressing place to visit. They described watching officials take bribes and also beating other migrants waiting in the queue. Again, they mentioned that men and boys here bore the brunt of the violence.

> "One of the Zambian girls was 19, her child was 6 – her story suggested that one of her reasons for leaving home in the first place was the rape that resulted in the child's birth."

> "They described watching officials take bribes and also beating other migrants waiting in the queue."

4.4 Who are the girls who migrate in this context?

As well as being complex and diverse, the experiences and realities of girls who migrate also showed patterns in terms of where girls face increased risks and where they are better able to strategise or to make their situations better. For example:

- Girls who travelled with truck drivers were often given extra support and protection
- Girls with documentation tended to face fewer daily precarities in the host country
- Girls who had pre-planned their journey and arrival tended to be better able to navigate and manage everyday life in Johannesburg.
- Girls with babies and children of their own faced heightened risks and encountered specific challenges such as in accessing healthcare.
- Younger girls who were more likely to be without documents found themselves in more difficult situations and unable to access education and employment.

Two themes that seem valuable to lift out of the overall interaction with girls who had migrated or were migrating along the Southern Africa routes, include:

- the recognition that many young girls are mothers, and often inadvertently, yet as a matter of consequence, were excluded from programme activities or services targeting children on the move;
- the recognition of resilience, conscious decision-making and problem-solving that even the most vulnerable of girls apply in the interests of realizing their migration plan.

[61] Note that it was mostly the Congolese girls who had to interact with Home Affairs as they tried to access Asylum Seeker papers; Mozambican and Zambian girls did not attempt to access any South African papers.

For me it's complicated because, for example, yesterday it was my son's birthday, so I didn't have even a six Rand cake for my child. So, it's complicated, I wish I could be like other mothers that sing happy birthday to their children.
– Wendy, 19, Mozambique

4.4.1 Girls who are mothers

Some of the teenage girls were mothers and this significantly altered the risks and challenges they faced in transit and in surviving in Johannesburg. Two of the Mozambican girls in Tembisa, two of the Zambian girls, and one of the Congolese girls had made their journeys to South Africa with their children. They had given birth to these children when very young. One of the Zambian girls was 19, her child was 6 – her story suggested that one of her reasons for leaving home in the first place was the rape that resulted in pregnancy. One of the Mozambican girls in Tembisa was 20 and she had two children – the first had been born in Mozambique when she was 17, after which she left to join her Mozambican boyfriend in Tembisa. She now has a second child and still lives with her boyfriend.

All of the girls who had come as adolescent mothers had crossed the border informally – in the Mozambican cases "through the forest" and the Congolese "hidden in a truck". What is important about these narratives is that some girls travel and cross borders with their small children and babies but remain within the category of 'girls on the move'. Essentially these girls are still children themselves but their identity as mothers seems to replace that of being children and having similar needs to other children.

Other girls told stories of giving birth in South Africa. This is dealt with under the theme on health service access, but it is important to mention here that generally the girls experienced many challenges accessing services and faced high levels of discrimination, stigma, neglect and even abuse. The Mozambican girls in Tembisa talked about the challenges of support and described how they supported each other in looking after a friend's child if she managed to get some informal work such as cleaning a neighbour's house. This network of peer support is discussed in the theme on social support networks. The Mozambican girls talked about how this peer network was not always enough though, and how at home there was a broader social network.

Researcher: How old was this little one when you came? (refers to child)
Wendy: One year.
Researcher: And you left him there?
Wendy: On the first time I came alone but the second, I came with him. Yesterday was his birthday. He is two.
Researcher: Yes, he looks like he's two. How is it to be a mother here?
Wendy: It is difficult here because if you are in Mozambique you can ask for a cup of rice from a relative, then you find some things, some wood to cook, it's okay.

But here, if you don't have, it's difficult. Children must…
Sharon: Here it's bad because you can go to bed hungry, while in Mozambique you can ask for a plate of food at least to give the child. While here, people can eat in front of you, they don't care, yes. It's not easy.
– Wendy, 18 and Sharon 19, Mozambique

Finding money for rent was the biggest issue for all of the girls in all of the sites targeted for this research. Most of them shared a room in a house, or a backroom shack with other girls, though some shared with husbands or boyfriends.

