

10 INSIGHTS
FROM
DISCUSSIONS
WITH **BOYS** AND
YOUNG
MEN
TRAVELING
TO **ITALY**

ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE

MARCH 2019

WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT ABOUT?

In October 2018, two researchers travelled to Rome and Sicily. We spoke with 52 young men and boys who had travelled to Italy from across Africa and the Middle East. We also talked to 63 social workers, guardians, doctors, psychologists, and other service providers. This document summarizes the key findings from our trip, especially regarding sexual violence.

WHO IS THIS FOR AND HOW CAN IT HELP ME?

This document is for young people, especially young men and adolescent boys, who travelled to Italy by crossing the Mediterranean Sea from Libya. If you (or someone you know) experienced some form of sexual violence, it is not your fault and you are not alone. **Help is available:** see the resources under question #10.

REMEMBER, SEXUAL VIOLENCE:

- Can happen to ANYONE
- Has happened to MANY boys, girls, men, and women travelling to Italy
- Is NEVER the victim's fault
- HELP is available

1- WHAT DID THE BOYS AND YOUNG MEN SAY ABOUT THEIR JOURNEY?

Young people told us that the journey to Europe is VERY difficult. MANY young men and boys experienced kidnapping, imprisonment, and violence, including sexual violence.

2- WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Sexual violence includes rape, injury to or unwanted touching of the private parts, being forced to have sex with someone, being forced to watch someone else being sexually violated, being forced to be naked, and much more. Sexual violence is NOT sex! It is about violence, power, and control.

3- DOESN'T SEXUAL VIOLENCE ONLY HAPPEN TO GIRLS?

MANY women and girls suffered sexual violence along the journey, too. But ANYONE can be targeted for sexual violence, even adult men, elderly people, and young children.

4- WHERE IS THIS HAPPENING?

Sexual violence can happen at any point on the journey, even in someone's home country. Armed men and others perpetrate sexual violence at checkpoints, at border crossings, during work, in prisons, and many other places. Sexual violence is VERY common in Libya, especially in detention centers and in captivity, in order to force families to send money.

5- IS ANYTHING LIKE THIS HAPPENING IN ITALY?

Yes. Some boys and young men are selling or exchanging sex for money, food, or help. This can make them especially vulnerable to different kinds of violence. Some adults feel fine about selling sex. For all boys under the age of 18 and some adults, selling or exchanging sex is a form of sexual exploitation. That means an adult is taking advantage of the vulnerability of a boy or young man and using him for sexual purposes.

6- WHOSE FAULT IS IT?

The **ONLY** person to blame is the perpetrator. It is **NEVER** the fault of the person who is violated. Perpetrators are usually men, but they can also be women, boys, and girls. They can also be family members and friends.

7- DOES IT MAKE SOMEONE GAY?

Suffering sexual violence has **NO IMPACT** on a person's sexual orientation. Sometimes boys and young men get an erection during an assault. This is a **NORMAL** bodily response and **DOES NOT** mean they wanted it or enjoyed it.

8- WHAT HAPPENS AFTERWARDS?

Sexual violence can affect people in different ways, and it might have physical and emotional impacts. It can cause injuries and, for women and girls, can cause unwanted pregnancies. Sometimes people have pain in their private parts or anus, and some might have been exposed to infections. Some people feel ashamed, scared, guilty, angry, lonely, sad, and confused. **ALL** feelings are OK! It can also cause headaches, nightmares, sleepiness, insomnia, lack of concentration, and feelings like something is crawling on the skin or in the body.

9- IS THERE ANYTHING THAT CAN BE DONE?

Yes! There are doctors, nurses, psychologists, and social workers who can help men and boys who have suffered sexual violence. They will listen to you and support you while maintaining your privacy. With support and care, many young men and boys can recover and lead normal lives.

10- WHAT IF THIS HAPPENED TO ME OR MY FRIEND?

The most important thing to know is that it is **NOT** your (or your friend's) fault. You are also not alone. There are people who can help you in a confidential way. You can:

- Call Emergency Services if you are in immediate danger: 118.
- Call the national helpline on violence and stalking: 1522. The number is free of charge and active 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Advice is provided in Italian, English, French, Spanish, and Arabic.
- Go to the nearest hospital for medical or immediate psychological care.
- Go to jumamap.com/ana/map/ALL/all/all/ or direcontrolaviolenza.it/centriantiviolenza/ and find the closest service provider on the map.

WOMEN'S REFUGEE COMMISSION

The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) is a nonprofit organization in New York City. We travel to refugee settings and talk with refugees and migrants to find out what they need. We then make recommendations to the United Nations, governments, and other organizations about what should be done to improve the lives of refugees and migrants. In Italy, UNICEF, as well as UNHCR, MSF-Belgium, and other organizations, helped us with this research. The content was developed by WRC and UNICEF.



UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

UNICEF works with and for disadvantaged children and adolescents worldwide, including across 21 countries and territories in Europe and Central Asia where we have country programmes. We also have programmes to respond to the needs of refugee and migrant women and children in Austria, Germany, Greece and Italy, as well as engagement with institutions across many more countries to uphold the rights of children.



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