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Children on the Move:The Egyptian Unaccompanied Migrant Children

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List of Abreviations:

AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
CPCs	Child Protection Committees
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EU	European Union
IOM	International Organization of Migration
MIFA	Ministry of Immigration and Foreign Affairs
NCCM	National Council for Childhood and Motherhood
NCCPIM	National Coordinating Committee for Preventing and Combating Illegal Migration
PASTEL	Political, Administrative, Social, Technological, Economic, Legislative Analysis
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
UASC	Unaccompanied and Separated Children
UMC	Unaccompanied Migrant Children
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

Executive Summary:

Nowadays, children have become a recognized part of today's global and mixed migration flows, especially in developing countries. This migration is considered a new area of concern and focus because of its risks, not only on children, but also on the whole society. Thus, academic and policy discussions tend to represent children as passive victims of exploitation, possibly even including trafficking situations, coerced to move and work in exploitative situations. migration is one of the painful features of the two shores of the Mediterranean Sea. It has attracted the attention of public opinion, for it is a very sensitive problem for the child victims. This crisis has become a phenomenon, not only for young people, but also for children categorized under the term "unaccompanied".

After the Arab Spring, there was an increase in irregular movements of children from the Middle East to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. This is occurred in an attempt to avoid the scourge of war and economic problems.

This paper discusses the matter of Egyptian unaccompanied migrant children (UMC). It firstly provides insight into the manifestations of this problem in Egypt, major factors and reasons why the phenomenon of UMC occurs, and highlights the risks of the problem. Subsequently, the actual efforts for solving the problem are analyzed, elaborating on the Egyptian government's curtailment policies. The paper concludes by providing recommendations on how the crisis of UMC could be resolved in the near future.

The main finding of the paper is that this phenomenon increases in some of the most deprived governorates in the country. Although there are a number of measures which have been taken by the key players on this issue, still more concerted efforts are needed to prevent this phenomenon from being a trend among Egyptian children. Consequently, the paper states four approaches for intervention: the preventive, the protective, the prosecution, and the partnership approach. In each of these approaches, an analysis of the policy alternatives occurs. Finally, the paper concludes with recommendations, which include: the importance of raising awareness for children and their families, the need for offering quality education services, the availing of information, and providing support to the labor market to develop more job opportunities.

Keywords:

Introduction:

Recently, the irregular migration of children from Egypt has increased significantly, especially after the Revolution of January 2011. The report from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) 2016 indicates that Egypt is among the largest contributing countries for this type of migration.

The percentage of unaccompanied children reached 28% of the total number of the migrants in 2011, increased to 49% in 2014, then went up to 66% in 2016. The issue of Egyptian unaccompanied migrant children. has many causes; most influencing is poverty, unemployment and the pursuit of a better life. Strategies have been developed to deal with the crisis by directly dealing with brokers of boats, by talking to youth, securing borders, providing access to education and health services and improving the overall quality of these services. These Strategies also call for protection programs aimed at spreading awareness about the dangers of illegal migration and disseminating these awareness programs throughout all Egyptian society, especially in its rural areas (IOM, 2016).

The National Center for Social and Criminal Research in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs conducted a study entitled: "Illegal Migration of Unaccompanied Children" which illustrated that the entire number of unaccompanied migrants are all male, with the proportion of children reaching 99.9% and increasing in the age group 16-18 (73.2%), while the percentage in the age group 12-15 amounted to 25.2%. The figures also show that UMC normally drop out of school. The study also indicated that the weakness of the educational level of the parents and their illiteracy is a cause of the phenomenon, where the illiteracy rate among the parents of UMC is 59.3%. The study also revealed that three-quarters of the children live with their families and despite this apparent correlation, 17% of the children suffer from problems with their parents, and five percent of the sample fled their home during their lifetime due to family issues (NCSCR,2016).

A large number of Egyptian immigrant children know that EU rules allow unaccompanied children to stay in the country of arrival, and some other countries recognize the child's right to reside, such as the Italian law. Consequently, most children surrender to the police knowing that this will cause their lives to continue, with possibly even better circumstances in a regulated manner and without prosecution. In one study, it was reported that more than 50.3% of children have a great determination to repeat the same experience as their peers, as they, too, have reasons for despair (Al-Youm al Sabi newspaper).

They attempt to find alternative ways to travel and raise funds quickly, even if it is arduous. Nearly sixty-eight percent of children sampled-held the view that because the country does not provide work at the forefront, this is one of the causes of children migrating irregularly, followed by their personal desire for a better life by 24.3% (Al-Youm al Sabi newspaper).

Definition of Unaccompanied Migrant Children:

UMC or an unaccompanied minor is defined as any child below 18 years old who chooses to move from home and live at different destinations without a parent or adult guardian. It also means children who enter any country illegally, with the above definition, as they lack the legal position of the transit or receiving country to enter. Unaccompanied children are children, as defined in Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult (UNICEF, 2014). In addition, separated children are children, as defined in Article 1 of the mentioned Convention, who have been separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members (Migration Data Portal, 2018).