Motherhood sometimes also involves transactional decisions about relationships with men. Some of the girls were in relationships with men because these men provided support for them and their children. While the lines between this kind of need to trade sex for basic needs and services and sex work described in theme two are blurred it is important to note the differences between a pre-arranged transaction i.e. sex in exchange for a truck ride or rent and sex within a relationship, even if the relationship is based on a search for security and support.

What is specific about these relationships for girls is that they were trapped by the need to support their children, or in other words, the burden of care. Having children to care for also impacts on access to services such as healthcare and shelters. One girl talked about how she could not secure a space in a shelter because she had a boy child of 7 years and the shelter would not take boys over 6 years. Thus, an obvious gap in support forces these girls into heightened spaces of risk.

The Mozambican girls talked about how they may have come to South Africa to join boyfriends, often the fathers of their children and how being far from extended family made them more vulnerable.

When asked if these experiences were different for men the girls were quite clear in their responses.

"Men when they get here they become rough because they can mistreat you, they know you have nowhere to go. But in Mozambique they know you have relatives, you have neighbours that care, so it's different, yes."
– Girl, 18, Mozambique

"I think it is much harder for a woman than a man. A man can go any place that a woman cannot – especially when they have kids…. I can see a situation where a mother has a child and that means leaving is very difficult. But she can then work for R2000 and there is nothing left, work for R3000 and there is nothing left. With the kids you will see some are complaining, they want to go to school…and for the future where is a human without an education? A woman is a woman but it is not like before where people could survive without an education. Nowadays even a husband will tell you they need an educated woman. That is the most difficult part of all the stories."
– Girl, 20, DRC

4.4.2 Agency and resilience

There are many examples of girls showing a sense of agency in the previous themes and also examples of their resilience in the face of adversity. This theme discusses some examples in more detail. The best example of agency we identified is found in the experiences of the Mozambican girls living in Tembisa and is reflected in their discussion of why they chose to migrate. Most of the girls described how, when looking back at their situations in Mozambique, they realised they were unlikely to ever get jobs back home. They noted and agreed with one another that even though they now realised that many people had exaggerated the potential jobs and the good lifestyle in South Africa, they still had more chance of finding work in South Africa than at home.

I was nineteen when I came. So, people told me, you can get a job in Joni (a name given by Mozambicans for anywhere in South Africa based on the most common destination, Johannesburg) make some money there? They told us there's no work in Mozambique, we can only find work in South Africa. Yes, we came here because we wanted money.
– Girls, 16-20, Mozambican

> "I was just sitting there. I decided at least to try and get work here. To pay for my two children."

Because there's no work in Maputo. If… if it was possible to work in Maputo I would stay there with my kids – my old mother looks after them. If you could find me a job in Maputo I wouldn't come here anymore.
Researcher: You others?
If there was work in Maputo we wouldn't…
No.
I was just sitting there. I decided at least to try and get work here. To pay for my two children. – Girls, 19-21 Mozambican

It was clear that these Mozambican girls had strategised: they had planned their trips, they had raised the money for a taxi fare by borrowing from relatives or working, they had planned where they were going and had multiple phone numbers of friends and relatives in Johannesburg to contact on arrival.

I came here by influence of my friend who lives here with her father. That friend told me that there was work in South Africa, you can come over, life will be better. I came with the taxi driver who dropped me here where my friend was.
Interviewer: So, how did you know where to find that driver?
I got the taxi in the CBD in Maputo. I went to the taxi driver and told him Tembisa and he brought me here and then I phoned my friend and she fetched me. I had money for the phone. – Girl, 18, Moz

So, there is a taxi in Magude (a small town in Mozambique close to the border) that takes people, so I got that taxi. I was coming to meet someone here, but when the person knew I was coming he switched off his phone. So I went to my uncle.
– Girl, 19, Moz

Therefore, although they did not and perhaps could not have anticipated many of the vulnerabilities and hardships they faced once in South Africa, most girls demonstrated a sense of agency, and had worked out a plan based on what they needed to do and with a future orientation of earning money and making life better.

