WHY CHILDREN STAY

Save the Children

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FOREWORD

Mixed migration and forced displacement are defining global issues of the early twenty-first century, attracting unprecedented interest amongst politicians, policy makers, international organisations and the public. By December 2017, approximately 36 million of the world's forcibly displaced were children, a figure which doesn't include the many millions of internal child migrants, or those often categorized as 'irregular' child migrants. Yet, despite being profoundly affected by migration and displacement, there is limited understanding of the specific challenges these children face. To respond to this gap, and to help identify solutions and programming interventions, Save the Children established its Migration and Displacement Initiative (MDI) in late 2016.

"
Get your development interventions right, and our formative research indicates that the majority of children won't want to take an often-perilous journey to seek better opportunities far away from home. "

Children migrate for various reasons. Some are fleeing armed conflict or gang violence, discrimination or persecution. Others might be victims of trafficking and slavery. Some child migrants seek education and employment opportunities; others are encouraged by their families to escape poverty. All of these children are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and are understandably the focus of numerous Save the Children interventions around the world. They are also the subject of much of our research, as we seek to better understand and measure migratory trends and the motivations for migration.

Yet far more people, including children, *stay* in their communities of origin rather than migrate. The lack of analysis and data on *why* **children stay,** especially of those children living in communities of high outward migration, represents a glaring gap in our knowledge base, and motivated Save the Children to design and commission this participatory research. We believe that the subject matter also provides a much-needed opportunity to approach the issue of migration from a more positive angle; hearing from children themselves, and learning more about the relevance of effective basic services, social networks and the impact of local opportunities to meet a child's aspiration.

In many ways, the research findings should come as no surprise – after all, they underline what development actors have been saying for decades, only this time we hear it from the children themselves: Regular food, a supportive network and the centrality of female family members, quality basic services and the opportunity to realise your aspirations in your own community, really do make a difference. Get your development interventions right, and our formative research indicates that the majority of children won't want to take an often-perilous journey to seek better opportunities far away from home. Get them wrong, or ignore the hugely damaging impact of violence and hazardous labour, and don't be surprised if the response of children, and their families, changes drastically.

Save the Children does not advocate for or against migration. We recognise that, on occasion, migration is the preferred and sometimes the only option to ensure that the best interest of the child is met – and that migration, when successful, can represent a life improving experience. We seek to protect children from unsafe migration and address the drivers of involuntary migration to ensure that children can fulfil their potential in their own country. That is why the 'Why Children Stay' study is so relevant: it provides donors and development actors with a clear, empirically-grounded framing of what children want and need to realise their aspirations in their home communities. And it does so by focusing on hope and potential, rather than barriers and difference.

Steve Morgan,
Director, Migration and Displacement Initiative, Save the Children International

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

EU	European Union
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LGBTQIA	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex and asexual/allies
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
RMMS	Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat
RQDA	R Qualitative Data Analysis
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNGA	UN General Assembly
UNHCR	UN High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
US	United States
WEF	World Economic Forum

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At present, nearly

36 MILLION

children worldwide have migrated across borders or been forcibly displaced.

This study interviewed

120

children in 3 countries.

At present, nearly 50 million children worldwide have migrated across borders or been forcibly displaced from their communities or countries of origin[1]. Yet even in communities where migration culture prevails, many more children stay than leave.

Save the Children does not seek to prevent child migration. We recognise that in many circumstances, migration can represent the appropriate choice for children and their families. Yet migration-focused interventions and research in communities of origin tend to focus on children who choose to leave. We know far less about the majority of children who choose to stay— their experiences, aspirations, relationships, and decision-making.

'Why Children Stay' addresses this gap by investigating the factors influencing children's decisions to remain in their communities of origin. **One of the largest participatory studies of children and migration conducted in Africa,** 'Why Children Stay' interviewed the voices and experiences of 120 children across 3 countries known for high rates of internal rural–urban and outward child migration: **Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Zambia.**

The results suggest a need for a profound change in the way we view communities of origin. Viewing villages and towns with high rates of outward migration as places that children invariably want to leave is misconceived. This research shows that communities of origin are places children typically want to stay in—and that their choices are the result of very deliberate, carefully considered reasoning.

The implications for programming hold far-reaching potential. The study highlights how positive reinforcement of key protective factors, identified by children themselves as critical to their decision to remain, is equally, if not more important than addressing perceived push factors – and that this should be factored into future decision making and investments by relevant state and non-state actors. The findings should also inform efforts to influence and support relevant consultative processes and policies, and help strengthen the transnational systems responsible for realising the rights of migrating children.

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[1]   Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts: www.childrenonthemove.org accessed 4 June 2018.

Out of 120 child participants (aged 10–19 years)

73%
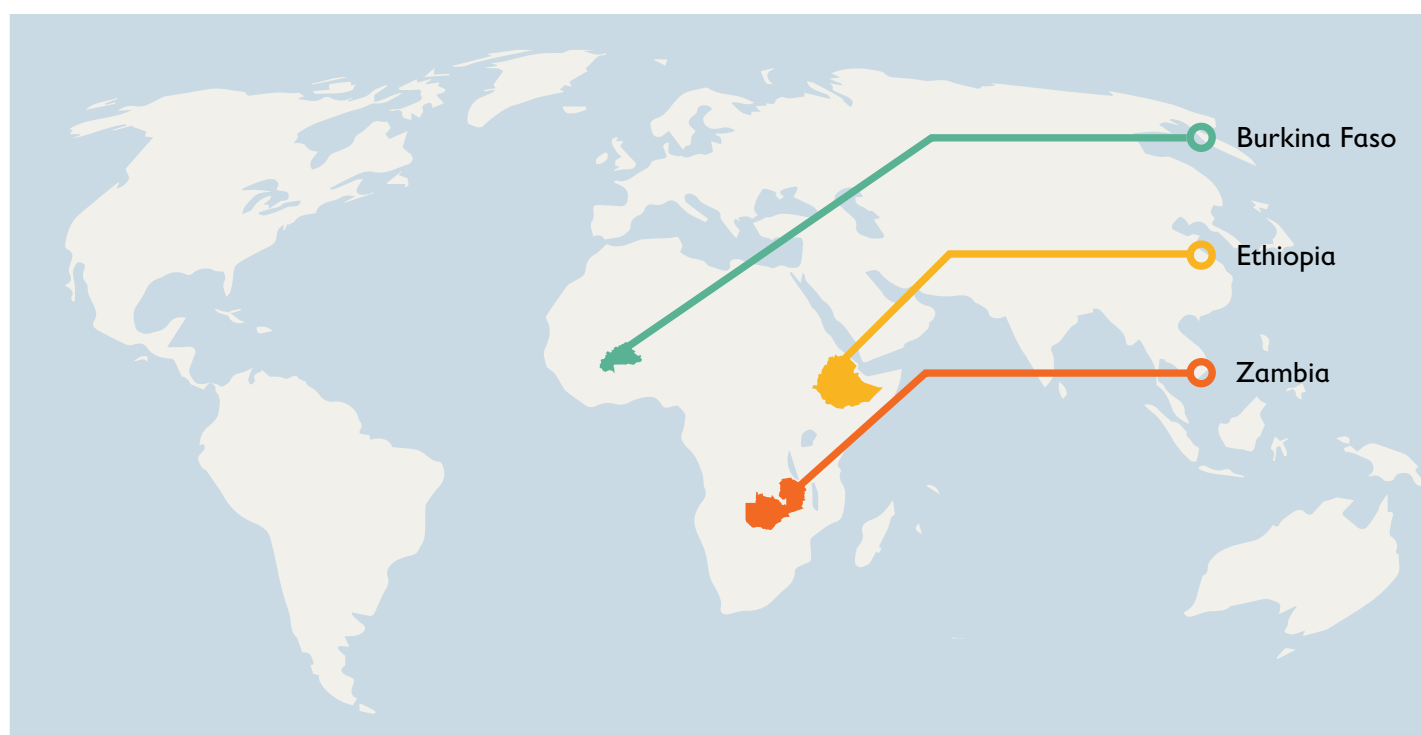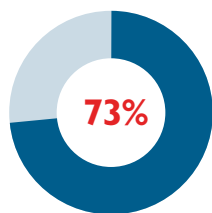
said they were not thinking of leaving.

Girl participants were only slightly more likely to indicate the intention to stay in home communities than boys

78%

compared to

70%
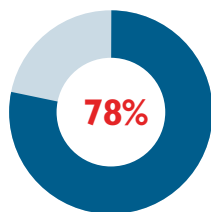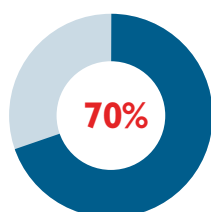
of boys.

KEY FINDINGS

The clear majority of child respondents who live in communities with high rates of outward migration and traditional cultures of mobility prefer to stay. Out of 120 child participants (aged 10–19 years) living in typical communities of origin, **73% said they were not thinking of leaving.** Regardless of age and background, most said they wanted to remain close to family and realise future aspirations at home. This finding challenges overly simplistic thinking about communities of origin as 'negative' environments children leave for perceived better opportunities.

Girls and boys are almost equally likely to choose to stay. Similarly, age is not a big determining factor. Girl participants were only slightly more likely to indicate the intention to stay in home communities than boys (78% compared to 70%). The emphasis on education, and presence of a caregiver, was generally more pronounced for girl participants than boy participants. These initial insights provide a starting point for more detailed, specific follow-on study into a far wider range of potential factors that may influence girls to stay.

Peers and relatives (especially female family members) are a significant influence on the decision to stay, and children consider their input on the risks related to unsafe migration more persuasive than that from elsewhere. Awareness-raising that hopes to reduce these risks needs to take this into account. Interestingly, female family members emerge as particularly influential when it comes to the decision to remain.

Children who have confidence in their ability to 'make it' within their communities choose to stay. Children who do not believe they can realise their life goals at home almost invariably fall into the 'wanting to leave' category.

Individual agency is highly significant in both the decision to stay and to leave. Children who decide to migrate are increasingly recognised as exercising their active agency, but an often-overlooked point is that the same is true for children who stay. Indeed, a strong profile emerges of **highly adaptive individuals who consciously and strategically weigh up possibilities and prospects and act intentionally with great depth of agency in reaching this choice.**

A number of key recurrent factors are specifically cited by children as the most influential reasons for remaining in their communities of origin. For the purposes of this study, these are referred to as *'protective factors',* including:

- Being in school, with the **opportunity to complete secondary education in the community of origin** an important qualifier;

- Eating more **than one meal per day;**

- Being able to identify someone who acts as **primary caregiver at home;**

- Individual agency and **a sense of prospect,** especially the belief that the child will be successful in realising their future aspirations;

- **Awareness of risks** associated with unaccompanied migration and exploitation.