According to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, an unaccompanied minor and unaccompanied child are defined as those "who have been separated from both parents. The Committee defines separated children as those "who have been separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. This committee also applies such a definition to unaccompanied and separated children who find themselves outside their country of nationality (consistent with art. 7), or, if stateless, outside their country of habitual residence" (CRC, 2013).

This concept is viewed differently from both the sending state and the receiving state because from the perspective of the receiving state, individuals must enter legally, with a valid passport and visa, and may not reside or work irregularly. From the point of view of the sending state, people under their jurisdiction should have valid travel documents and abide by their laws in order to leave the country.

The action of children moving irregularly has different names such as children on the move, illegal migration, and irregular migration. All this means children are on the move within countries, with or without caregivers, which occurs for several reasons. They think that migration is the only solution to overcome their problems and may provide better living opportunities; thus, they do their best to migrate legally or illegally. However, this type of migration always places them in difficult situations, such as to an increased risk of economic or sexual exploitation, abuse, neglect or violence.

There are three main categories of unaccompanied and separated children; the first category: Children separated from their family or caregivers during the move. This type should have access to civil society, international organizations and social workers to take measures in reception and transit centers to enable prompt family reunification. Second category: Children who started their journey as unaccompanied or separated children and are currently traveling with groups of people. Most are males aged 14-17 years who avoid being recorded, or pretend to be young adults. Third category: Children who have interrupted their migration owing to a lack of resources.

There is also the category of an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child: children who are claiming asylum in their own right, who are separated from both parents, and who are not being cared for by an adult who, in law, or by custom has the responsibility to do so. Meanwhile an unaccompanied migrant child not seeking asylum is any child who is not seeking asylum because their reasons for being in a new country are not connected to seeking protection, or who may be undocumented, or is not seeking asylum because they have not been advised of the need to do so,the child may be separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who in law or by custom has the responsibility to do so (HertsChildcare, 2018).

The Manifestations of UMC Phenomenon:

Nowadays, the world has witnessed an era of human mobility not seen since the end of the Second World War. After the Arab Spring in 2011, flows from the Middle East and North Africa towards Europe have increased significantly, due to the increase of violence and political instability in Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen, to name a few examples. The number of irregular movements reached approximately 1,000,000 in 2015, a figure that amounts to four times the total for all of 2014 (The Central Mediterranean Migration Route, 2017). Unaccompanied migrant children depend on various illegal methods to migrate to other countries such as: using the services of smuggling networks, being hidden by traffickers, or entering through informal borders.

The issue of illegal migration for young children in Egypt is a serious threat not only to the receiving countries but also to the sending countries. There is a prevailing belief that the migration of these children is a relief of the burden placed on the state and its institutions for the provision of basic services (Education, Health, Housing, etc.), but this is not always the case. The threat will double if the migration process is carried out with the consent of the family, which considers the travel of children between the ages of 14 and 16 to be useful: first, to reduce the burden on parents to provide living for the children and in the face of constantly increasing prices of survival goods. The second benefit is that these children, instead of being a burden on parents, become a source of income that improves the living conditions of the family through remittances. These remittances are the main source of household income, especially in rural areas where there is a significant increase in the number of family members where agriculture is the main occupation. However, all these benefits that may seem glamorous at the level of the family and the individual could bring many risks and disadvantages to these families in the event of failure of the son on his trip, and to the country which may experience brain drain, or increased deaths due to clandestine movements.

The Magnitude of UMC in Egypt:

It is difficult to determine the extent of illegal immigration due to the nature of this phenomenon, and the status of the illegal migrant which may vary between firstly, persons who enter illegally into the receiving states and do not qualify for their legal status; secondly, persons who enter the states of reception legally and stay there after the expiry of their legal residence; and thirdly, persons who work illegally during permitted residence.

The Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the number of Egyptians who tried to reach Italy illegally during the period from 27 October 2012 to 25 September 2013 reached 4,711, including 1,214 minors less than 18 years old. The figures of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) pointed out that minors have the highest rates of illegal immigration in Egypt, which exceeded 41 percent of the total number of migrants, according to the 2014 estimates.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) also revealed that Egypt was in the advanced ranks in the field of illegal migration of children by sea during the period from 2011 to 2016. The statistics of the organization in 2014 recorded the migration of 2,007 children from Egypt to Italy alone. A total of 1,711 unaccompanied children by their parents, migrated during that period (Global Detention Project,2018).

The Minister of Immigration and Foreign Affairs of Egyptians Abroad, Nabila Makram, on the sidelines during her participation in an economic conference entitled «Egypt first with young people» on 21 November 2016, stressed on the seriousness of this problem and said that Egypt ranks first in the world in illegal immigration. The highest sending governorates of illegal immigrants are Kafr El-Sheikh, Gharbia, and Fayoum.

