

# Health of young migrants and refugees: Staged awareness - raising interventions



## An example from Italy: “12 Questions and Answers on Sexual and Reproductive Health” (2022) UNFPA and UNICEF

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<https://eeca.unfpa.org/en/publications/12-questions-and-answers-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights>



<https://eeca.unfpa.org/en/publications/boys-move-brochure>



The unconscionable human trafficking of adolescents including for sexual purposes along the refugee and migrant routes towards Europe became evident to UNFPA and UNICEF during the development of their emergency response in Greece, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Italy.

**"Boys on the Move"** (first edition April 2017) was created as a scalable model to roll out among younger male adolescents, often neglected survivors of abuse. The informal though structured curriculum addresses health and hygiene; emotions and coping with stress; communication; relationships and sexuality; cultural awareness; money and planning. By integrating crosscutting protection concerns, the second edition (September 2019) recognizes the specificities of older male adolescents, as potential perpetrators and therefore puts emphasis on adolescent sexual and reproductive health, prevention of and response to violence, particularly sexual violence and presents the concept of consent.

**Case Study:** Italy hosted 128,000 refugees and irregular migrants in 2020, of which 7080 were unaccompanied minors. Cultural and social differences, language barriers and lack of access to information and services were identified as leading to negative health outcomes, unwanted pregnancies, SGBV and other rights violations. Lack of access to quality SRH information and services for young displaced people was recognised as of concern, particularly as the proportion of migrants residing in Italy living with an HIV infection increased from 11% in 1992 to 29.7% in 2018.

**Methodology:** The study was conducted in June and July 2020 among 300 refugees and migrants aged 15 to 24 years living in Italy. In this research project, a combination of online questionnaires, interviews, field surveys and participatory action research was used to collect data on their knowledge, attitudes and behaviours regarding sexual and reproductive health. It included three main elements: prioritization exercises, online surveys and material testing. All activities required the presence of cultural mediators and interpreters.

The prioritization exercises were carried out by the implementing organization Arci Solidarietà, Bologna.

An online questionnaire in six languages administered by staff of UNICEF in Italy surveyed 58 young people on their awareness level, generating data to guide development of pedagogical material.

U-Report was used to collect information on levels of SRH knowledge and attitudes from 297 participants. Findings were disseminated online in a live interview.

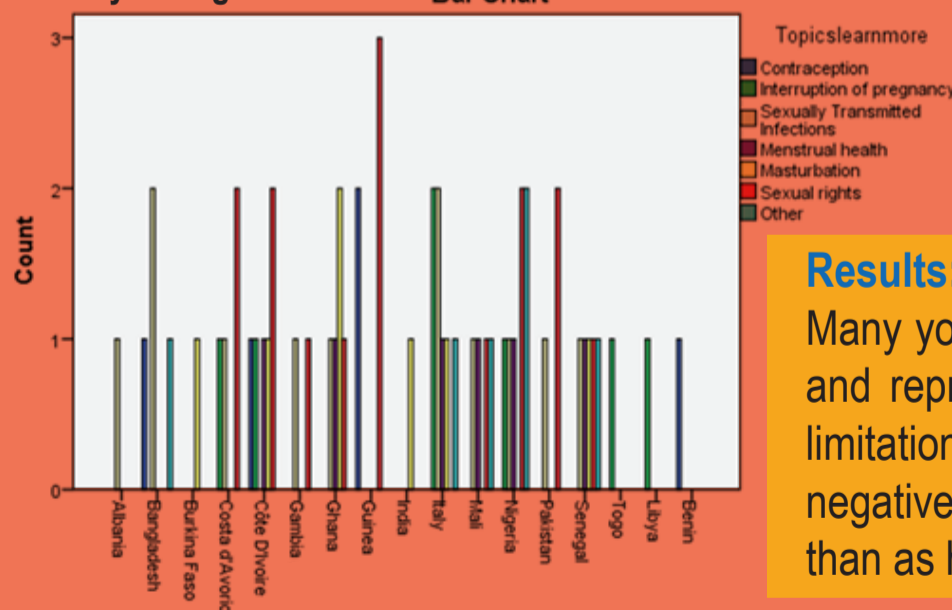
Finally, the socio-ecological model was used to identify barriers affecting the intended recipients of pedagogical interventions, from the individual to the systemic level.

### Results:

Many young migrants and refugees in Italy lack access to accurate and comprehensive information on sexual and reproductive health and rights. They reported facing barriers to accessing services, through language limitations and a lack of knowledge about available resources and facilities. As a result, many feel at risk of negative health outcomes. Members of refugee and migrant populations see themselves as individuals rather than as homogenous groups, something not recognised by those providing care.

Topics they would like to know more about according to country of origin

Bar Chart



### Conclusions, Application:

The results guided the development of the training package “Preparing for a lifelong journey: 12 questions and answers on sexual and reproductive health and rights” as a deliverable of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). This was undertaken as part of the project “Strengthening the health of refugee and migrant children in South and South-East Europe” funded by the European Union Health Programme.

The training package was tested in October 2020 in Palermo by two groups, by gender. The content was redesigned according to feedback from participants and implementing partners and released in Italian and English in 2022. The package provides accurate and comprehensive information on the sexual and reproductive health of young migrants and refugees and aims to promote their well-being and rights.

### References:

Boys on the Move Training Packages. (2017, 2019) UNFPA and UNICEF. <https://eeca.unfpa.org/en/publications/boys-move-brochure>

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