



RESEARCH TEAM

Ilse Derluyn

Ine Lietaert
Floor Verhaeghe
Giacomo Orsini
Malte Behrendt
Océane Uzureau
Marina Rota
Sarah Adeyinka

IMPACT STORIES

ChildMove

Ghent University

Worldwide, about 30 million children are currently forcibly displaced, of which a considerable group is separated from their parent(s) or caregiver(s). Forced migration is known to considerably impact these children's psychological wellbeing, leading to elevated levels of emotional problems. Yet, little is known about the longitudinal psychological impact of unaccompanied refugee minors' transit experiences, during the flight.

The ChildMove project is aimed at deepening scientific insight into the experiences of these young refugees who travel on their own, without their parents, while being on the move from their home to the host country, and the long-term mental health impact these experiences have. Through adopting an innovative longitudinal follow-up of a large group of unaccompanied young refugees, the research team managed to follow these young people while they were still on the move through Europe and to document their experiences and the mental health impact of these events. These unique findings, including strong evidence on the health impact of detention (e.g., in Libya and Greece) and of the repeated experiences of violence and racism, evoke highly important recommendations for policy and practice which can decrease the mental health problems these young refugees are facing and increase their well-being, contributing to a more equitable society.

The ChildMove study ran in four different countries: Libya, Greece, Italy and Belgium. In all of these countries, through different activities the team involved different stakeholders throughout the lifecycle of the research: local stakeholders involved in the care and reception for unaccompanied refugee minors or those involved in the creation of care structures for unaccompanied refugee minors, practitioners working in other services that are important for unaccompanied refugee minors and a network of interpreters and cultural mediators, and policymakers involved in migration policy on the European level.

Not only was the set-up of the study discussed with these partners, dissemination workshops were organized about the first and subsequent findings. A series of policy briefs was developed, containing recommendations and illustrated with sketches, and a specific event for EU policy makers was held. On top of this, the main findings have been disseminated through a series of podcasts, short posters and blogs which all were disseminated widely via the project website and social media (twitter, Facebook).

"This strong focus on societal impact from research is for us a 'conditio sine qua non' in research and we are therefore strongly engaged to further support these avenues for researchers who are also interested in creating (more) societal impact."

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