The Egyptian Efforts to Combat Illegal Migration:

The Egyptian government has taken many measures to deal with the crime of illegal immigration. These measures varied between legislative and procedural measures, the most important of which are the following: firstly, legislative measures, including the state's issuance of a number of new laws to criminalize illegal immigration and impose sanctions on the perpetrators, including:

1) Law No. 64 of 2010 on criminalization and combating human trafficking and

2) Law No. 82 of 2016 on the Illegal Immigration and Smuggling of Migrants. Secondly, Procedural measures, including a set of policies and procedures adopted by the State in order to stop illegal migration, including

1- Establishment of the National Coordinating Committee for the Criminalization of Human Trafficking, under the provisions of Article 28 of Law No. 64 of 2010, and is based under the Ministry of Justice.

2- The establishment of the National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Immigration, pursuant to the decision of the Prime

Minister No. 380 of 2014, which includes representatives of all relevant national bodies and agencies, and is based in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

3- The establishment of strict regulations and rules in coordination with some foreign consulates to check the forged documents provided by those wishing to travel abroad, and coordinate with border guards to control illegal infiltration across borders. Additionally, intensified efforts were exerted to control the active elements in the field of illegal immigration.

4- Organizing a lot of awareness programs aimed at educating young people and families about the dangers of illegal immigration, especially in the governorates that rank first in this regard (Majalla, 2017).

Push and Pull Factors for UMC:

The increasing rates of unaccompanied child migrants have been a defining feature in recent international migratory flows. The problem is not pertinent only to the EU; unaccompanied migrant children have been arriving in increasing numbers to countries of Central America and to the United States(Cecilia & Krista, 2017). Thus, the reasons motivating immigration is different from one context to another. According to the "Global Issue of Unaccompanied Migrant Children and Adolescents and Human Rights" report published by the Human Rights Council, Individuals migrate for different multilayered reasons depending on the country of origin, the socio-economic backgrounds, and the cultural backgrounds. Some of the unaccompanied migrant children are motivated to seek asylum in the receiving states, while others only seek to be integrated in the host community to gain better economic opportunities (NCCPIM,2018).

General and common reasons for migration as specified in the literature include poor living conditions, limited access to education, scarcity of economic opportunities, and violence (Cecilia & Krista, 2017).

In the case of Egypt, some factors are more relevant than others. According to the assessment conducted by REACH and UNICEF on the profiles of children migrating from Egypt to Italy, several push factors come into play. The lack of access to economic opportunities ranked first in those factors by a wide margin, constituting 81% of the answers provided by the children. Limited access to education came second by 53%. In addition, the lack of survival essentials constituted 22%, while persecution for political or religious reasons accounted for 9%. Therefore, we can conclude that the push factors of Egyptian unaccompanied migrant children are mostly materialistic, unlike the push factors of violence in Central America.

As for the pull factors encouraging immigration to the host countries, the report identifies five main ones. Better economic opportunities account for 63% of the answers reflecting the most prevalent push factor. Better education comes second with 53%. Furthermore, the family at destination constitutes an important factor with 25% of the respondents reporting it as a pull factor to the host destination. Friends at the destination also account for 9% of the responses;

reflecting the influence of peer pressure as a motivating factor. And, finally, respect for human rights accounts for 6% of the answers.

Governments should deal with the issue of UMC by addressing the main drivers behind the phenomena. In the case of Egypt, the main reasons motivating migration of Egyptian unaccompanied minors are the lack of access to economic opportunities, limited access to education, and the lack of survival essentials.

The government has to work on availing opportunities for the youth, especially in the city and towns responsible for a high number of youth migrants. Furthermore, the government should work in cooperation with the receiving states to make available legal routes for migration to prevent youth from resorting to illegal routes and smugglers. Awareness campaigns are also a vital element in the government response to work counter to the peer pressure in certain areas. The government of Egypt has indeed adopted some legal and procedural steps to combat the phenomenon (IOM, 2016).

Egyptian authorities stepped up their crackdown on illegal migration since 2016. A number of domestic laws and agreements with European countries have shaped refugee migration patterns over the past few years. These include an anti-human smuggling law passed in 2016 that for the first time laid out penalties for smugglers while safeguarding migrant rights. Two years before that, a National Coordinating Committee on Preventing and Combating Illegal Migration was established to combat irregular migration and raise awareness about the issue (Nielsen, 2018).

Achievements towards Combating UMC Problem

There are many organizations which have conducted research and empirical studies with regards to unaccompanied migrant children such a UNICEF, NCCM, NCCPIM, IOM, and many other individual academic studies in universities. Every year, UNICEF has issued a report concerning Egyptian children with a focus on unaccompanied migrant children. IOM has many offices that assist unaccompanied migrant children and also have projects providing assistance to unaccompanied migrant children.