This wasn't the only example of agency. Once they had got to Johannesburg the girls worked most often in their own small informal businesses, even though this was often not successful, and also in some cases band together to share child care so that young mothers can go to work

"So, I tried to sell… I cooked chicken feet, sold tomatoes and other things. I tried to cook, like but things were not working out."
– Adolescent mother, 18, Mozambique

Girls in Ressano Garcia usually come to work as domestic workers. While this was often something set up for them in many cases by family and neighbours, they also claimed that they had made a choice and shown agency. A few girls made the point that they had chosen to work to send money home, "I wanted to come to Ressano to continue with study and help my family back in Taminga".
"When a person grows up they have to find a job."

Interestingly there were far fewer examples of a sense of agency from the Congolese young women. From their descriptions of their journeys and life in Johannesburg there appeared to be much less resilience – or at least at that moment in time they were struggling a lot more than many of the other girls. This is likely because of the emotional distress and pain that many of them had experienced and as yet, not received any help or support for. There is of course a level of resilience and possibly agency in running away and enduring the kinds of journeys that the Congolese girls faced on route (given that there is always those who stay and cannot make the journey) and this should not be underestimated. However, because of the current difficult situations they were in and because of the 'heaviness' of the stories that the girls shared (remembering that for many this was the first time they had been given the space to share) they did not talk about any coping strategies they may have had.

Time and scope limited the extent to which this study could investigate in detail how girls negotiate trauma, or which strategies they employ to cope emotionally in the spaces they inhabit. Nonetheless, the girls' accounts were almost always characterised to some degree by a glimmer of the kind of resilience that children show in difficult circumstances.

"Time and scope limited the extent to which this study could investigate in detail how girls negotiate trauma, or which strategies they employ to cope emotionally in the spaces they inhabit."

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Photo: Save the Children South Africa

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

From the findings, it is clear that experiences of girls on the move are diverse, complex and often push beyond the existing frames and categories used to describe and capture their realities. Their everyday lives, before they move, during migration and once they arrive cannot be easily summarised. The girls themselves often struggled to articulate the multiple layers to their stories and the conflicting emotions. But what was clear was that there were many experiences recounted by the girls, as well as thoughts and opinions provided by them, that are not often discussed and which are seemingly absent from the contemporary body of published research about girls on the move.

Therefore, this sections draws from the nine key themes in the findings to present what should be recognized as 'new' contributions to the existing field of knowledge captured in contemporary migration literature that addresses the realities of girls on the move. In part, the aim is to build a case for inspiring further, more rigorous research into prevailing themes; but also to draw on the voices and experiences of the 52 girls participants, against the framework of existing knowledge explored in the literature review, in order to contribute to a broader and more complex understanding of the experiences of girls on the move across Southern Africa.

To this end, four main points of analysis are used:

- Complex realities of moving and migrating
- Gendered vulnerabilities: balancing the visibility and invisibility of girls who migrate
- Documentation: A ticket to protection and identity
- Listening to girls on the move

Complex realities of moving and migrating

The journeys of girls on the move weave through a complex set of social networks of which the nature sometimes determines the experience. In particular, social networks clearly shaped challenges and risks and how the girls coped with them.

This complex social reality remains largely invisible and in this study only came to the surface through the layered discussions around the drawings of journeys and of home and host country. For example, in the finding discussed in section 4.2.1, 'Networks and protection in transit', this report illustrates the way in which unknown adults such as truck drivers and strangers can help facilitate travel and often take on a protective role during their journeys. The literature review identified the role of 'intermediaries' in the travel of girls and showed how research has reported on this role, ranging from those who prove untrustworthy and often exploit and take advantage of the girls, to those who play a protective role. The findings revealed a similar range but in contrast to the literature where truck and taxi drivers are usually presented as a risk because they demand sex in exchange for lifts, our primary research showed that truck and taxi drivers often play a role in the safe movement of girls. They help them negotiate borders, find food if needed and ensure they meet with the relative or friend that they were making their way to join.

"The journeys of girls on the move weave through a complex set of social networks of which the nature sometimes determines the experience."

“It is also important to take cognisance of girls’ agency in working out whom they can trust, and in navigating the various safe and unsafe spaces they encounter. We should not assume they are solely dependent on support while at the same time we should not see them as without vulnerabilities.”

