

## UPDATE FROM THE SUMMER TRAINING FOR UNACCOMPANIED MINORS (UAMS) AND THEIR MENTORS

During the summer months, Training sessions were held for  
Unaccompanied minors (UAMs) and trainers.



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## WHY DO CHILDREN BECOME UNACCOMPANIED MINORS?

When discussing the underlying factors that contribute to children leaving their home countries, it is important to recognize that every situation is unique and influenced by a combination of factors. **Here are some common underlying factors that drive children to migrate:**

**Conflict and Violence:** Children living in areas affected by armed conflict, civil unrest, or widespread violence often face threats to their safety, well-being, and even their lives. The fear of being caught in the crossfire or targeted by armed groups can push children and their families to seek refuge in more stable regions.

**Economic Hardship and Poverty:** Persistent poverty, lack of job opportunities, and limited access to basic services can leave families struggling to meet their basic needs. In many cases, children are forced to migrate in search of better economic opportunities for themselves and their families.

**Displacement and Disasters:** Natural disasters, such as hurricanes, earthquakes, or floods, can devastate communities and displace families. When homes are destroyed, livelihoods are lost, and access to essential services becomes scarce, children and their families may be compelled to leave their home countries in search of safety and stability.

**Discrimination and Persecution:** Discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, race, or political beliefs can subject children and their families to persecution and marginalization. When their safety and rights are threatened, migration may become the only viable option to escape persecution and seek protection elsewhere.

**Family Reunification:** In some cases, children may choose to migrate to reunite with family members who have already migrated. The desire to be with loved ones and seek their support and guidance can be a significant motivation for children to embark on their migration journeys.

**Lack of Education and Opportunities:** Limited access to quality education, including schools that are destroyed or unavailable, can severely hinder children's prospects for a better future. Children and their families may see migration as a means to access educational opportunities and improve their life chances.

**Trafficking and Exploitation:** The grim reality of child trafficking and exploitation is another factor driving children to leave their home countries. Traffickers prey on vulnerable children and lure them with false promises of a better life, only to subject them to exploitation, forced labour, or sexual abuse.

**These factors often interact and reinforce one another, creating complex and challenging situations for children and their families. Addressing the underlying causes of child migration requires a comprehensive approach that includes addressing conflict, poverty, inequality, and ensuring access to education, social services, and protection measures in the home countries of these children**



## CHALLENGES FACED BY UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

Unaccompanied minors face numerous challenges throughout their migration journey and upon arrival in their destination countries. These challenges can have significant impacts on their well-being, development, and ability to integrate into new societies. **Here are some of the key challenges faced by unaccompanied minors:**

**Protection and Safety:** Unaccompanied minors are highly vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and trafficking during their journey. They often face risks such as physical violence, sexual exploitation, forced labour, and recruitment by armed groups. The lack of parental or guardian protection exposes them to heightened risks and makes it difficult for them to seek help or report abuse.

**Legal Issues and Immigration Processes:** Navigating complex immigration systems and legal processes can be overwhelming for unaccompanied minors. They may struggle to understand their rights, access legal assistance, and effectively present their cases for asylum or other forms of protection. The uncertainty surrounding their legal status can contribute to their feelings of insecurity and anxiety.

**Access to Basic Services:** Unaccompanied minors often encounter challenges in accessing essential services such as shelter, healthcare, education, and psychosocial support. Limited resources, language barriers, and lack of knowledge about available services can further hinder their ability to access the support they need.

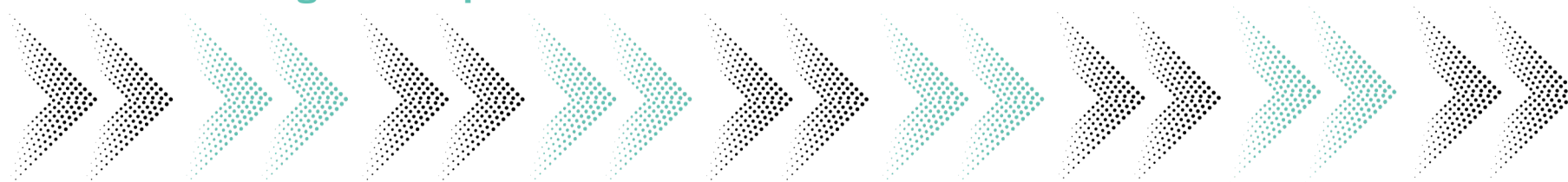
**Education and Language Barriers:** Unaccompanied minors face barriers to education due to language differences, lack of appropriate educational programs, and difficulty in integrating into school systems. Limited educational opportunities can affect their long-term prospects and hinder their ability to rebuild their lives.