The National Coordinating Committee for Preventing and Combating Illegal Migration (NCCPIM) is mandated to take care of responding to children on the move by strengthening the capacity of government authorities to provide alternative care for those detained, released and for the Egyptian returnees (NCCM, 2018).

The National Center for Social and Criminal Research, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, issued a study on the phenomenon of "Illegal Immigration of Unaccompanied Children." The study said that it aims to put forward to the planners many doctors that help in controlling the phenomenon by determining the demographic, social and economic characteristics of immigrant children. The Institute chose the sample in the age group of 9-18 years who have the profile of someone to illegally migrate, with a total number

of respondents of 980 children, who were selected from 10 governorates: Gharbeya, Sharkeya, Menoufia, Dakahlia, Kafr El-Sheikh, Qaliubiya, Beheira, Fayoum, Assiut and Luxor. The study presented a number of recommendations under the title 'Strategy of Confrontation' to be used by officials to develop different policies and strategies to confront the phenomenon. First of all, confronting this danger needs a strategy dealing with three leading parties: brokers, youth, and border security. There is also a great need to improve the quality of the inputs of the educational process and raise the level of individual education (Al-Malt, 2018).
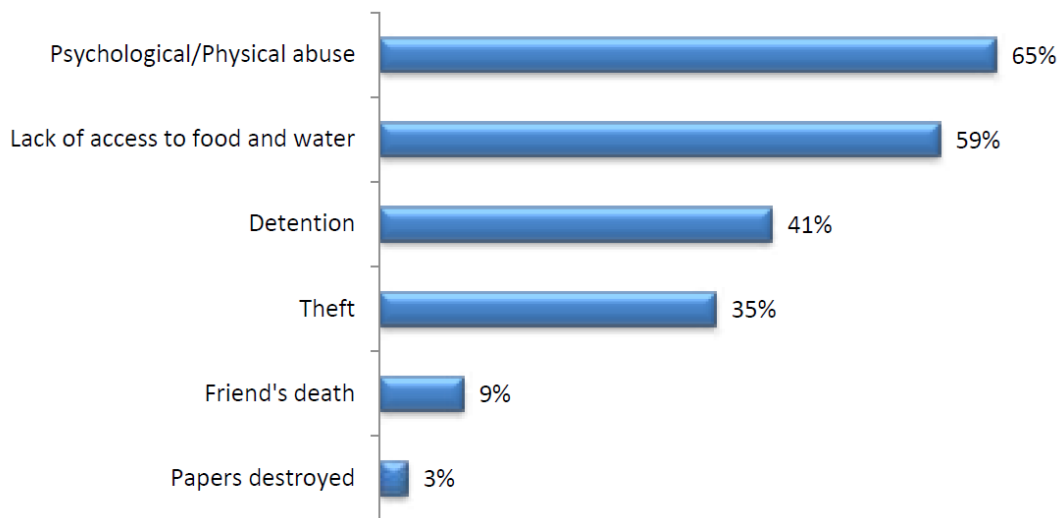
In order to deal with this problem in the future, the National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Immigration places this file within the framework of its next strategy (2016-2018) to combat illegal migration. They want to ensure that children and their families live a decent life. To do this, the National Committee will continue to carry out awareness campaigns.

The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) works to establish a more sensitive child protection system to the needs of children on the move.

The Child Protection Committees (CPC) at the District and Governorate levels should also play a leading role to ensure that migrant and refugee children are part of the CPC mandate, as per the Child Law and the national SOPs on case management. Children returning to Egypt should be provided support with a close follow up on their cases, including efforts of family reunification. This work is already successfully being implemented in a number of governorates including Aswan and Damietta. The model can be scaled up on the national level to support child returnees (NCCM, 2018).

The Risks of the UMC Problem:

During their migration journey, UMC migrating to Europe from Egypt face trauma in the form of exposure to a variety of stressors, which may include experiencing multiple forms of violence. UMC may face various forms of violence in their home country, on the migration journey, or once they arrive in the hosting countries. They may be unable to find water to drink and only small amounts of edible food available. Additionally, they may be exposed to verbal and/or physical abuse at the hands of smugglers, and their belongings can be robbed. Besides the absence of basic needs, they can witness the death of another migrant. Other risk factors include children's exposure to harsh conditions at sea, including exposure to waves and cold temperatures during night hours, which results in low body temperature and at times hypothermia, with significant risks to their physical health (NCCM, 2018).