This is important because, while the risks of having to trade sex for basic needs and services and rape are a reality for girls on the move, it is clear that labelling all truck and taxi drivers as a threat and problem is a mistake as they could in fact be co-opted as protectors of girls. A recent study[62] conducted on the Uganda/Kenya border showed how truck drivers can be formed into an association to protect girls. It is also important to take cognisance of girls’ agency in working out whom they can trust, and in navigating the various safe and unsafe spaces they encounter. We should not assume they are solely dependent on support while at the same time we should not see them as without vulnerabilities. Therefore, what is key here is acknowledging the risks while recognising the points of intervention and where support can be strengthened.

The findings also emphasise the tendency of girls to act and rely upon advice or offers of support from known adults, mostly family members and relatives. Sometimes this was helpful but at other times it was duplicitous and exposed them to greater risks, leaving them more vulnerable than they were at home. In one particular case of a Mozambican girl, this also led to an identified case of trafficking. Returning to a point made in the literature review about the role of families as drivers of migration it is useful here to reiterate the caution by O’Connell Davidson that ‘the uncritically positive emphasis on the family is questionable, given that statistically, families could be argued to pose a far greater risk to children than ‘traffickers’’[63]. Girls do face risks of exploitation and sometimes, yet uncommonly, of trafficking, but this research shows that the person pushing or encouraging a girl into a situation of vulnerability is usually known to them and is often a family member. Equally, one cannot uncritically say that these are “bad parents or relatives” but that the entire context is mostly one of economic vulnerability on both sides.

It is important therefore not to simply accept the common assumption that most girls are trafficked but to recognise the contextual factors surrounding the situation that girls find themselves in, what factors led to their decision to migrate, what is working for them, what isn’t and asking them how they want to be helped.

All of this indicates the importance of placing “trafficking” alongside the other ways and circumstances in which girls cross borders (or migrate internally) rather than as the dominant frame. This does not mean that trafficking is ignored and lessened in any way as a human rights violation and crime. Rather, it ensures, as argued in the literature review, that the label of trafficking is not (mis)used to suggest that all girls who move are deceived, exploited or forced to move against their will. The literature review identified ways in which the trafficking discourse (of women and children in particular) is frequently used to suggest that girls on the move – as migrants, as females and as children – are at risk in a way that justifies certain interventions that aim to put them ‘back in place’. This suggested ‘triple anomaly’ offered a critical insight into how girls on the move are often framed and acted upon and crucially, sustains the ‘invisibility’ of the complex realities of girls on the move.

The findings from this study support this argument because they show that migrating girls face a broad range of experiences and fluctuating levels of victimhood and agency. In fact, it could be argued that to focus only on trafficking – or to consider the other experiences under this one frame – is actually to increase the risks that

[62] Clacherty, G. (2017) Case Studies of Community-based Child Protection Activities. Columbia: Interagency Learning Initiative Child Protection Forum.
[63] O’Connel Davidson (2011, 469–70)

girls on the move face due to misrepresentation of their experiences and failure to listen to and understand what they want and need.

What is also clear from the findings is that labelling commonly associated with the realities for girls in migration or displacement, (for example "sex work" or "transactional sex") did not adequately reflect the complexities of relationships and transactions; nor were they conducive to facilitate thinking about effective and supportive ways forward. Labels such as these carry the risk of distancing practitioner and policymaker focus from a human rights perspective in which the contexts of disempowerment, exploitation and a lack of choices must be recognised. Where recognizing the agency of girls is paramount, this should be done through a lens of protection and support as well as considering the root causes of the lack of choices that lead to heightened vulnerabilities, such as a lack of documentation, poor prospects for realising life aspirations and lack of safe and legal pathways for crossing international borders.

Photo: Save the Children South Africa

The girls prioritise finding work and making money to be able to meet basic needs, particularly when they have children to provide for. A search for employment is often the reason they leave in the first place and is certainly seen as the key to moving beyond the initial state of desperation that many find themselves in when they arrive. The levels of need, of hope, of loneliness, of struggle and of burden often mean that they move between various means of making money and engaging in relationships whether it is through selling clothes, exchanging sex, looking for a boyfriend and securing rent or school fees as part of a transaction. Sometimes this means doing work that they do not want to do or compromising on what feels safe or comfortable in order to get by. Evidently, this lack of options can lead to greater risks and particularly for younger girls, serious abuse and violations of their rights.