Critically, *presence of these protective factors overrides the influence of other competing 'push' factors also present in children's environments.*

Two notable exceptions are violence (both at home and in the form of corporal punishment by teachers) *and harmful work. Children exposed to both factors feel compelled to move even when they prefer to stay.*

The findings above imply the need for a radical shift in programming: instead of targeting push factors relevant to the minority who are leaving, key national and international stakeholders should **strengthen the capacity of communities to reinforce the protective factors** relevant both to those who refrain from migrating and those who chose to leave.

The most significant push factors are

VIOLENCE

(both at home and in class) and

HARMFUL WORK.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

Proactively engage communities of origin as priority targets in programmes, regardless of whether programming is implemented as part of a typical migration or pre-migration intervention.

Identify context-specific protective factors alongside push factors. Greater attention should be given to understanding the protective factors influencing the majority of children to stay, not just the push factors compelling a minority of children to leave:

- Conduct pre-intervention participatory research or assessments to establish these factors;
- Establish an age-disaggregated, gender-sensitive, baseline of factors for reinforcement;
- Work with key stakeholders to identify the most influential people in the lives of children in the specific context, for the purpose of messaging and dialogue;
- Conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation by involving relevant community stakeholders, civil society and children.

Work *across thematic sectors to reinforce protective factors.* Integrated programming across sectors, including education, health/nutrition, protection, child poverty and child governance, among others, can create viable local prospects while eliminating factors harmful to children's developmental trajectories and aspirations.

Awareness of the risks associated with the journey correlates with a lower likelihood of wanting to leave. This **validates and supports the continued implementation of awareness-raising in communities of origin** to educate children about risks, in an effort to prevent irregular mobility.

- *Put families, especially female members, and peers at the centre of dialogue and messaging;*
- *Strengthen resilience by recognising the agency of children who stay and more directly involving them as active, decision-making participants in migration-related programming.*

"Greater attention should be given to understanding the protective factors influencing the majority of children to stay, not just the push factors compelling a minority of children to leave."

POLICY AND ADVOCACY RECOMMENDATIONS

Intervene to reduce violence and harmful work. The importance children place on exposure to violence and harmful work in their decision to move underlines the need for initiatives that promote positive parenting, bans on violence in all settings, and appropriate involvement of children in household and agricultural chores.

For Save the Children advocacy to government partners and regional economic communities:

Support national governments and hold them accountable to step up commitment to and accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDGs 1, 2, 4, 5, 8 and 16.

Work with regional consultative processes and regional economic communities to support and advocate for accelerated progress towards provisions for countries of origin in the African Common Position on Migration and Development (2006) and related regional/pan-African frameworks.

Amplify the narrative around communities of origin as places where children want to stay in regional consultative processes, and support states to increase commitment to relevant SDGs and development instruments, especially to nurture child and youth development.

Advocate for governments in countries of transit and destination to include migrants in targeted skills or vocational training schemes currently targeting citizens only, and to act on the finding that in some countries, children migrate in pursuit of specific skills which they hope to use in home communities upon return.

For Save the Children donor advocacy:
- Advocate to donors to include or prioritise communities of origin in geographic criteria for proposed projects and programmes for all funding streams, not only migration programming;
- Augment Save the Children advocacy to donors to deliver on and step up commitments made to the agenda to eliminate all forms of violence against women and children.

> **"** The importance children place on exposure to violence and harmful work … underlines the need for initiatives that promote positive parenting, bans on violence in all settings. **"**

RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of themes emerge as promising avenues for follow-on research:

Explore the factors that influence children to stay in conflict settings. Research in conflict settings could investigate children's decision-making in places where protective factors are under greater threat from violence. Violence featured as a significant push factor in this study—even for children who said they would otherwise not want to leave and who had many other protective factors in place.

Unpack the relationship between factors that influence children to stay, to better understand which of them are dominant and which less so, which remain protective in the presence of specific push factors and which potentially combine to strengthen the likelihood of a child staying.

Investigate agency and resilience (by age and gender). Multi-disciplinary research that delves more deeply into children's thinking processes could provide valuable insights into their decisions to leave home, how their migration aspirations link to migration outcomes and how best to protect and promote the resilience of all children who are involved in mobility—including those who would like to leave home and migrate outward but are held back by circumstances out of their control.

Evaluate which interventions are most effective. Action research employing 'test and invest' methodologies can better identify and evaluate migration interventions working effectively to improve prospects for children in communities of origin.

Replicate the study to better include disability and LGBTQIA, as well as other forms of non-conformity that may elicit discrimination. These are essential areas of research to use to refine programme strategies so they speak to all children's needs.

Replicate the study in a context which would shed light on how climate-related factors alter or confirm findings from this formative study.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a novel **mixed-methods approach,** combining child-centric, participatory qualitative interviewing with quantitative survey data analysis.

Children's perspectives were **supported and triangulated by the additional perspectives of 36 adult key informants** (parents, caregivers, international and national non-governmental organisation representatives, government authorities and others).

Save the Children hopes to develop findings further in a Phase 2 study, and more broadly, ignite a research agenda that supports immediate and lasting interventions enabling children to survive, learn and be protected as close to home as they choose.

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1. INTRODUCTION

We need a global commitment to address the root causes and drivers of migration including unsafe migration.

Migration and displacement are front-page news across the world. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted in 2016 by UN member states, and the ensuing Global Compact for Migration, represent a global commitment to addressing the root causes and drivers of migration, including unsafe migration, in countries of origin. This essential policy area requires commitment from governments and partners in translating the New York Declaration into practice for children involved in mobility (UNICEF, 2017).

1.1. BACKGROUND

Emerging literature on the link between migration aspirations and migration outcomes, however, increasingly cautions against one-dimensional policies or interventions that seek to address root causes as a measure to manage or curb unsafe or irregular migration (IOM, 2017). Instead, interventions that build on a sound understanding of the thinking behind decision-making earlier in the chain of events, and that aim to build on aspects of resilience, agency, and sense of prospects already established in local communities of origin, are increasingly seen as more realistic ways to influence the decision to leave home in the first place. (Carling, 2017).

Within this context, it **is an often-overlooked fact that far more people, including children, stay in their communities of origin rather than migrate.** Very little research exists on adult migrants' motivations to resist migrating from communities where migration culture is prevalent (IOM, 2017).

Even less well understood are children's motivations to stay—even though girls and boys are the key actors in long-term solutions in communities and countries with strong migration cultures. Understanding what motivates these children to stay or to return to their community of origin, and how they engage with external circumstances that inspire migration aspirations, is key to ensuring relevant and timely interventions in communities of origin.

'Why Children Stay' marks an innovative contribution to the child migration research landscape. While previous studies have tried to understand why children *move away* from or leave their homes, our study seeks to understand 'Why Children Stay' or do not leave their home and what incentivises this decision. The study therefore adopts a very different angle on child migration, and represents, to the best of our knowledge, one of the first concerted attempts to engage from this perspective.

As one of the largest participatory studies of its kind so far to be conducted with children involved in mobility in countries of origin, 'Why Children Stay' has enlisted the opinions and experiences of 120 children in Eastern, Western and Southern Africa to provide essential insights into the motivational factors that encourage them to remain at home. It provides an opportunity to engage with the often-incendiary migration debate **from a more positive perspective,** by looking at, among other things, kinship ties and effective social networks; local capacity to meet aspirations; and access to and relevance and effectiveness of basic services. The overall aim is to elucidate timely, actionable insights for programming and advocacy. Of equal importance, the study serves as a call to action and seeks to ignite further research into the understudied interests of children who choose to stay.

To this end, the main objectives of 'Why Children Stay' are:
- To improve knowledge and understanding of why certain children choose to stay in communities with prevailing high rates of outward migration, rather than move;
- To explore and define key factors that encourage some children to stay in their community of origin, which could include individual and/or structural reasons not to leave;
- To examine, in particular, the effectiveness of programming in supporting a positive environment for children to stay or return, and to draw from the findings relevant programming recommendations for children who stay (including for those considering leaving and returnees).

> "We should not stop people from migrating. We have to give them better life at home."
> —Ambarish Datta, BSE Institute

1.2. WHY DO WE NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT CHILDREN WHO STAY?

Knowing more about the children who do *not* migrate empowers community actors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local authorities to better understand and address needs in communities of origin.

Mobility is never exclusively bad or good. Successful mobility can represent a route out of poverty and violence for young people, for families of migrants and for communities of origin who receive regular remittances[2]. However, engaging in mobility during influential development states of childhood and adolescence has the potential to significantly alter the trajectory of the young person's future. Migrant children often sacrifice many more years to reaching their destination than they intend at the time of departure. Their journeys are seldom direct. In their journeys through places of transit, they regularly become stuck in inefficient institutional systems, are often exposed to protection risks including violence and exploitation all in an effort to reach the ultimate destination.

This bartered existence very often plays out between the ages of 12 and 19. These are arguably the years when parents, caregivers and governments as primary duty-bearers, along with NGOs, need to support child development and present young people with opportunities to develop their cognitive, social and emotional skills. It is also when they need to promote young people's abilities or help them hone skills to enable them to fully participate in society, as far as possible in a profession or capacity of their own choosing. International NGOs and other agencies that implement migration programmes targeting children and young people ultimately aim to safeguard these sensitive years for children at the respective stages of their journeys—with varying levels of effectiveness.

It follows that children who choose to remain at home, and not expose themselves to the risks posed by unaccompanied or independent child migration, should be supported to do so. Knowing which factors can be strengthened in communities of origin to assist children who would choose to stay but who are otherwise pushed into migrating creates an alternative way of cushioning these important formative years.

Despite significant investment over the past decade by donors and international NGOs in communities of origin to reduce the risks related to mobility and prevent children's unsafe migration, evidence of what really works to reduce vulnerability in this context is extremely scarce.

Very little systematic research and programme monitoring has been conducted to establish whether typical pre-migration interventions successfully protect children from unsafe migration or address situations in communities of origin that contribute to mobility. In part, this is because the target group is a transient one: it is difficult to establish a baseline and measure the impact or effectiveness of interventions when beneficiaries have moved on. This complexity is exacerbated by the ambiguity and controversy surrounding the notion of preventing migration.