Psychological/Physical abuse — 65%
Lack of access to food and water — 59%
Detention — 41%
Theft — 35%
Friend's death — 9%
Papers destroyed — 3%

Source: IOM, Egyptian Unaccompanied Migrant Children: A Case Study on Irregular Migration

Egyptian unaccompanied migrant children face huge amounts of risks, including, being held in detention facilities, inability or difficulty in communicating their needs due to languages barriers, verbal abuse, and racism. Some of the most prominent difficulties and risks that children may face whether outside or within the protective facilities: include (IOM, 2016): first, the general lack of Arabic interpreters and trained psychologists have the most fundamental impact on the minors; second, some children are unable to obtain information about their status and possibilities; third, in some shelters, children are only provided with one basic clothing item of poor condition. Minors thus have to wear the same clothes over a prolonged period of time with negative implications for the child's hygiene; fourth, children outside of shelter might work against their will under poor and exploitative conditions (NCCM, 2018).

There are some violence prevention programs or interventions that have been specifically designed for these children. Some selected strategies are primarily drawn from violence prevention technical packages, which represent the best available evidence on approaches to reduce or prevent violence against children in a broad context and include suggestions for domestic and international, low- and middle-income countries. These strategies fall into prevention and intervention activities which target all levels of the social ecology: individual, relationship, community, and societal.

Unaccompanied children are a vulnerable group, for they live not only in a relatively difficult situation, as minor refugees staying in another country, but also face other risks due to the absence of their parents, such as traumatic experiences, exploitation or abuse. This might, therefore, threaten their emotional well-being, resulting in serious emotional and behavioral problems (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2008).

Policy Alternatives:

The problem of Egyptian unaccompanied migrant children is a major phenomenon because of the wide range of governorates and regions affected. The policy status in this field is still in the beginning and needs to be improved in both the analysis of the causes, repercussions and the policy alternatives that exist until now.

There are two main challenges facing the issuing of an effective and doable policy to tackle the problem of the Egyptian unaccompanied migrant children. On one hand, the first challenge is dealing with the push factors, such as the lack of job opportunities and low level of educational services. On the other hand, the pull factors, such as the better job opportunities and a high quality of life, also play a large role.

After evaluating the state of the demographic and economic situation in the target governorates and the push and pull factors for the child migrants in Egypt, and after analyzing the general efforts and activities done by the various authorities in charge, there are several alternatives and decisions that must be taken. However, for the purpose of the policy paper and the priorities that could help to ease the repercussions of this phenomenon, the policy options have been divided into four sectoral categories: the preventive options, the protective options, the prosecution options, and the partnership options. This sectorial categorization is based on the framework of the IOM in its report titled "Egyptian Unaccompanied Migrant Children" (IOM, 2016).

The collective aim of the options is to prevent the irregular migration of Egyptian children by raising awareness of the community towards the dangers that the children face in their journey through the Mediterranean, and after arriving at the European coasts.

Preventive Alternatives:

There is no doubt that the prevention approach to intervening in the issue of the unaccompanied migrant children should be the most important on the list of priorities of the government, especially, that the decision makers are willing to combat this phenomenon.

The weak economic situation of rural families is one of the pressing factors that push families to send their children to the sea to find better opportunities. It is more than important to protect the less advantaged families and find a systematic way to provide coverage for them with the national support programs such as the conditional cash transfer Takaful and Karama. This alternative would prevent some potential children from being forced to migrate by their family. Incorporating families into the social safety network will encourage them to make use of the opportunities in their own country.

The limited opportunities in the labor market should be enhanced and expanded to ease the entering of new laborers from the governorates that suffer from

a high number of child migrants. This option should go along with providing children and adolescents with life and work skills which empower them to be good laborers in their own communities and within the local economic system.

Also, this option could include encouraging multinational companies to do their duty in helping the community they work in.

Regarding the opportunities in the labor market, the governorates with the high rate of children emigration should build strategies to give the children safe alternatives that represent incentives for them to stay in their villages.

Administrative units for facilitating corporate social responsibility should be created within the administrative structure of governorates. These units should be mandated with helping companies that are interested in helping the community find a legal way to work and identify the right beneficiaries for certain projects and programs. Needs assessment, coordination, advocacy and matching are the basic mandates of these units. These units could also plan for crowdfunding campaigns, as well as linking Egyptians abroad with communities at home.

Although the issue is related to Egyptian children and their safety, the whole family, and even the whole community, should be taught how awful the journey through the sea can be, and how difficult it is to succeed in reaching any of the European coasts. Awareness should be raised on the circumstances of the shelters where the migrant children are kept for a long time and how bad they could be treated and abused. Changing the mentality that promotes that 'the journey is for the strong and ambitious' should be combatted, as the journey is not easy on anyone. Using the available traditional media and social media in an effective strategy to approach a massive number of community members could be utilized. Besides, it is important to raise the awareness of the community leaders such as Imams in the mosques, Priests in the church, the teachers in the schools, and the social and health workers. In parallel with raising the awareness of the community, parents and household members should be subjected to an intensive program of awareness raising. The parents need to understand the dangers that face their children when they go on a journey through the unknown.