Ultimately all of these experiences, which cannot easily be captured by a clear label (and hence they remain invisible) make up the continuum between ultimate vulnerability and successful, urban existence, which characterizes the daily reality of girls on the move.

These experiences must be further unpacked and understood as complex and nuanced in order to inform relevant policymaking, inclusive service provision and programmatic support, both in contexts of origin and in host communities.

> "Evidently, this lack of options can lead to greater risks and particularly for younger girls, serious abuse and violations of their rights."

Gendered vulnerabilities: balancing the visibility and invisibility of girls who migrate

The findings from this study suggest that overall, the visibility, and lack of visibility of girls needs to be better understood against the context of how it is influenced by, and how it in turn impacts on, gendered vulnerabilities of girls and indeed boys on the move. There are categories of girls on the move who are currently hidden from the radar of service providers, policymakers and development practitioners – because they do not fit predominant and stereotypical profiles against which their lives are interpreted, because they may choose to remain hidden and because their daily reality may be such that they never really fully feature physically in the outer reality of the neighbourhoods they call home.

Girls with children are largely invisible – in research and in reports and literature and to state and non-state actors.

They are invisible to the state and non-state actors because they are no longer really seen as children once they have children of their own but yet are not adults. They are invisible in research because they do not fit the frames that have generally been used to capture the experiences of migrant mothers, namely 'trans-national mothers', mothering from a distance and older women who migrate with families and are seen in relational roles.

The findings showed that the girls continued to have many of the same needs as other girls, but that the challenges of meeting these needs were greater, due to their responsibilities to provide for dependants. Yet while having increased needs the girls are also largely invisible when it comes to accessing services. As the findings showed, many of the girls chose not to go out often and to stay at home due to fear of being arrested or harassed. This was particularly the case when undocumented. The girls also didn't necessarily know where to get help when they needed it and what their rights were in terms of accessing services such as healthcare.

"As the findings showed, many of the girls chose not to go out often and to stay at home due to fear of being arrested or harassed."

This was in clear contrast to boys, whom the girls described in the findings as more visible – which on the one hand rendered them more vulnerable to arrest and harassment but on the other offered them opportunities such as interaction and learning local languages, access to work and to services such as healthcare and education. Thus, visibility meant some advantages at the same time as greater risks too.

It is therefore important to note here the gendered dimensions of these experiences, which include exploitation and violence directed at girls and the heightened vulnerabilities that they experience because they are girls. To understand this is to increase the possibility of finding ways to work with girls that are sensitive to their complex realities, to their (sometimes deliberate) invisibility and to their right to be heard.

Documentation: A ticket to protection and identity

Documentation – or lack of documentation that legitimizes a girl's existence and presence in a country – directly and critically shapes every aspect of her migration experience. It determines the risks faced on a journey, how borders are crossed, who the girls meet, who helps them, who exploits them and the challenges faced on the way as well as in the host country. Findings showed that while girls with documents also face discrimination, stigma and xenophobia in many different spaces and that they remained fearful of arrest from the police and at the borders, for those without documents, these issues were significantly heightened. For some this meant that they did not leave the house (and remained invisible), for others they had to map out their daily lives around safe and unsafe spaces. Thus documents are key in locating girls, both physically and symbolically in their present and in orientating them for their future.

Documents, or their absence, also map onto a sense of legitimacy, of rights, of deservingness and importantly, belonging. For many of the girls, not having papers or being "with passport" or "without passport" shaped how they connected with the contexts and their sense of self. With many of the undocumented Zambian and Congolese girls the levels of fear they experienced on a daily basis ensured isolation and impacted on their state of wellbeing.

Listening to girls on the move

The final point in this analysis of the findings around girls on the move is that all of the identified themes highlight the significance of understanding the experiences of migration from the perspectives of the girls themselves. This means that girls on the move must be listened to.

As the findings illustrate, many of the girls are very capable of identifying the challenges of their journeys and life in the host country. Many of the girls who participated in this study were able to distinguish those who have assisted and supported them from those who have tricked and exploited them. In this (although there were a few cases where the girls did not seem to recognise the extent to which they had been misled or lied to) their voices were clear. Reflecting back on their experiences many knew where they had been deceived or told 'half-truths'. They were also clear that they wanted other girls who might also consider leaving home and to travel to South Africa to understand the risks and, especially, to know the realities.