**Psychosocial Well-being:** Separation from family, exposure to traumatic events, and the stress of migration can significantly impact the mental and emotional well-being of unaccompanied minors. They may experience feelings of loneliness, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Access to specialized psychosocial support services is crucial to address their emotional needs and help them heal.

**Family Reunification:** For many unaccompanied minors, the desire to reunite with their families is strong. However, the family reunification process can be complex, time-consuming, and uncertain. Lengthy separation from loved ones can have negative psychological effects on children and hinder their ability to form stable relationships in their host countries.

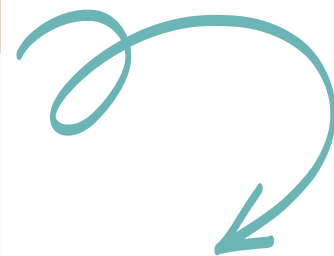
**Social Integration and Discrimination:** Unaccompanied minors may face challenges in integrating into their new communities due to language barriers, cultural differences, and discriminatory attitudes. They may encounter prejudice, xenophobia, and social exclusion, which can impede their sense of belonging and hinder their ability to build a support network.

**Addressing these challenges requires a holistic and rights-based approach that ensures the protection, well-being, and development of unaccompanied minors. It involves providing safe and supportive environments, access to education and healthcare, legal assistance, psychosocial support, and opportunities for social integration. Collaboration among governments, civil society organizations, and communities is crucial to address the unique needs of unaccompanied minors and ensure their rights are upheld.**



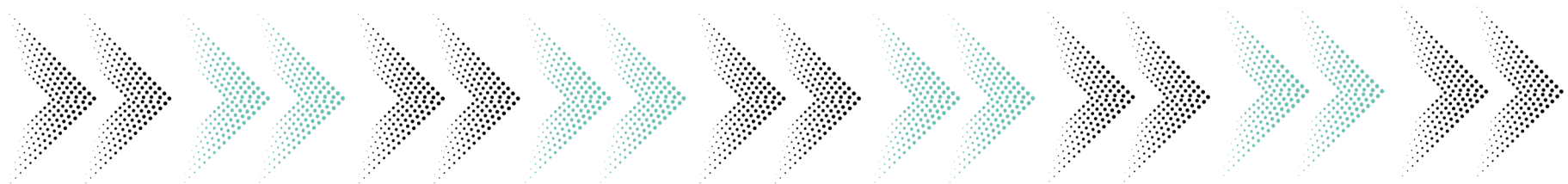
### Children's Rights and Ethics

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EU Strategy on Children's Rights was adopted at European level in 2021, consisting of six key areas: 1. Children's participation in political and democratic life, 2. Socio-economic inclusion, health and education, 3. Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection, 4. Child-friendly justice, 5. Digital and information society, 6. Global dimension. There's also a child-friendly version of the Strategy, which can be used in the process of collaboration of trainers and UAM.[1]

[1] Source: [https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-03/long\\_version.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-03/long_version.pdf)



The documents and strategies that are mentioned above, should serve as an additional tool that people working with UAMs need to be familiar with.

When we talk about children's rights, we rely heavily on the definitions and rights contained within the key document in this area; the Convention on the Rights of the Child. **It is a document[2] made up of 54 articles, some of the key ones being :**

- **ARTICLE 2 (non-discrimination)** - The rights set out in the UNCRC apply to every child whatever their race, color, gender, language, religion, ethnicity, disability or any other status.
- **ARTICLE 3 (the best interests of the child)** - In all decisions and actions that concern children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
- **ARTICLE 10 (family reunification)** - Where a separated child or his or her mother or father wishes to move to another country to be reunified as a family, the states involved should respond quickly and sympathetically. Children whose parents are separated and living in different countries have the right to maintain a personal relationship and direct contact with both parents.
- **ARTICLE 22 (refugee children)** - Children seeking or who have refugee status have the rights set out in the UNCRC. Governments must provide protection and support, and must help children who are separated from their parents to be reunited with their family.
- **ARTICLE 29 (education and children's development)** - Education should help develop every child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the full. It should develop children's respect for their own rights and those of others, for their parents, for their own culture and the cultures of others, and for the natural environment.

[2]Source:  
<https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/content/dam/gb/reports/humanitarian/uncrc19-summary2.pdf>