On the other hand, one of the most effective methods to prevent irregular migration is education. Enhancing the quality of education and promoting its relevance to the labor market demands is crucial. Education has multiple benefits in solving this issue and acts as a ring in a chain with the other preventive policy options. Starting from the schools and educational facilities, the enhancing process should start at an early age with obligations, and at the same time with incentives, from the social support networks to encourage families to take their children to school instead of sending them to the sea. It is helpful to establish community schools where the students can take vocational education and increase their skills, especially if the CSR activities take part in establishing them.

Evidence-based accurate research should be conducted. The challenging increasing amount of data about the migration phenomenon and the related issues need to be analyzed in rigorous studies. Analyzing the new current statistics and their relations could give valuable insights for how resolving the problem with the most suitable tools can be achieved. Building a comprehensive database for the demographic, economic, social, legislative and cultural aspects of the issue of irregular child migration is a must, not a luxury. To cope with this challenge, each governorate should encourage the existing think tanks to focus on the issue, in addition to establishing specialized think tanks in case there are no sufficient capacities.

In the preventive approach, all the steps aim to prevent the phenomenon from happening by enhancing the quality of life in the target areas. There are significant factors that may help accomplish this aim, such as (NCCPIM, 2016) (UNICEF, 2017) (IOM, 2016):

- **Building a comprehensive database** of the cases and related events that contains the demographic, economic, social, legislative, and cultural facts related to the issue and the target areas. This would result in, encouraging evidence-based research activities, and accordingly, supporting decision making.

- **Establishing a citizen-based administrative unit to facilitate CSR activities for corporates and multinational companies.** Such an administrative unit in each target governorate that would match the job opportunities with potential beneficiaries.

- **Coordinating with the national support program Takaful and Karama** to encourage families to send their children to school instead of sending them to sea.

- **Establishing a national program for awareness raising** using the available media and social media channels. Prominent talk show presenters, cinema stars, football stars, and thought leaders should be invited to participate in an awareness campaign.

- **Encouraging new businesses and labor-intensive projects** and training the youth on the working skills and helping them access the entrepreneurship world. This will promote the opportunities in the labor market.

Consequently, the preventive approach with the suggested policy options in this paper will cause an integrated defense base and empower the community to create its own immunity against the misperception and stereotyping of migration to European countries. This is in parallel with the quality of education which plays the cornerstone in the development interventions. Education will enlighten the vision of the children who are growing up with the idea that travelling abroad does not necessarily equal a better life.

On the other hand, establishing the suggested unit in each target governorate will ease the conversation between the real needs of the community and the real resources available by the companies and other stakeholders. This coordination will create more work opportunities and reduce the desire for leaving based on the lack of work opportunities.

This package of the preventive policy options is supported by the political will and the strategic plan of child welfare in Egypt. However, there are some difficulties in changing the governmental structure by adding an administrative unit in each governorate to facilitate the CSR activities. It is also challenging to reach entire families and change their mindset regarding the migration of their children. Weak communication and lack of cooperation is also a fragile point in this package because it could cause a misunderstanding and a waste of time and efforts.

Protective alternatives:

The protective approach could play an assistive role in combating the irregular migration of the Egyptian children and, ultimately, integrate with the preventive approach. This approach aims to heal and reduce the repercussions of irregular migration on children and their families.

First of all, giving irregular migrant children the chance to return to their homes protects them from being abused and lost in unwelcoming communities. There should be a well-planned program in collaboration between Egypt and the host countries to assist the children in returning and reintegrating with their families. This type of Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration, originally an IOM program, protects them from morbidity and the life threats. AVRR programs should start with an agreement to secure decent living circumstances during their return journey.

The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, (NCCM), the National Coordinating Committee to Combat and Prevent Illegal Migration, (NCCPIM), and the Child Protection Committee apparatus in the governorates should work together to enhance the existing protection mechanisms and establish the AVRR program for the Egyptian irregular migrant children. AVRR programs include the treatment of the trauma of the rescued children and psychological and social support in order to rehabilitate them safely.

This policy paper believes that one of the key stakeholders is the International Organization of Migration, (IOM), which provides an assistive program to return and reintegrate the irregular migrants, especially the unaccompanied children.

The ideal case for implementing the AVRR program is to plan for a real needs assessment of the returnees and their families who are important in the process of the reintegration. There are several projected needs that could be met through the re-enrollment of the returnee children in the education system: offering vocational training programs that address the needs of the labor market, encouraging new businesses and entrepreneurship, and providing proper employment opportunities for returnees and their family members.

The monitoring and evaluation of the efforts that aim to support the returnees and their attempts to reintegrate is a fundamental policy option. The process of the AVRR program should be accompanied with continued research and data analysis to put concrete indicators for the implementation and the resulting outcomes resulted. Consequently, there will be up-to-date knowledge about this phenomenon and its elements, such as the push factors for the unaccompanied migrant child, the size and power of the smuggling networks, the pull factors, and the potential for reintegrating the returnee child.