Listening to the girls themselves and allowing them to identify priorities for protective interventions at various stages of the journey is key to successful and relevant programme interventions for girls on the move.

"They were also clear that they wanted other girls who might also consider leaving home and to travel to South Africa to understand the risks and, especially, to know the realities."

Photo: Suzy Bernstein

6. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Photo: Save the Children South Africa

CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Core recmmendations

The findings from the Southern Africa Girls on the Move study should be read as a call to state and non-state actors with an interest in social cohesion and integration of girls on the move, to shift the focus of interventions from attempts that respond to the perceived vulnerability of girls, to instead focusing on addressing societal factors that act as barriers to choice, and which promote misinformation and stigmatisation of girls who undertake journeys in the interest of improved prospects and realisation of life aspirations.

> "Treat trafficking as a key issue alongside other key and more common forms of irregular migration such as smuggling."

The overall recommendation to all actors within the child rights sector is to **assess, review and investigate critically the way in which we approach this topic, and how we see these girls in the context of mobility – it is imperative that we take a critical look at systems, societal norms, perceptions and approaches which shape the environment in which these girls are left to attempt to pursue realization of their rights.**

- ***Listen to girls***
  Prioritise participation activities with girls themselves before any intervention in order to better understand their experiences and locate when and how exploitation is taking place. Girls must have a say in what they think would best support them and increase their chances of moving safely and taking less risks.

- ***Make gender analysis a prerequisite in proposal design, programming and advocacy for girls in migration and displacement***
  Use an intersectional gender lens and analysis when developing advocacy and programme interventions for children on the move because this works for boys and girls.

- ***Anticipate and acknowledge the intersectional, multi-dimensionality of vulnerabilities for girls on the move:***
  Look beyond the human trafficking discourse: treat trafficking as a key issue alongside other key and more common forms of irregular migration such as smuggling. Look for what an over-emphasis on trafficking may be hiding.

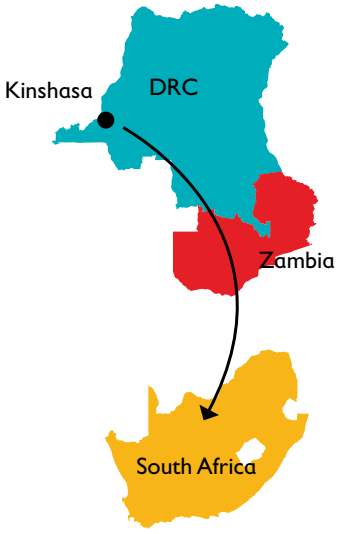
- ***Prioritize young mothers on the move:***
  Raise awareness within Save the Children and implementing partners as well as in advocacy and programme intervention that many girls on the move are also mothers, with heightened vulnerability and greater barriers to accessing essential services. They need interventions targeted to their and their children's particular needs.

6.2 Recommendations for programming

6.2.1 Programming in countries of origin

Raise girls' awareness and implement gender-specific and relevant information, education and communication (IEC) activities in communities with high rates of outward migration[64].

[64] See https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/why-children-stay for a comprehensive set of recommendations to reinforce protective factors that influence children's decision not to engage in unsafe, uninformed migration



> "Girls travelling from Kinshasa through Zambia to South Africa seem to be particularly vulnerable and little is known about their situation, both in countries of transit as well as in South Africa, often their ultimate destination."

- Implement awareness-raising activities and provide girls in high risk communities in countries of origin with informed, gender-sensitive information specific to the prevailing migration routes they are likely to use. Information should focus on the realities of irregular migration, as well as the conditions in countries of destination, the likelihood and nature of employment (or lack thereof) and opportunities, and strategies for regular migration.

- Implement age-appropriate information and awareness-raising for pre-adolescent girls in communities with high rates of outward migration. Young girls who participated in this study and who had migrated irregularly to South Africa at an early age seemed most at risk, least prepared and most vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and being unable to access avenues for inclusion into formal systems.

- Give accurate information that allows girls take protective measures and prepare for safe travel (for example, seek out trusted taxi drivers).