And yet, in a context where climate change, conflict, rapid urbanisation and access to technology are all expected to increase mobility across the continent and beyond, understanding the interaction between children and their external environment in communities of origin in Africa has never been more important. Communities such as those sampled in this study are highly likely to continue to fuel outward migration in years to come. The anticipated global increase in regular and irregular migration (WEF, 2016) by 2050[3] should arguably also be understood to represent an increase in the number and spread of villages and towns that will qualify as so-called communities of origin, and in the number of children who will face the decision to stay or go.

> **Knowing which factors can be strengthened in communities of origin to assist children who would choose to stay, but who are otherwise pushed into migrating, is essential for supporting critical migration choices in important formative years.**

[2] Landau, L. & Blaswer, C. (2014). Managing Migration in Southern Africa: Tools for Evaluating Local Government Responsiveness. Working Paper 19. Migrating Out of Poverty Research Programme Consortium

[3] According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), climate change could displace as many as a billion people by 2050 (www.iom.int/migration-and-climate-change-0).

> **"** The 'Why Children Stay' study confirms that not all children in communities of origin are vulnerable; indeed, not all children think about leaving. Yet often those who deviate from the norm of outward migration face and interact with the very same external factors that push others to leave. **"**

This implies greater pressure in the near future on governments in countries of origin, as well as on governments in transit and destination countries, and indeed on regional economic communities, to find local and bilateral solutions to promote development and address push factors, while not losing sight of the ambition of ensuring safe passage for those migrants for whom moving is the most protective course of action. The onus will rest on state and non-state child rights organisations and actors to step up commitments in communities where conditions render children so vulnerable that leaving home unaccompanied seems like the only decision left to take.

At the same time, results from this study show that not all children in communities of origin are vulnerable, and, indeed, that not all children want to leave. Those who deviate from the norm of outward migration face and interact with the very same external factors that push others to leave. The success of interventions that aim to alleviate the vulnerability of children who reside in communities of origin—be it from the risk of unsafe migration or from the impact of gaps in service delivery or other so-called push factors that prevail—is as dependent on evidence of what works as are interventions in any other context.

This study assumes that one way of building this evidence is to start with an exploratory understanding of how children who stay view and engage with the factors that affect their day-to-day lives in their community of origin. It attempts to isolate factors that appear to play a protective role in the lives of children who stay from factors that merely limit the migration aspirations of children who would otherwise choose to leave. Although it intentionally deviates from the traditional approach of exploring root causes, push factors and triggers for leaving home, the 'Why Children Stay' study does not neglect these. Instead, it considers the interplay between protective factors and the most pressing of push factors to better understand their respective roles in persuading decision-making either way.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With these objectives in mind, this report aims to answer the following central questions, not only for the target group as a collective, but also, where at all possible, respectively for boys and girls, using gender- and age-disaggregated data:

1. How do girls/boys view where they live/their current life and whether their circumstances fit/meet their aspirations for the future? To what extent do they feel they have control over the factors in their external environment that inspire migration? *(perceptions)*

2. How have changes in their lives affected such views, how does the aspiration to leave home change over time as the child grows, and how (and what) changing conditions might affect their likelihood to stay? *(life experience)*

3. What factors inform the decision-making process to stay or leave, and how do girls/boys making any decision as individuals/groups/families about staying or leaving? What opportunities exist for civic engagement and decision-making within children's communities of origin? *(decision-making)*

4. Are there any factors encouraging children to leave/migrate (peer or family pressure/access to education, jobs/protection issues, influence of existing formal/informal child protection systems in the community and country of origin)? *(migration push factors)*

5. To what extent do interventions by Save the Children and/or partners provide anchoring incentives for children to remain locally? How effective are they at preventing unsafe journeys? What role does a sense of agency play in the child's decision to stay or go, and how could it be harnessed to strengthen programming? *(programmatic impact)*

6. What do returning children need in order to stay/not undertake another journey? *((re)integration programming)*

1.4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A detailed understanding of the external and internal factors influencing the decision-making of children who stay should help identify two distinct groups of potential beneficiaries: those whose specific circumstances and/or internal process have presumably led them to choose to stay in their community of origin because of the presence of key **protective factors** (i.e. positive associations with their current and future life). Conversely, those who would go but are constrained from doing so by certain **negative circumstances** (i.e. barriers to leaving).

1.4.1 Protective factors (positive associations with living in the community of origin)

As opposed to push and pull drivers of migration from communities of origin, certain factors within a child's day-to-day environment (home/family life, influence from peers, school or work environment, the greater community, conditions in the village or town) may conversely influence them to stay in these same communities. Although such influences are often referred to as 'anchoring factors', this term is politically contentious in current usage; for this reason the study terms them instead **'protective factors'** to refer to the positive reasons children themselves identify for remaining in their communities of origin. These factors refer not only to attributes in the home environment which relate to child protection, but also to positive factors across sectors which children identify as most influential in motivating their choice to remain.

Knowing which protective factors in particularly encourage the decision to stay is critical, as such reasons must have been so important to the children that they outweighed any negatives in the community of origin and actually swayed them in favour of staying. Conversely, they may be important to others who are deciding to move because these factors are not present in their situation—and from their perspective, possibly represent a gap in their wellbeing in the community of origin. What influences this group of 'voluntary stayers'? Do any specific factors repeat? Are there any two or more factors that often combine? Does anything stand out about these children with regard to individual profile and family composition? Living arrangement? Education level? Which nuances stand out by context, especially with regard to gender: in each context, is anything significantly more important in influencing girls or boys to voluntarily stay?

1.4.2 Negative circumstances (barriers to children leaving their community of origin)

Other children interviewed in this study would choose to go but *cannot* because of constraining factors that hold them back: e.g. responsibilities such as caring for ill relatives; needing to work but earning too little to fund a journey; lack of parental or familial permission; ill health or disability; perceived lack of skills or 'qualification'; early marriage, etc. We are interested in these negative circumstances as children who face them are likely, within a large group of programme beneficiaries, to be the most vulnerable. It seems reasonable from previous experience, and as also indicated in some other studies, to suspect that being held back from migrating correlates with other factors of extreme vulnerability. It would thus be in this group that we would traditionally look for 'hidden' populations, including populations engaging in exploitative labour, those unable to escape situations of abuse and those whose future prospects look the bleakest from their own point of view. It is therefore also important for us on a comparative basis to distinguish this group from the voluntary stayers.
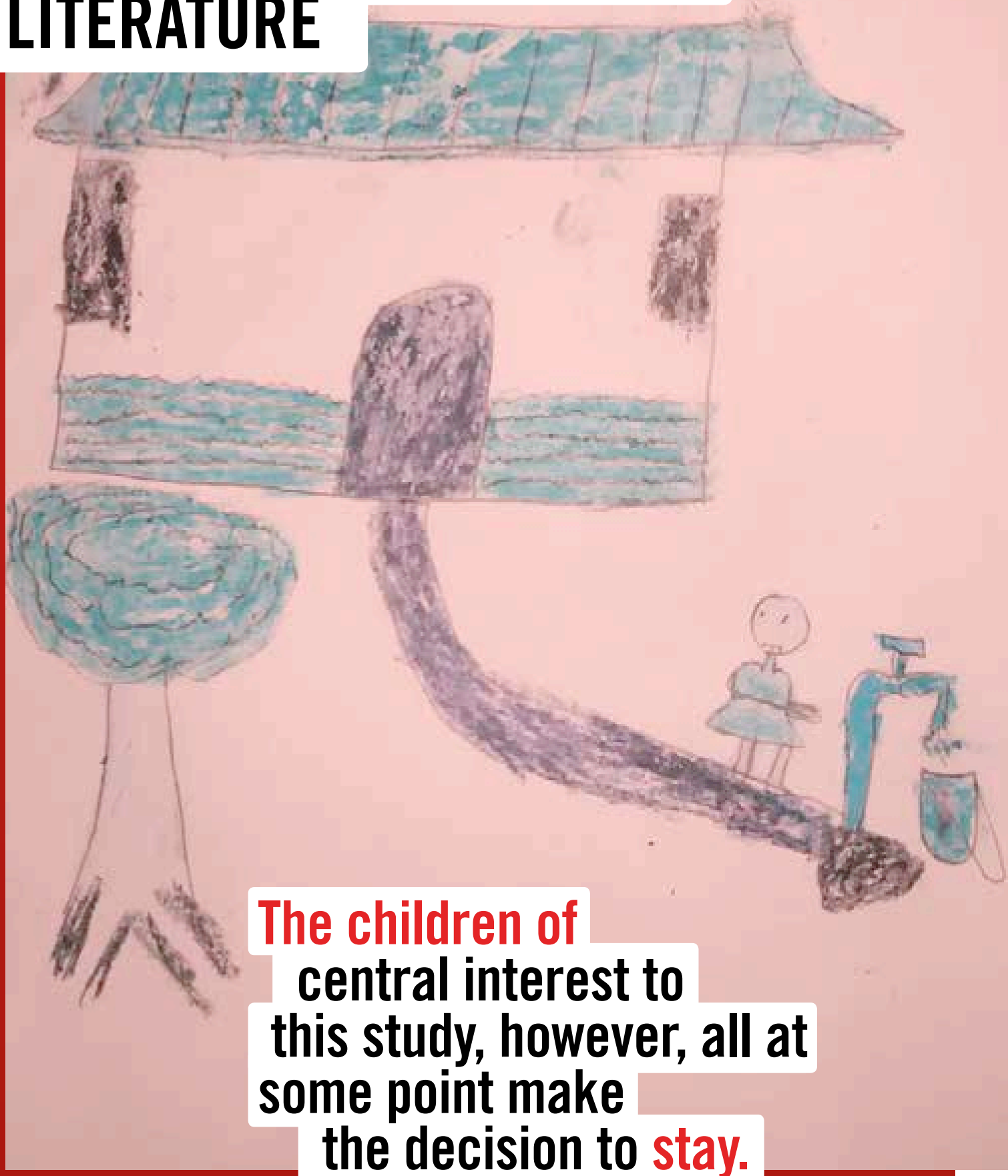
Protective Factors: Positive reasons children identified for remaining in their communities of origin.

Negative circumstances: Adverse conditions children identified as constraining their ability to leave.

2. SUMMARY OF AVAILABLE LITERATURE

The children of central interest to this study, however, all at some point make the decision to **stay.**

A literature review was undertaken to ensure the 'Why Children Stay' methodology was firmly anchored in sound, up-to-date, migration theory and avoided duplicating knowledge. This literature review also confirms the timeliness of the studied topic and its ground-breaking potential to address existing gaps in similar research.

