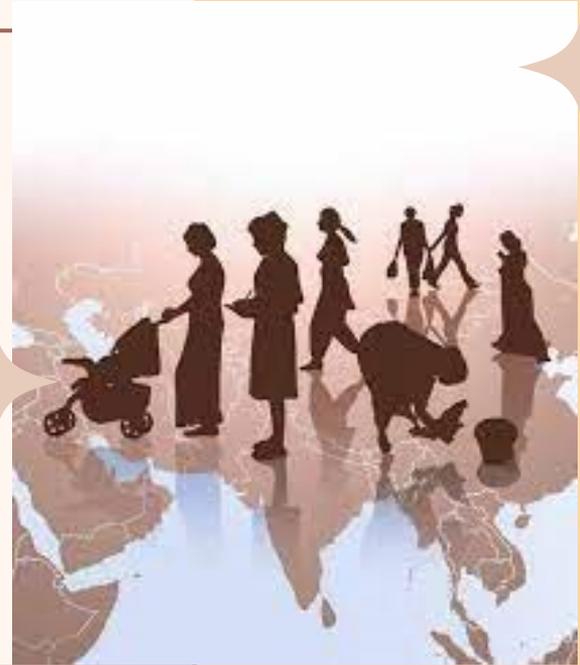


# Silenced voices: girls in migration on the Balkan route

*„When you don't have food to eat, water to drink and you need to travel continuously, this is the hardest part-girl 16y“*



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# About the project

1. Part of bigger research created in partnership between SCI and the University of Sarajevo supported by SVRI network
2. In this presentation we will show findings about violence against girls on Western Balkan route
3. Indepth interviews with 10 girls



**Save the Children**



UNIVERSITY OF SARAJEVO

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# Background

- For most migrant children coming from Afghanistan and Syria, violence is usually what they see or experience every day in their countries of origin
- There are complex reasons that push children to start their journey
- The situation is slightly different for girls, where push factors include, reasons related to gender-based violence (such as early marriages, threat of sexual violence) and education opportunities in a sense that education in the countries of origins can exclude girls.





“We realise the importance of  
our voice when we are  
silenced”

—Malala Yousafzai

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# Method

- Purposive and venue-based sample, 10 girls and 38 boys, the gender difference is according to presence in moment of the filed research
- Informed consent obtained
- Interviews were conducted in the safe settings
- There is no girls traveling alone
- Thematic anylises was perfomed



# Findings

*„So, it's better for the girls not to come. On this way... On this route ...“*

There are couple of identified topics:

- violence from country of origin,
- violence during the way to the destination country,
- crossing the border(game), experiences from the camps,
- who/what helps the children,
- discrimination and traumatic experiences and
- general well being



## Violence from country of origin and violence during the way

The reason for migration is: no freedom in their countries of origin considering their education, free movement, marriage and body.

*There is a lot of forced marriages,  
unfortunately girls have to be taken  
as wives, girl 18y*

Girls are most often traveling in the group, they are scared and exposed to all sorts of violence from physical, emotional to sexual

*If the father is not ready to give money for  
his daughter to smuggler they forcefully take  
their daughter, from the father ..and then, I  
saw on YouTube, at Google..- girl 13y*

## Violence on border crossing (game)

The most stressing experience is illegal border crossing, as there is no protection against police or border officials and only protection is having money which most often stays with men leading the group

*There is some kind of wired stress every time when someone says game..who did not pay, have been seriously beaten..girl 13y*

## Camp experiences and help for children

Camps are usually not considered to be safe places, as girls can not move alone in places where men can freely enter which reflects on their entire well being

*There is no help in camps, it is a horrible place for everyone, especially for children - girl 16y.*

Most children rely on God, parents and themselves when it comes to help, sometimes they receive help for good people on the way, but officials are rarely considered to be helpful

*No body helps, unless you are traveling with parents and they can help only if they have money, girl 13y*

## Discrimination and trauma experiences

Most girls have experienced discrimination from domestic people due to their colour, race and status

*I wish that people could understand that we do not wish to destroy anyons country we are just children and just like flowers if the soil is good we can flourish - girl15*

Every child have experienced traumatic events, either directly or they witnessed the acts of violences against other children

*We have lost 4,5 years nor here nor there, we do not play, no smile, I wish someone could acknowldage that - girl17*

# Conclusion



- Every child have experienced serious acts of violence during their way to the country of destination
- Girls are especially affected as they are even more voiceless and vulnerable during the way
- Most often the only strategy they use to survive is mimicking in the group they are traveling
- While silence could be surviving strategy it is also trauma response
- Adults are not perceived as help – from authorities and child protection officers to the NGO sector

# Recomendations



- Better coordination, cooperation and quick response and protection on the way is needed
- Trauma informed care is not existing, and should become a mandatory for all migrant children who lost third or even half of their life traveling on the dangerous ways
- Child trafficking, gender based violence and cultural competent child protection should be given a priority

If

If we do not find ways to support them now, when those children become adults, it will be too late for integration