Scale up existing Save the Children cross-border methodology to include the Democratic Republic of Congo

- Girls travelling from Kinshasa through Zambia to South Africa seem to be particularly vulnerable and little is known about their situation, both in countries of transit as well as in South Africa, often their ultimate destination. Save the Children should seek out an implementing partner in DRC (perhaps through the Save the Children programme operating in DRC) to work with potential girls on the move and truck drivers in Kinshasa. This will need to be preceded by information-gathering research on how girls move from Kinshasa to the Zambian border and through Zambia.

6.2.2 Programming in countries of transit and destination/arrival

Differentiate interventions to be relevant for specific categories of girls

- There is no homogeneity in girls on the move. In order to effectively support their inclusion or integration, even temporarily, in host communities, it is important to identify all of the different categories that may apply to girls likely to be included in any project which targets migrant or refugee girls as beneficiaries. Girls who migrate from Zambia and Mozambique have very different needs and vulnerabilities than asylum-seeking girls who are living in inner-city Johannesburg, and in order to ensure they survive, are protected and access an education, it is important to nuance interventions to target the specific needs of each group. This is only possible if girls are meaningfully and safely involved[65] to share their experiences and opinions in all stages of the project cycle, including the proposal design stage[66]. This is essential in order to truly seek out and reach the most vulnerable among this group of beneficiaries. Categories that can be considered include, but are not limited to, country of origin, local context in terms of accommodation, work, risks of violence, access to health services, numbers of girls who are mothers, existing coping strategies, especially social networks with older adults who could support girls.

[65] See https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/childrens-participation-analysis-planning-and-design-programmes-guide-save-children-staff for guidance on achieving meaningful child participation in programme analysis, planning and design.

[66] See https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/boxes-wonder-creation-program-children-move for a resource pack specifically designed to be used in direct engagement with children on the move, including for provision of psychosocial support.

Develop specialised programming for girls affected by conflict, such as girls from the DRC

- There is a particular need for psycho-social support to determine and deal with trauma or other distress among girls from the DRC, both while transiting through or residing in Zambia, as well as upon arrival and during their integration in South Africa. They also need specialised assistance with documentation and language skills.

- Work with implementing partners to help eligible girls access documentation so that they can obtain asylum seeker status in South Africa.

Link to Adolescent Skills for Successful Transitions programmes and approaches

- Pilot and support a vocational centre in urban areas (such as Kamaqhekeza/ Naas, (Mpumalanga) in South Africa and Chipata in Zambia) similar to the Scalabrini Centre in Ressano Garcia, which equips vulnerable and at-risk local girls as well as foreign migrant girls with income-generating skills. If and where possible, link this to the Adolescent Skills for Successful Transitions Common Approach.

Link to agendas and programming related to ending violence against children (EVAC), and combat xenophobic violence in particular

- Research and implement evidence-based strategies to promote tolerance and combat xenophobia in host communities.

- Undertake targeted community-based urban programming and engagement with relevant authorities and multi-sectoral stakeholders to change attitudes, improve knowledge on what constitutes violence and discrimination and hold them accountable for violence and discrimination against girls. This should be implemented in a manner so as to benefit local and foreign girls equally, where possible.

- Institutionalise anonymous reporting procedures to report violence and exploitation by authorities, and engage in high level advocacy to hold service providers accountable under South African law.

Pursue innovative and unconventional strategic partnerships, for instance by partnering with transport unions or truck driver associations

- Explore the possibility of an implementing partner to engage with truck driver associations in DRC and Zambia and taxi driver associations in Mozambique. Consider drawing on content developed to engage and train other unlikely partners and target groups in child protection, for instance the curriculum implemented for armed forces across Africa by the ESARO Regional Programme Unit.

- Explore the possibility of working with older women in destination countries to support younger women replicating Terre des Hommes Lodger Project.

> “There is a particular need for psycho-social support to determine and deal with trauma or other distress among girls from the DRC.”

Photo: Suzy Bernstein

> "We suggest that Save the Children work with other organisations such as Lawyers for Human Rights and Pretoria University Centre for Child Law to advocate for a solid evidence base."

- Develop an educational module to work with girls (and boys) to discuss gender and power dynamics in personal relationships to reduce vulnerability and harm, incl. through exploitative transactional sexual relationships.

6.3 Recommendations for advocacy

Responding to the focus on trafficking

It is important to recognize that the focus on trafficking is often political and linked to an increasing regional focus on restricting immigration. This is particularly the case in Mozambique where government officials cannot be seen to be promoting migration into South Africa so they frame all work on migration of children under the umbrella of 'trafficking' though they are aware that not all migration is trafficking.