2.1 LIMITED FOCUS ON THOSE WHO STAY, IN PARTICULAR WHERE CHILDREN ARE CONCERNED

The range of 'push' and 'pull' factors driving child migration in communities of origin is well-studied. Factors include, amongst others, poor economic conditions and better livelihood opportunities abroad, child protection risks, discrimination, and family reunification (Cossor, 2016).

The children of central interest to this study, however, all at some point make the decision to stay. Yet a review of the recent migration literature (see Section 2.3) reveals a significant absence of studies investigating the circumstances or agency of children who refrain from leaving home in communities where outward migration is prevalent. Within migration theory, information and theory pertaining to independent child migration is scant; it is even more so when it comes to children who decide to stay rather than migrate in a culture of migration (Punch, 2007).

The body of existing research on those who do not move within contexts of high migration is extremely small, and what does exist focuses largely on adults. Some of these studies cover topics such as labour migration (IOM, 2017), populations resisting movement in contexts where climate change is promoting migration cultures (Mbaye, 2017) and why immigrants choose to stay in locations when hindered by anti-immigration policy (Valdez et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, a growing number of reports and studies are beginning to call for a focus on populations, and especially individuals, who remain in communities of origin (Barcus and Werner, 2016; Carling, 2017; IOM, 2017). There is some acknowledgement that focusing primarily on those who decide to migrate limits the understanding of migration, and that the reasons non-migrants have for staying shadow those that migrants have for leaving (Boehm, 2012).

One recent study by the Population Council (Temin et al, 2013), for instance, concluded that global interventions aimed at supporting migrant girls have had limited impact in part because they tend to reflect evidence on the worst outcomes rather than the diversity of girls' experiences. As a result, programmatic assumptions are disproportionately aimed at mitigating negative effects rather than seeking to maximise the benefits of migration and reduce risk by developing girls' protective assets.

Themes such as economic challenges, gender norms and discrimination affect both migrants and non-migrants but are interpreted differently at the individual level, resulting in different migration decisions (Cohen and Sirkeci, 2011; Boehm, 2012). And non-migrants are also important to the migration cycle – in this context, Cohen and Sirkeci (2011) describe non-migrants as social actors who anchor migrants as well as facilitate the process of migration. Studying non-migrants (also referred to in the literature as 'non-movers', 'stayers', 'stay at homes' or 'immobiles') can offer a unique perspective on the dynamics within communities of origin, and shed light on migration dynamics within the given context (Boehm, 2012). Even more importantly for this study, it is useful for elucidating the mechanics of the decision-making and planning involved in the grey area between migration aspirations and actual migration outcomes (Carling, 2017).

> **Understanding the factors that are involved in preferences not to migrate is becoming increasingly urgent in a world where climate change, conflict and ever-increasing social connectivity combine to create migration cultures that may place pressure to migrate on growing numbers of young people and children who may otherwise prefer to remain in their communities** (IOM, 2017).

2.2. THE NEED TO ENGAGE POTENTIAL MIGRANTS IN COMMUNITIES OF ORIGIN

Contemporary recognition of the need to engage the experiences and opinions of non-migrants (IOM, 2017)—women as well as men—is no doubt boosted by the emerging understanding among global migration practitioners and policy-makers that effective and humane migration management requires more nuanced information than what existing trackers of flows and stock figures can provide. There is increasing appreciation of the fact that understanding how potential migrants think about migrating is essential to truly make sense of the changing dynamics of migration patterns, processes and consequences (Carling, 2017; IOM, 2017), and that women and men, and also girls and boys, respectively, apply unique criteria and interpretations to the factors that affect their realities when embarking on their journey.

A significant advantage of research that focuses on child migrant decision-making and experiences is precisely that it is child- as opposed to policy-centric. Asking potential and actual child migrants how they think about migration and the journeys they may take or are taking can provide important insights into the changing dynamics in origin and transit settings (IOM, 2017).

Understanding the factors that are involved in preferences not to migrate is becoming increasingly urgent in a world where climate change, conflict and ever-increasing social connectivity combine to create migration cultures that may place pressure to migrate on growing numbers of young people and children who may otherwise prefer to remain in their communities (IOM, 2017).

2.3. WHAT MAKES GIRLS AND BOYS STAY: THE NEED FOR GENDER-SENSITIVE, CHILD-CENTRIC MIGRATION RESEARCH

Child-centric research by definition implies a gendered approach, one that tries to understand the potentially different perspectives, interpretations and realities of women and men, girls and boys, in the thinking that drives their migration aspirations, plans and outcomes. The increase in female migration in Africa (from 43% in 1960 to 48% in 2000) (United Nations, 2015) has generated a push by scholars and policy-makers to include gender as a category of analysis in migration studies. Studies that heed this call have in the past decade shown how gender intersects with race, class and identity to illuminate a wide range of women's experiences in the migration process (Hiralal, 2018).

In Africa, for example, there has recently been a trend of young women undertaking independent migration to pursue educational aspirations, rather than responding to the traditionally assumed motivation of visiting or joining a husband or partner abroad (Hiralal, 2018). It is important to track and keep in mind trends such as this when investigating the still-present gap in understanding around why individual girls choose to stay or leave. It is likewise vital that governmental and non-governmental actors accelerate efforts to achieve gender equality in programme outcomes that target both boys and girls in contexts of migration and displacement.

As Save the Children, it is essential that we identify and address the specific needs of girls, boys, women, and men across our program cycle if we are to fulfil our vision of a world where every girl and every boy attains their equal right to survival, protection, development, and participation. This process of gender equality integration, often called gender mainstreaming, is not only a requirement for many donors and partners, but drives positive, transformative results, and is key to effective and sustainable development[4]. For this reason, this study sought to involve approximately equal numbers of girls and boys. Evidence from existing programming suggests that it is important that interventions meant to reach girls in contexts of migration are designed with careful input from the girls themselves (Temin, Montgomery, Engebretsen & Barker, 2013).

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[4] Save the Children (2014). Save the Children Gender Equality | Program Guidance and Toolkit: Engendering transformational change. Available at: https://resourcecentre.savethechildren. net/library/save-children-gender-equality-program-guidance-and-toolkit-engendering-transformational

2.4. LOCAL FACTORS IN COMMUNITIES OF ORIGIN AND THE DECISION TO MIGRATE

At the same time, emerging literature investigating the link between migration aspirations and migration outcomes is beginning to stress the importance of building policies and interventions on a sound understanding of the thinking behind migrant decision-making earlier in the chain of events. In this context, efforts to increase local prospects and generate positive engagement within communities of origin is increasingly seen as the potential to influence children's decision to leave home in situations of migration and displacement (Carling, 2017). (The decision to stay, as noted, remains comparatively under-explored.)

This point further underlines the importance of understanding children's perceptions of local circumstances, as well as the factors influencing their interpretation of these in deciding to either engage with their circumstances or leave. Van der Velde and Van Naerson (2010), in their proposed approach to cross-border mobility in the EU, also place migrant decision-making—and the perceptions that influence individual migrant strategy and choice—front and centre in understanding the dynamics involved in cross-border mobility.

2 5. THE ROLE OF AGENCY IN MIGRATION ASPIRATIONS AND MIGRATION OUTCOMES

Children's agency—as it appears in different contexts or circumstances within the respective community of origin—should be considered central in an investigation of why and how they choose to remain at home. The notion of respecting and recognising the agency of migrants, in particular child migrants, is not new. However, migration literature has traditionally paid little more than lip service to this issue, instead focusing big data inquiries

on trends, flows and, in particular, external push factors giving rise to large-scale involuntary movements of people. There is a general absence of research into migrants' decision and agency (McAuliffe, 2013). Cochetel (2017) accounts for this absence by acknowledging that migrants' perspectives and experiences are mostly ignored as migrants are portrayed as disempowered objects of asylum policy.

In addition, most studies categorise movements as either voluntary or involuntary—which places the decision-making process at the periphery of research and policy (IOM, 2017). Ignoring migrants' agency and their individual and collective decision-making processes limits the ability to draw nuanced conclusions with regard to the patterns, dynamics and consequences of migration (ibid.). Accounting for migrants' agency and decision-making in research shifts the narrative from policy- and pattern-driven results to a child-centric approach.

To better understand the process and trends of migration, individual factors such as sex, age, wealth, kinship ties, social networks and personal convictions, must be explored. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) World Migration Report 2018, the most successful way to do this is by conceptualising the migrant as an agent with points of view, experiences and decision-making capacity, even when these are limited. Migrants' agency is demonstrated not only during the journey but also before and during it; in how they navigate challenges, risks and setbacks; and in the factors that account for the decision to migrate and where to. Only migrants themselves can answer these questions. The decision to stay rather than to migrate within a culture of migration is also a manifestation of agency (IOM, 2017).

Madianou and Miller (2012) also suggest that theories surrounding migration generally revolve around economic or structural explanations that focus attention on push/pull factors to interpret the movement of people. They identify neoclassical macroeconomic theory as 'the oldest and very influential theory of international migration' (p.31), with its focus on economic disparity and asymmetries in labour supply and demand, while its microeconomic corollary considers migrants as rational agents who move to maximise income. Likewise, they refer to world systems theory as 'an equally influential paradigm', since it considers migration to arise from global capitalism and the structural asymmetries of industrialisation and international development. Madianou and Miller make it clear, however, that migration is a multi-faceted phenomenon with a complex causality that no single factor can explain; for example, little attention has been paid to 'the desire for personal development and self-improvement' (p.32). They argue that socially acceptable economic motivations become less significant as personal reasons receive more attention, thus reinforcing the notion that centring on 'the migrants' own perspective as active, reflexive agents' (p.32) helps provide clarity on the complexity of the contradictory process of migration.

Children's sense of agency is recognised as a determining factor in the development of resilience, especially for children displaced by events out of their control (Bohle et al., 2009). Agency can be increased when participants 'demonstrate their ability to speak up' and 'share experiences and stories' (Ansell and Van Blerck, 2007).