The protective approach that originally aims to ease the repercussions of the irregular migration phenomenon should be based on a national program for returning and reintegrating children who migrate irregularly with the following essential actions (NCCPIM, 2016) (UNICEF, 2017) (IOM, 2016):

- **Enhancing the protection mechanisms system** especially for the children in the quarantine of any European country.

- **Providing adequate psychological and social support for the rescued children** and their families in order to rehabilitate them and prepare them for the reintegration program.

- **Ensuring the opportunity of re-enrollment in education for children** at the age of compulsory education.

- **Providing vocational education and training for returnees** who are ready to work and to their family members to encourage the family business attitude.

- **Encouraging new businesses and entrepreneurial enterprises** in the target governorate to open more job opportunities.

As a result of the protective approach with its several activities, there will be a chance for the children who are already involved in irregular migration. This will let them see an opportunity in returning and encourage them to change the fate that they were given. The activities that aim to protect the children in danger of irregular migration should alert their families and encourage them to recall their children, as well as to prevent the candidate for irregular migration from considering migration as an option.

Prosecution alternatives:

The legislative framework is important to control such a multidimensional issue. With a quick look at the key factors that influence the decision to irregularly travel through the sea, we can see why the law is important. These reasons include family members, peers, smugglers, and the migrants who succeed in reaching their destination. The anti-smuggling laws should be developed based on real conditions, at the same time meeting the international standards and the local needs. Advocating for more regulations to manage this issue is necessary.

On the other hand, the interested stakeholders, such as the legislators, parliamentarians, pressure groups, and migrants rights organizations should review the existing policies in line with child rights and welfare.

There is a law for combating smuggling that was promulgated in 2016. It was submitted by the Egyptian government in November 2015 to the parliament.

Lately, the executive regulations for this law have been promulgated in 2018. Although this is a good step towards preventing irregular migration, still more work is needed on the competencies and resources that are required to enforce the law effectively. Therefore, building capacities is an essential prerequisite to enforcing the law. Capacity building programs implemented in collaboration between local institutions and international organizations are the right way to transfer the expertise and raise the performance of civil servants. The capacity building programs could include exchange visits with the destination countries with Egypt and exchanging best practices in combating children migration.

The smugglers and any of their collaborating networks should be prosecuted and heavily penalized. The punishment should be raised for any individual involved in the activities of smuggling. The illegal migration brokers are dangerous and prosecuting them will prevent them from attracting more victims.

Eventually, punishing parents who send their children on a dangerous journey through the sea will be part of the penal system.

In order to tackle this approach, there are a number of clear actions that should be pursued (NCCPIM, 2016) (UNICEF, 2017) (IOM, 2016):

- **Building capacities of law enforcement** through visits and training courses for public servants, policemen, judges, and other social workers who will be involved in the enforcement of the law and its regulations.

- **Developing supportive regulations and ministerial decrees** in order to impose the regulatory punishment of the law in the proper way.

- **Emphasize the responsibility of the parents** and the guilt that they will be accused of if they indulge in their child's migration. Furthermore, announce the punishment of real cases as proof of the law's seriousness.

Enforcing the law and its executive regulations, in addition to adding more regulations and decrees, will complete the legislative framework which is needed to treat the problem. On the other hand, enhancing the capacities of those who are involved in the implementation will put the law in the right place with clear responsibilities and accountabilities.

Partnership alternatives:

The overlapping nature of the Unaccompanied Migrant Children phenomenon in Egypt imposes obligations on the involved parties to collaborate, especially the Egyptian government and its counterparts in destination countries, in addition to

the regional and international organizations interested in child protection and migrant rights. Therefore, the priority of those parties should go to establishing an integrated partnership paradigm.

The partnership in the issue of Egyptian unaccompanied migrant children needs to be based on strategic thinking and planning. The policy option of formulating a partnership paradigm upon a strategy that interrelates with other policy options is needed. Apparently, one side will not be able to work separate from other actors. A well-planned strategy for the partnership that is put by all involved parties will ease the work in collaboration and give the maximum outcomes from the combating efforts.

Undoubtedly, adopting cooperative agreements and memoranda of understanding on all levels of partnership in a strategic way is important and one of the primary requirements. NCCM and NCCPIM in Egypt have the mandate to sign with other actors' agreements and memoranda of understanding on all levels and also to develop prioritized plans to apply those agreements. These agreements must be in light of the international instruments. Egypt will definitely benefit from these agreements especially in gaining experiences, particularly the technical support in planning and implementing highly effective programs to resolve the issue and remedy its consequences.

One of the good opportunities for a bilateral cooperation agreement that will help Egypt reduce the number of unaccompanied migrant children is the border management agreements with the Mediterranean countries, especially the main destination ones, like Italy and Greece.