- The literature and findings are clear that trafficking is happening across borders in Southern Africa and demands a response that matches the severity of the crime. However, it is also clear that trafficking is one piece of a much larger puzzle of irregular migration and thus should not be the dominant lens through which the experiences of girls on the move are framed. Therefore:
- Interventions first need to be clear that trafficking and smuggling/exploitation are not conflated, and nor can girls who experience abuse and sexual exploitation always assumed to be trafficked. To ignore the realities of their experiences and simplifying what is happening misrepresents the girls and places them at more risk.
- Interventions need to look at what kinds of responses are most helpful in terms of increasing options to girls and thus reducing the kinds of vulnerabilities they face. An anti-trafficking response based on 'rescue' does not always address the needs of the girls - and sometimes drives them further underground as they do not wish to be returned or to go to a shelter.

Advocate for a policy shift, which moves away from restricting migration towards integration and social cohesion

- State policies aimed at further restricting migration and making legal entry into a country harder need to be challenged as they tend to increase the risks that girls face while in migration. The findings are clear that the less likely girls are to legally enter a country the more risks they face, which can lead to trafficking, smuggling and sexual exploitation. Therefore, policies which focus on 'protection from trafficking' to justify further migration restrictions actually make girls less safe as they move. They can also increase the chances of trafficking as girls seek more clandestine ways of moving across borders. Consistent and strong advocacy focused on the protection of migrant girls from exploitation, not just trafficking, is important and has to draw on solid evidence that captures the complexity and nuance of crossing borders.

Advocate for the protection of undocumented girls and hold authorities accountable to realize their rights

South Africa

- Engage the SA Police Service (SAPS) around arrests of undocumented girls. Link this to continued work and training with officials.
- Continue to advocate about the problems with accessing asylum seeker status at Department of Home Affairs.
- Advocate for the full application of the legal process for unaccompanied minors, particularly to ensure their access to documentation.

Zambia

- Continue to advocate against the detention of children on the move together with other actors.
- Work with partners to develop a coherent set of advocacy messages around children on the move.

> "Continue to advocate about the problems with accessing asylum seeker status at Department of Home Affairs."

> "Work with partners to develop a coherent set of advocacy messages around children on the move."

6.4 Recommendations for further research

- Undertake research into the situation of domestic workers in southern Africa (in Maputo city and in Lusaka and other large Zambian towns particularly). This is poorly understood and the literature review suggests that most of the research work has been done in south-east Asia and West Africa.
- Much scope remains for research which will explore how girls move from Kinshasa to the Zambian border and through Zambia.
- Conduct research for better understanding of the movement of working children and youth in Africa to inform regional response and protection mechanisms.
- Undertake research to better understand how having to trade sex for basic needs and services, sex work and choice play out in the lives of migrant girls in southern Africa.
- Explore how technology such as smart phones could be used to support girls on the move.
- Research the Scalabrini Centre in Ressano Garcia as a case study as to see the interventions and the interventions that work, with the aim of replication by an implementing partner.
- Write up a detailed case study of the work of the 'cultural mediators' in South Africa and look at similarities and differences between this intervention and the Scalabrini Centre.

GLOBAL RESEARCH SERIES: GIRLS ON THE MOVE

SUMMARY

*The Girls on the Move Initiative is a global series of **action research** conducted across different regions within existing Save the Children programmes. Each regional study generates targeted evidence to address knowledge gaps in current literature and programme approaches, and engages Save the Children teams to **immediately strengthen ongoing interventions for girls** in different stages of migration, notably during transit and arrival. Methodology and emphasis vary according to context, but research is mostly qualitative. In all contexts, it includes the **literature review**, **participatory research** with girls on the move in countries of origin, in transit and/or at destination, participatory **programme review and capacity building** with country and regional office teams directly responsible for implementing programming that reaches girls on the move. Through this initiative, we hope to cultivate a more nuanced understanding within and beyond Save the Children of how gender impacts experiences and outcomes for children in migration and displacement. The research reports are published as a series with a global summary that presents interventions for quick uptake to accelarate our collective ability to seek out and reach girls on the move and achieve **Ambition 2030**.*

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