With specific reference to children and young people, Orgocka (2012) observes that research into their independent migration has accelerated over the past 20 years. She notes that explanations for this vary in terms of the main push/pull factors, which she classes as 'poverty, natural and human-made disasters, most notably conflict and war, family reunification, and search for better life opportunities' (p.2). Centrally, however, in keeping with the above insight, she calls for a primary focus on child migrants as their own agent of development, powerfully interconnected with their broader social organisation of families, communities and societies. Given this perspective, the processes linking independent child migrants, their individual development and their expression of agency become pivotal. Agency is defined as 'the ability to exert one's will and to act in the world through setting goals [and] includes aspects of independence and autonomy…often linked to the motivations of children to migrate' (ibid., p.2). This is a key concept in the current study.

Agency relates closely to resilience, which, with reference to childhood, can be defined as phenomenon of positive adaptation despite significant life adversities (Luthar, 2003). Some authors go so far as to define resilience as agency (Bohle et al., 2009), noting that, if resilience is about 'adaptive capacities, the ability for reorganisation and renewal, and the potential for self-organisation and learning', then an agency perspective is pivotal within a broader social systems context (p.8).

Although very little evidence exists in the literature with regard to children's decision not to migrate, various factors—and influential actors—are associated with the decision-making processes that ultimately result in independent child migration. According to Thatun and Heissler, 2013 (in Dottridge, 2013), the household is the key site where choices and decisions about migration for work or other purposes are shaped and framed, including children's. Using a mixed-methods approach to study decision-making by internal independent child migrants in Ghana, Kwankye et al. (2009) found that more than half of the migrant children who participated in their study had made the decision themselves, but that family and peers nonetheless had had a significant influence. Camacho (1999) came to a similar conclusion when researching children's decision to migrate for work in the Philippines, with mothers supporting a decision first taken independently on the child migrant's part.

In a study for Save the Children and the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS) of youth migration within and from the Horn of Africa, Cossor (2016) documented focus group discussions with Ethiopian children who had returned (reunited with family by the government) from domestic migration. In these, both girls and boys emphasised their parents' expectations that they would migrate. Among boys, a pressure was felt to migrate domestically while they were still young (10–15 years); girls reported that they were expected to migrate (abroad) once they were 'older'. Almost all the returned boys indicated that they would migrate (domestically) again, whereas the girls were less definite about their future migration plans.

Similarly, the RMMS (2014) found that potential migrants from Ethiopia most often mentioned their parents as having the most influence on their migration decision, followed by spouses and siblings. For current migrants, friends (both in Ethiopia and abroad) were most frequently mentioned as having influenced the migration decision, followed by parents and brokers. The Ghanaian study by Kwankye et al. (2009) also identifies peers as a major influence, especially as a source of information on conditions and opportunities in destination countries.

3. METHODOLOGY
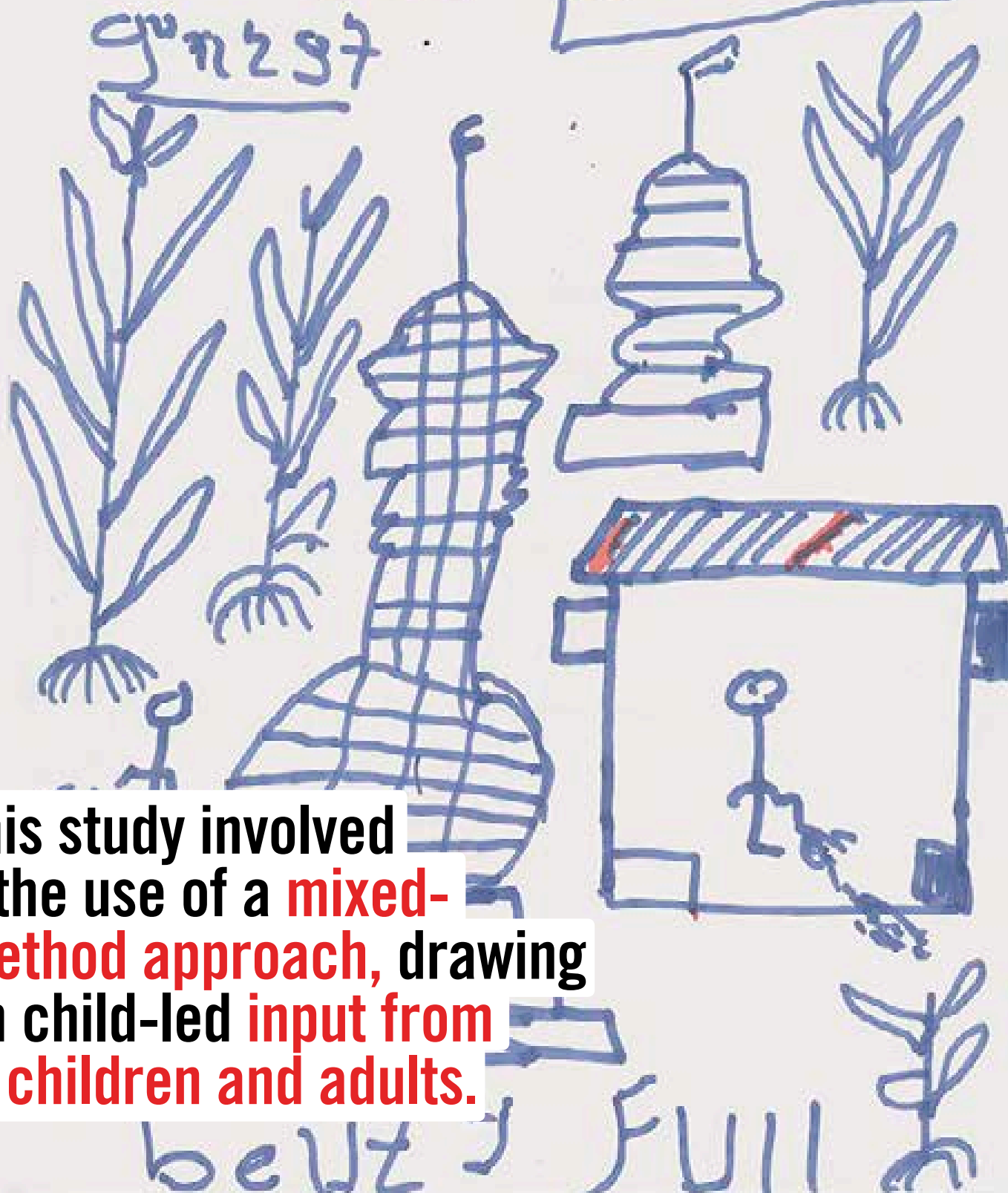
This study involved the use of a mixed-method approach, drawing on child-led input from children and adults.

In order to isolate and identify recurrent factors significant to different children who may be inclined to stay, this study involved the use of a mixed-method approach, drawing on rigorous quantitative analysis triangulated with participatory, child-led qualitative input from children and adult key informants.

See Appendix 1 for additional methods information and detailed demographic analysis.

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

The participatory element of this methodology expands on one already tested and validated as part of Save the Children's Jozi Lights study (Tschudin & Van Zyl, 2015), which was successfully implemented in 2015 in researching strategies to prevent unsafe, unaccompanied child migration in Southern Africa (Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe). This methodology leveraged a series of participatory focus groups with children and applied psychosocial group techniques to deliberately build a rapport between participating children and researchers, as well as among the participating children themselves, and to enable discussion of progressively sensitive topics related to their rural to urban journeys.
The current methodology also draws inspiration from positive deviance methodology, pioneered by Save the Children in the field of health and nutrition (Clawson, 2002),[5] and combines lessons learnt from both methods to design a bespoke methodology for exploring the factors affecting children's thinking and agency in the decision not to leave home. Identifying and understanding these factors, in turn, provides a critical – and, to date, largely missing – foundation for further exploratory research into the nuanced decision-making processes which occur between children and their key influencers and caregivers at the household level.

The 'Why Children Stay' study was carried out using a mixed-methods approach, comprising both quantitative and qualitative components, to reflect field realities as well as allowing for depth and nuance in meaning. To this end, the 'Why Children Stay' study can be visualised at three different, albeit related, levels:

- **Level 1 - In-country:** This basic level of analysis concerns the findings within each sub-sample. This we might like to think of as 'ground-truthing' within each research community. Here, we are most concerned with similarities and differences between children within each country sample. Is there something, for example about being an educated, empowered older female child, that makes her stay compared with a younger, impoverished male child?

- **Level 2 - Cross-country:** At the second level, we consider what happens at country level for the respective sub-samples from Burkina Faso, Ethiopia or Zambia that make them similar to or distinct from one another? Mindful that each sample has its own unique demographics and migration push/pull factors, we probe to find patterns and trends, and compare and contrast the findings of our various country samples.

- **Level 3 - Meta-analysis:** Finally, at the third level, the 'umbrella' or meta-analysis seeks to establish whether bigger-picture trends, patterns or findings of statistical significance emerge from the data for the study— that is, the data for all children across all three sites. Here we probed for the multiple and potentially interactive effects of, for example, gender, age, poverty and education across the entire study population to attempt to understand better what makes children more likely to stay (or go).

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[5] Also see https://hbr.org/2000/01/the-power-of-positive-deviancy

3.1.3. Sampling

Given that the total sample was 120 child participants, the population size surpasses previous Save the Children research into child migration in communities of origin studies, such as Jozi Lights (n=96). Attempts were made towards gender balancing, although there is a slight skew, both in-country and in terms of overall sample, towards males. The age range was from 7 to 19 years. In order to permit triangulation with the views of adults involved with the children at the various study sites, we also interviewed 36 adult key informants (12 per site), using a standardised questionnaire translated into locally accessible languages (e.g. Amharic, French). These key informant interviews represent three sub-samples—of parents/family; child care professionals; and active and influential community members.

3.1.3. Data Collection and Analysis

In terms of the rollout of the children's component of the design, we adopted a four-session contact approach with the child participants. In Session 1, field teams comprising a focal point and members including Save the Children staff and partners engaged in a familiarisation session, thereafter administering standardised questionnaires arranged around several themes of interest. Questions were for the most part closed, and also provided space for qualitative input. Session 2 was framed around a creative expression exercise: each individual child focused on the theme 'stay' versus 'go', and drew image series variously for themselves, an 'imaginary' child, a female child and a male child in relation to the two categories. Session 3 gave each child the opportunity to share their drawings with their peers, for dialogue in child-centred and child-led focus group discussion. Session 4, the closing-out session, was accompanied by a standardised 'exit interview' comprising several ranking items.

Data was collected, collated and cleaned. For the quantitative analysis, we made use of R software (R Core Team, 2017). Several R packages were used for the quantitative analysis, and the package RQDA (R Qualitative Data Analysis) for thematic analysis of qualitative data (Huang, 2018). For the qualitative analysis, content analysis and grounded theory was used to help ensure as holistic an interpretation of findings as possible.