Exchanging information and statistical facts about the phenomenon between the key actors is one of the strategic partnerships that Egypt should regularly conduct. This exchange includes some of the official records on the crimes in the target governorates, the number of the population, the unemployment status, and other related information and insights that can be used in the process of decision-making, planning and implementing.

There are repetitive problems and dangerous patterns of attracting children to use their families' savings to travel with smugglers. There is, therefore, a need for the establishment of a comprehensive database to cover these complicated details. This database should be flexible enough to include the whole details from all key actors and involved partners. Hence, the best way to establish this comprehensive database is the collaboration between the Egyptian government and/or NCCM and NCCPIM, international and regional organizations, and the other authorities in the destination countries.

In order to implement the partnership approach, the following is a key prerequisite (NCCPIM, 2016) (UNICEF, 2017) (IOM, 2016):

- **Developing a strategic plan for the partnership in the long run.** This includes the border management agreements with all neighboring countries with a clear mention of cooperation in returning the unaccompanied migrant children.

Conclusion and recommendations:

The major causes of the problem of Egyptian unaccompanied migrant children are diverse and complex. This diversity and complexity in causes require a strategic multidimensional intervention to tackle the related socioeconomic problems. This paper stated a four pillars approach to encompass a package of alternative solutions through phases and tactics. These four pillars are the preventive approach, the protective approach, the prosecution approach, and the partnership approach. Alternative options are also diverse and varied in the importance and feasibility. Accordingly, in order to adopt an objective way to evaluate the whole package of alternatives and give the proper recommendations, (PASTEL) analysis has been conducted to evaluate each option and its validity and feasibility. This is meant to analyze each option in terms of the Political, Administrative, Social, Technological, Economic, and Legislative feasibility.

This paper recommends developing an awareness-raising campaign throughout Egypt with a special concentration on the governorates with the highest rate of child migration. This campaign needs to be continued and repeated for a long period. NCCM, NCCPIM, UNICEF, IOM, and Mediterranean countries are key actors in this activity led by the NCCPIM. Aiming to shift the individual and family attitudes towards the irregular migration of children by changing their beliefs through media releases in TV and radio channels, can also be incorporated. This is urgently needed to tackle the social and behavioral parameters.

Movies and TV shows could directly/indirectly address this issue and its repercussions in the scenarios and scripts. Community leaders such as Imams in mosques, priests in churches, and teachers in schools should be well trained to inform the community members about the negative consequences of child migration. Those persons will advocate for changing the widespread misconception that migrating irregularly will lead to a better life.

Offering fair access to quality education is a focal option. There is a pressing need to increase the investment in education in the target governorates. Building new schools and providing an education system responsive to the labor market is critical. Hence, there should be a combination of educational opportunities and employment opportunities to entice children to stay in Egypt. At the same time, the returnees should find a place in the education system. One of the best ways to reintegrate returnees is to enroll them in school in order to provide them with the needed skills for the labor market and also to rehabilitate them in the community. This quality education is the base to build a capable community caring about its children and sustained in its development.

This policy paper emphasizes the importance of the availability and validity of information and evidence-based research adequacy. The returning and reintegrating program should be based on strong knowledge and well-done research, especially on community needs. This policy recommends extending the margin of policy research in the field on unaccompanied migrant children and suggests policies aimed to address the different stakeholders, with

recommendations and options from their perspectives. The focal actors such as NCCM and NCCPIM are urged to provide integrated databases collecting the available information, statistics, research, and insights about the phenomenon and make it available for all researchers, think tanks, and decision-makers in order to enhance the effectiveness of the intervention activities.

The private sector is a key stakeholder, from the angle of the funding of educational projects and supporting of the labor market by establishing new business opportunities. There is a need for a unit for facilitating corporate social responsibility and managing the relationship between the private sectors' efforts and the economic policy direction in the target governorates. Establishing this unit in the administrative structure of the governorate under the supervision of the governor will give it the power to manage the available resources and the chance to reach the maximum benefit. These units should be mandated to help the companies who are willing to help the community to find the right way and the right beneficiaries for the projects and programs. Needs assessment, coordination, advocating and matching should be the basic mandates of this unit. Through the implementation of the suggested interventions package, quick and positive steps will be achieved in combating the problem of UMC in Egypt.

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Appendix A

	Political	Administrative	Social	Economic	Technological	Legal
Building a comprehensive database	1	1	1	1	1	1
Establishing a citizen-based administrative unit to facilitate CSR	1	1	1	0	1	1
Combining support program with education	1	1	0	1	1	1
Establishing a national program for raising awareness	1	1	0	1	1	1
Encouraging the new businesses and labor-intensive projects	1	1	1	0	1	1
Building capacities for law enforcement	1	1	1	0	1	1
Developing supportive regulations and ministerial decrees	1	1	1	1	1	1
Emphasizing the responsibility of the parents	1	1	1	1	1	1
Developing a strategic plan for the partnership in the long run	1	0	1	1	1	1

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