STAY
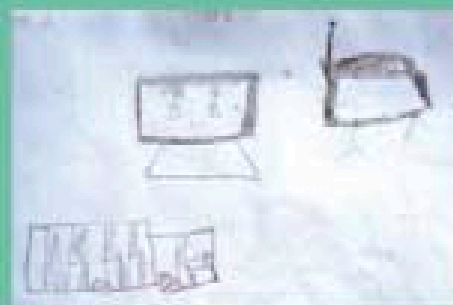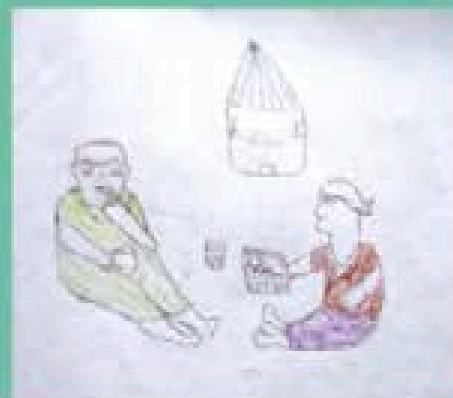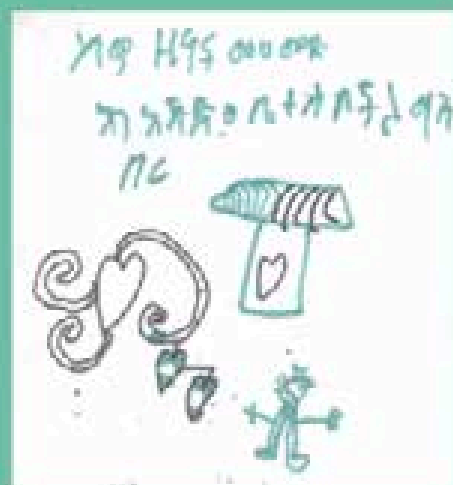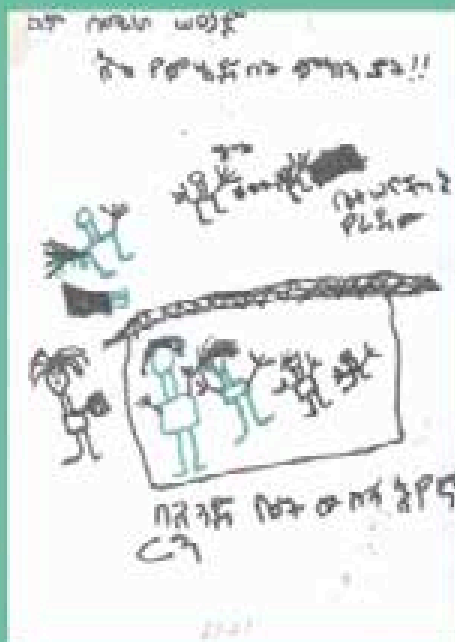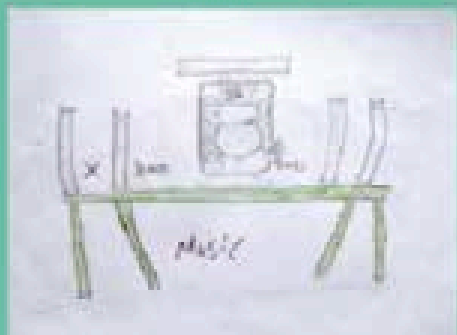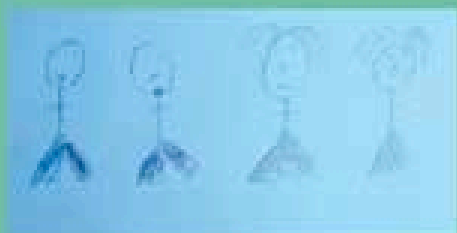
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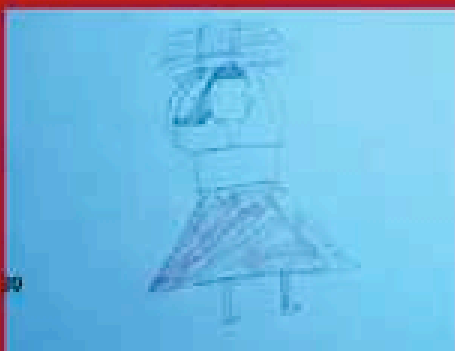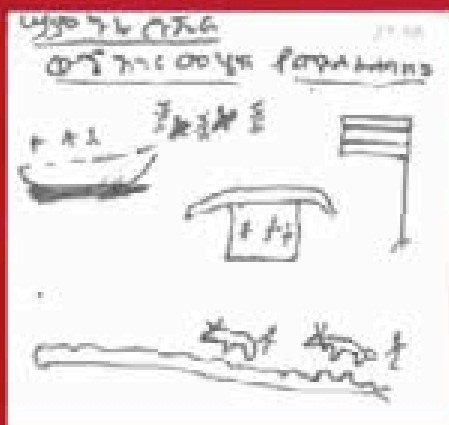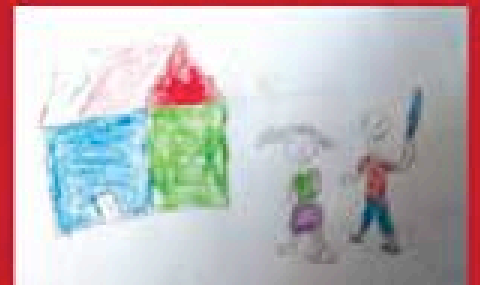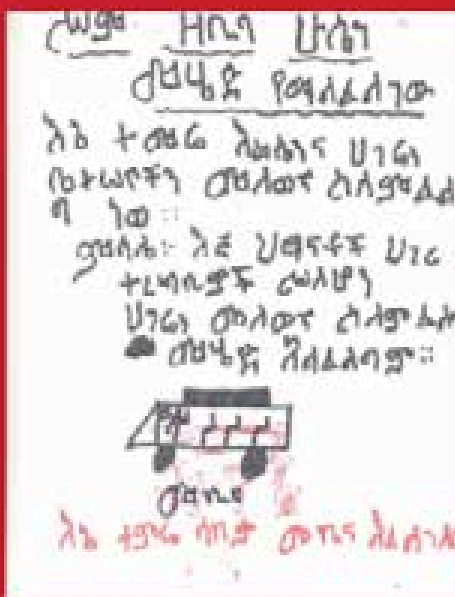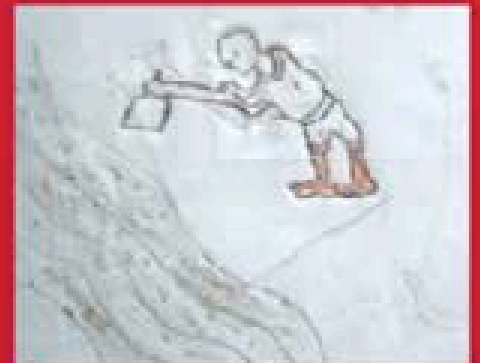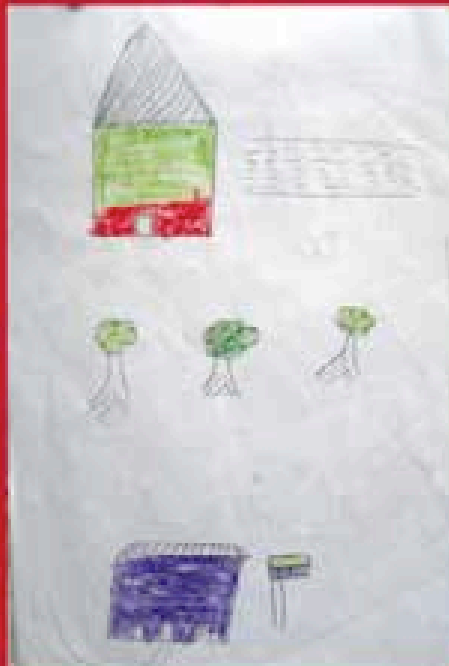
3.2. LIMITATIONS

This study is regarded as formative research, and its findings enable the identification of areas of knowledge for further exploration, as well as providing a sound basis and trigger for future research with a replicable methodology. Nonetheless, several important caveats and limitations should be kept in mind.

First, although every attempt was made to select a regionally representative sample of countries and achieve a uniquely large representative participant sample size for similar research, time and resources necessarily constrained the geographic scope of findings. A maximum of three countries were feasible for this stage of exploratory study, all from the African continent – significant opportunity exists to increase generalisability and triangulate findings with more country and region contexts to be studied in follow-on research. Migration in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Zambia likewise all takes place in primarily development, rather than conflict contexts. Additional research is therefore needed to compare these initial Phase 1 findings into conflict-affected regional and country contexts.

Second, to allow for statistical variance in basic binomial tests a minimum number of 12 respondents is required. We exceeded this as far as time and especially budget allowed, pushing the number of participants to 40 in each of the three sites. This constitutes a representative sample *within each community*. They are, as such, most valuable and most applicable to the specific communities and country contexts in which the study was conducted.

Third, research comprised 51 females and 68 males and 1 participant who did not provide their gender; this translates into a slight gender imbalance towards males, with 42.5% female and 56.7% male overall (0.8% undefined).

Fourth, many different models exist for studying child and adolescent decision-making processes (such as normative and dual-process models of adolescent decision-making)[6]. The 'Why Children Stay' study does not purport to fully assess the decision-making process of non-migrating children; instead, it seeks to identify and better understand the factors that matter to children who make this decision. Children interact differently with their external environment, and while care was taken to only present statistically significant findings that were substantiated by agreement of the vast majority of children, this does not constitute a study on decision-making. It should, nonetheless, be useful as a step in the direction of identifying factors that could be considered in future studies that set out to investigate decision-making processes.

The formative scope of this study precluded detailed consideration of several important cross-cutting issues relevant for any discussion of child migration drivers and decision-making. In particular, the role of climate change and its growing negative impact on children's livelihoods and migration trajectories warrants further attention. A growing body of evidence[7] documents how climate-related factors interact with young people's realities in rural settings to create a range of push factors that merit deeper investigation in follow-on research.

[6] Wolff, J.M. (2012). Adolescent Decision-Making and Risk Behavior: A Neuro-Biological Approach. Digital publication: https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1041&context=psychdiss. Accessed July 30th, 2018.

[7] See, for example, UNICEF (2017). 'No Place to Call Home'. Available at https://www.unicef.org.uk/publications/no-place-to-call-home/

4. FINDINGS

78% of girls indicated that they were **not** thinking of leaving their home community.

This section presents those factors that were found to be statistically significant[8] across the sample of participants through advanced analysis of quantitative data and that further emerged as significant in children's drawings and discussions. (See Appendix 1 for additional detailed demographic analysis of results.)

4.1. DECISION TO STAY

The tables below show how many children were thinking of staying at the time of interview.

'Why Children Stay' child participant summary	Total no. of children (n)	Age of youngest child (years)	Age of oldest child (years)	No. of children who indicated not thinking about leaving the community of origin (STAY)				No. of children who indicated that they were thinking of leaving the community of origin (GO)				No. of children who indicated neither
			**	Male	Female	Total (STAY)		Male	Female	Total (GO)		*
All countries	120	7	19	48	40	88	73	20	11	31	25.8	1
Burkina Faso	40	7	19	14	10	24		9	6	15		1
Ethiopia	40	11	18	19	14	33		5	2	7		0
Zambia	40	12	18	15	16	31		6	3	9		0

*Participant (aged 18) did not indicate gender
**In Burkina Faso, 3 male participants specified their age as 19, although two of the three did not know their birth date. Although the study set out to sample participants between the ages of 10 and 18, children who showed up to participate were not excluded on the basis of age, and therefore the sample does include a few exceptions.

Out of 120 children, a majority of 88 (73%) indicated that they were **not** thinking of leaving their community of origin, whereas 31 (25%) indicated that were contemplating outward migration. Out of 51 girl participants, in total 40 (78%) indicated that they **were** not thinking of leaving their home community, while 48 of the 68 boys (70.5%) indicated their interest in staying.

Summary data—girls	Total no. of GIRLS (n)	Age of youngest GIRL (years)	Age of oldest GIRL (years)	No. of GIRLS who indicated not thinking about leaving the community of origin (STAY)		No. of GIRLS who indicated that they were thinking of leaving the community of origin (GO)	
				Total (STAY) (GIRLS)		Total (GO) (GIRLS)	
				#	%	#	%
All countries	51	7	18	40	78	11	22
Burkina Faso	16	7	18	10	62.5	6	37.5
Ethiopia	16	12	18	14	87.5	2	12.5
Zambia	19	12	18	16	84	3	16

Summary data—boys	Total no. of BOYS (n)	Age of youngest BOY (years)	Age of oldest BOY (years)	No. of BOYS who indicated not thinking about leaving the community of origin (STAY)		No. of BOYS who indicated that they were thinking of leaving the community of origin (GO)	
				Total (STAY) (BOYS)		Total (GO) (BOYS)	
				#	%	#	%
All countries	68	9	19	48	70.5	20	29
Burkina Faso	23	9	19	14	61	9	39
Ethiopia	24	11	18	19	79	5	21
Zambia	21	12	18	15	71	6	29

[8] Significance set at <5% chance of error.

4.2. WHICH FACTORS INFLUENCE THE DECISION TO STAY?

A number of factors corresponded as being statistically significant across countries for children who indicated that they were not thinking of migrating from their communities. Interestingly, the majority of these can be classed as protective factors—that is, their presence can be seen as positive and as motivating a genuine desire/choice to stay—as opposed to limiting factors, which hold children back and thus force them to stay when they would prefer to leave. Section 4.4 discusses findings specific to the countries involved in the study.

4.2.1. Protective factors in the external environment that influence the decision to stay:

Food security: eating more than one meal per day

Children who reported to 'never eat only small portions of food' or had regular access to adequate meals (always more than one a day) were significantly more likely to indicate that they were not thinking of leaving home. The inverse was striking: children who 'often miss meals', 'often eat smaller portions' or 'recently lost weight due to food scarcity' almost invariably were thinking of migrating.

Availability of food was a central theme when children were asked to draw pictures representing reasons to stay, particularly for focus group discussions held in Burkina Faso and Zambia. This theme of food security emerged almost equally for girls and for boys, with slightly higher frequency in girls' drawings.

This finding is especially thought-provoking in the context of climate change and associated changes to agriculture, in areas where livelihoods depend on subsistence farming. It implies a need for interventions in communities and indeed countries of origin not only to step up short- and medium-term interventions that help supplement or provide meals (e.g. through school-based nutrition or social protection interventions) but also to realise long-term strategies to mitigate the effects of climate changes in countries that stand to be most affected.

Education: access that allows for completion of schooling

In all three countries, out-of-school children and young people were significantly more likely to indicate a desire to engage in outward migration, whereas those in school were more inclined to stay because they aspired to complete their education.

In Ethiopia, in particular, 94% of those still in school clearly indicated that they would rather stay (the figures in Burkina Faso and Zambia were 66% and 78%, respectively). In focus group discussions, almost all children in Ethiopia agreed that they wanted to stay to pursue their education. They explained that education was their primary duty as children and even those who wanted to migrate needed to complete their education first as they would not get the opportunity elsewhere.

The other two contexts were a more mixed picture, with children placing greater emphasis on factors such as proximity of the school. In particular, focus group discussions in Zambia linked proximity to a proactive choice to stay. Girls found this particularly influential, although it was clearly an important issue for boys also. Girls may place greater emphasis on living within a reasonable walking distance from school if routes to school pass through very remote areas where they are more at risk of sexual violence. Completing education featured prominently as a reason for staying in the drawings of both girls and boys from Burkina Faso and Zambia, but focus group discussions in both countries suggested that this factor weighed particularly heavily for girls.

Interestingly, children suggested that their peers who did not have an interest in continuing their education, but who nonetheless faced pressure to do so from families, might be more vulnerable to traffickers/smugglers, and also more inclined to take the decision to leave home as a result.

> "Children explained that education was their primary duty and even those who wanted to migrate needed to complete their education first.
>
> '(An) educated person can be more successful even in migration'"
>
> Boy, 12, Ethiopia

Another qualitative aspect worth noting from the Ethiopian focus group discussions is the link between the relative value children placed on education and their experience of schooling in the community of origin. Children from Sirinka whose parents were better educated civil servants experienced their schools as 'poorly equipped with less experienced teachers' and were keen to pursue better education abroad. Meanwhile, in Haro, where the school is in worse shape and the teachers are less experienced (according to the school director), education was not mentioned nearly as often as a push factor. This may be because less emphasis is placed on education as an aspiration in this geographic area. Thus, the extent to which education aspirations act as drivers for outward migration seem to link to the relative value placed on education in a given context. This links to the influence of family, as discussed below.

Family

Children across the sample whose families did not openly discuss migration were, perhaps unsurprisingly, significantly more likely to indicate that they were not thinking of leaving. Girls with migration aspirations who had been persuaded to stay indicated primary influence from female family members: mothers, grandmothers and aunts, often in caregiver roles, featured in the narrative of girls who decided in the end not to leave.

Children's concern around missing family, friends and country after migration also featured strongly in group discussions as reasons for staying. In Ethiopia, love and protection of families (parents, siblings and close relatives) was described as something that could not be replaced. Children argued that it was not only about missing their family, but that families also missed their children and would worry day and night about their safety. In Burkina Faso especially, boys cited patriotism as a popular reason for not wanting to leave home (and by implication, their country, thus we should treat this factor with caution, as it would arguably not come into question in internal migration).

> " If my mum refuses, I will stay. "
>
> Girl, 13, Burkina Faso

The themes of family loyalty and support, particularly agricultural support, were also frequently linked in the Burkina Faso context. Needing to take care of family was the factor most frequently mentioned as holding children back from migrating, although it was equally cited as a motivating factor for leaving home and finding a job. Helping parents through subsistence farming, working or taking care of the house and family dominated reasons given by girls to stay instead of leave during these focus group discussions.

> **" Girls and boys emphasised feeling loved by family—specifically parents and siblings—as a factor that would influence their decision to stay. "**

Care and protection: having a caregiver at home

Living with a caregiver at home and being taken care of by someone specific correlated strongly with the decision to stay for both girls and boys. In Ethiopia, 13 out of 14 girls who were living with a caregiver at home indicated that they were not thinking of leaving, as did 19 out of the 23 boys. The same was true for 10 out of the 15 girls in Burkina Faso who lived with a caregiver at home, and for 14 out of the 22 boys. In Zambia, 9 out of the 10 girls who had someone looking after them at home indicated that they had never thought of leaving the community to migrate, as did 6 out of the 8 boys. Conversely, 76% of all children across the total sample who said they did not have someone they could identify as a caregiver at home indicated that they were thinking of migrating.

In Zambia in particular, children's drawings depicted happy home lives and connectedness to community (church, school, etc.) as reasons for staying. Happy home lives were often linked to adequate food and especially clean drinking water in Zambia. Both girls and boys emphasised feeling loved by family—specifically parents and siblings—as a factor that would
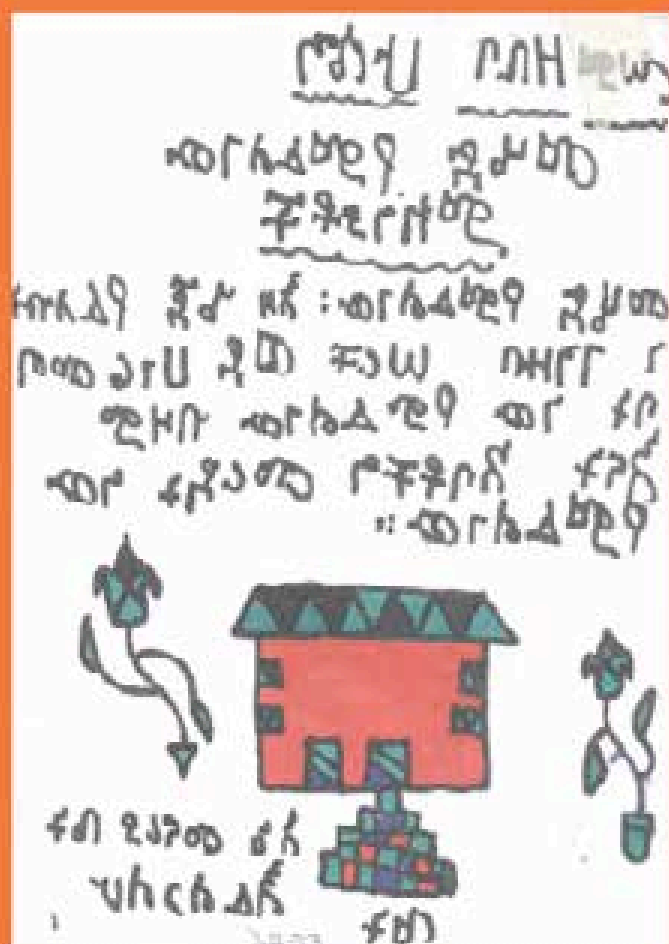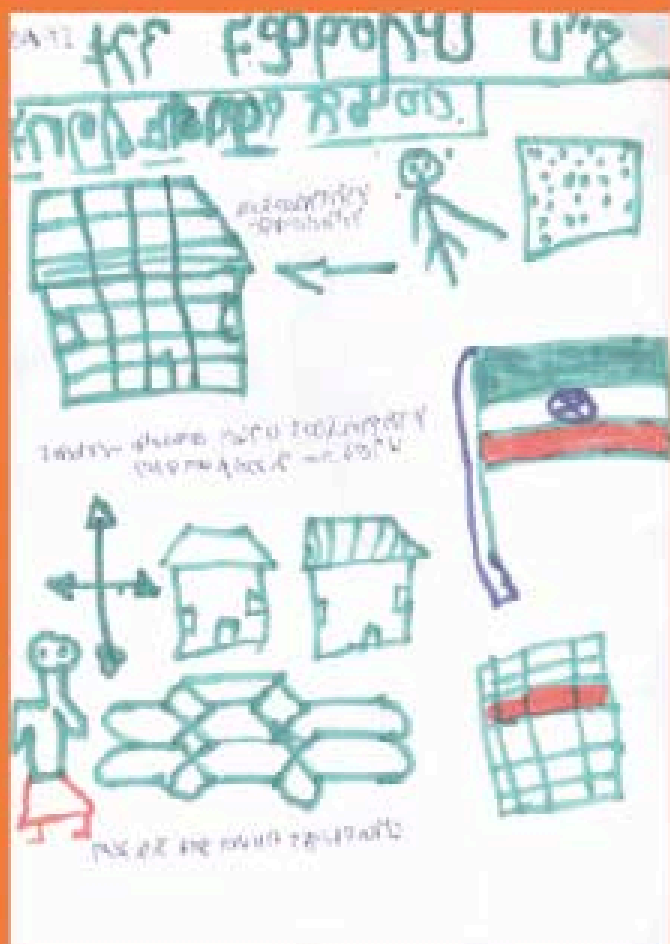
> **" I want to migrate to work and come back home with enough cash, and support my father and mother. "** — Participant, Ethiopia

> **" I want to have a house. "** — Participant, Ethiopia

influence their decision to stay. When citing home conditions that they considered influential in informing the decision to stay, boys in Zambia especially included having a nice house with a place to sleep and space for farming and play, as well as a television.

The importance of having a caregiver at home underlines the need for interventions that strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms in communities with high rates of outward child migration. Based on the evidence, family-strengthening, positive parenting and promotion of kinship care for children in need of support stand out as interventions that are essential to reduce the vulnerability of children at risk of unsafe migration.

Peers: direct, in-person conversations between friends

Given the opportunity to identify the actors who were most influential in informing their decision to stay, surprisingly few children in this study identified peers. Family members – especially female family members – were considered far more influential. Indeed, when asked to list the most important people in their lives, children who chose to stay cited – with almost no exceptions – the role of family members (mothers, fathers, grandmothers, aunts, brothers, sisters), and only in a minority of cases added peers to the list.

This observation was unexpected, considering the significance usually afforded to peers in the contemporary migration literature on children who move. One possible theory, which warrants closer inspection through further research, is that children who do not live in families with a dedicated caregiver are more likely to rely on peers to take part in collective decision-making around the choice to stay or leave. These peers might not necessarily be more inclined to advise each other to engage in outward migration, but instead, that children who engage in outward migration are more likely to rely on peers, in general, due to the lack of a dedicated caregiver.

There is at present insufficient data to validate this premise further. It would therefore be worthwhile to replicate this aspect of the study – a deeper focus on the influence of peers – with children who have migrated or who are in the process of independent migration, to ascertain whether peers are really more influential in the decision to leave.

Additionally, findings show that children who communicate directly with friends in person, as opposed to through phone messages, WhatsApp or other messaging platforms/applications or social media, were significantly less likely to indicate that they were thinking of migrating. This corresponds to a correlation between having access to technology—namely a computer or phone—and a higher likelihood of leaving home (see below on access to technology).

A possible explanation for this finding could be that messaging platforms commonly used by children and adolescents are compatible with smartphones, and smartphones, in turn, provide more opportunity for exposure via social media to the world beyond the child's frame of reference. This dynamic also makes it possible for children to communicate with peers from their own community who may have migrated, and who may be posting updates of progress towards realising aspirations in the new host country.

> **Family-strengthening, positive parenting and promotion of kinship care for children in need of support stand out as interventions that are essential to reduce the vulnerability of children at risk of unsafe migration.**
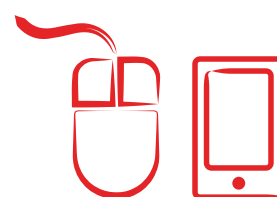
There is a correlation between having access to technology— namely a computer or phone— and a higher likelihood of leaving home.

Technological connectivity: lack of access to phones and computers

Children without access to computers and/or phones were much more likely to indicate that they had never thought of leaving home. This corresponds with the finding, above, that children who communicated with friends in person are less likely to have thought about migrating.

The difference in having access to, versus direct ownership of, a phone did not seem to be particularly important. Children who owned a mobile phone were almost as likely to indicate that they had chosen to stay as those who did not own a phone. This observation has implications for using device ownership as a proxy indicator for relative affluence. Even children who live in abject poverty, if they have access to peers via someone else's device, would seem to be more open to persuasion. This is of interest to note and merits further investigation.

Access to mobile phones has made obtaining information about migrating cheaper and faster, and plays a significant role in the migration process. Mulugeta and Abebaw (2012) suggest such access is significant only for shorter-term migration outcomes and not permanent migration. Nonetheless, it is essential to take into account the influence of mobile phones in 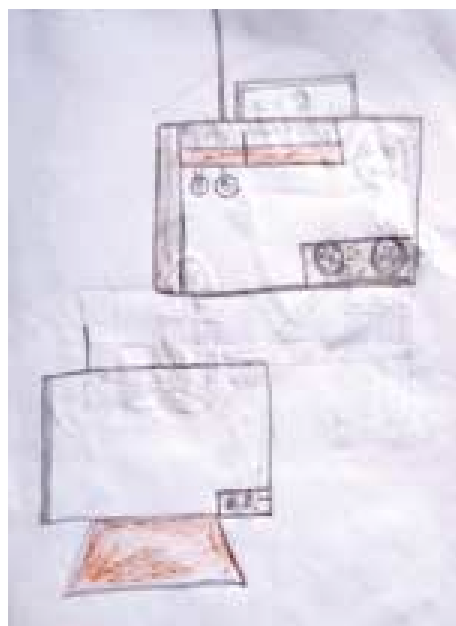interventions that target potential child migrants. Various actors already do use mobile phones to convey information on the risks of unsafe migration as well as on strategies for safe passage. Much scope remains for further research on the role of mobiles/smartphones and social media in child migration. Understanding the usage of such devices, the sources of information children use in deciding to migrate and the ways in which these devices are used for communication are only a few examples of topics for further study that merit attention.

Livelihoods: not working, or working reasonable hours

In all three countries, children who were in school and/or not working were more likely to indicate that they were not thinking of leaving home. This was true also for children who were working, but who also felt they were working reasonable hours. Working longer hours, conversely, correlated with the decision to leave in both Ethiopia and Zambia, with a slight variation between what children deemed tolerable (no more than four hours per day in Ethiopia; in Zambia no more than two).

4.2.2. Internal factors

'Internal factors', for the purposes of this study, refer to beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, or capacities inherent to each individual child participant who shared their experiences with us. Two main such internal factors emerged as significant in the decision to stay – an awareness of risks and exploitation; and the sense of prospect and belief in their potential to realise aspirations in their community of origin.

Awareness of risks and exploitation

In both Burkina Faso and Zambia, children's level of awareness towards risks associated with unsafe migration emerged as most significantly correlated with the decision to stay. Statistically, being aware of the risks thus represented the strongest deterrent to leaving in both countries.

In Ethiopia, awareness and understanding of exploitation and trafficking risks also correlated significantly with not planning to leave home. Ethiopian key informants were also keen to increase access to information about how children could stay safe if they did decide to migrate, and emphasised the need for awareness-raising on the risks related to the journey as well as on exploitation at destination.

A sense of prospects: believing in the possibility of realising aspirations

Children were asked to share their career and life goals, and then how likely they thought it was that they would be successful at realising their aspirations within their communities and countries of origin. Significantly, 79% of children who felt that they were highly likely to realise their own life goals indicated that they were more inclined to remain in the community of origin. Inversely, believing that one would not 'make it' significantly correlated with having already thought about outward migration.

> "Children without access to computers and/or phone were much more likely to indicate that they never thought of leaving home."

4.3. PUSH FACTORS THAT EMERGED AS MOST INFLUENTIAL IN LEADING TO MIGRATION

Although the focus of 'Why Children Stay' is to explore what encourages children to stay in their communities of origin, push factors in these same communities – as opposed to pull factors in destination towns/areas/countries—are also important to consider in establishing an understanding of the context within which decision-making occurs. As with factors influencing the decision to stay, children who indicated they were thinking of migrating pointed to several common push factors across all three sites that compelled them to migrate – even if they may have otherwise not aspired to leave home.

4.3.1. Violence, abuse and conflict at home

Corporal punishment and violence in the home were common themes in drawings depicting the reasons a child would leave home, and focus groups in Burkina Faso and Zambia frequently discussed them as such. Both girls and boys frequently mentioned violence as a reason for girls to leave home. Children in Zambia were particularly inclined to cite child abuse as a push factor for girls. In Burkina Faso, girls often cited ill treatment or repudiation from family and forced marriage.

4.3.2. Harmful work

Working longer hours correlated with the decision to leave in both Ethiopia and Zambia, with slight variation between what children deemed tolerable (no more than four hours per day in Ethiopia; in Zambia no more than two). They often referred to menial or physical labour. Children in Burkina Faso cited avoiding harmful or exploitative farm work as the second most common reason to leave home, only behind the desire to improve the economic status of the self or family. Girls in this context explained that when household chores or farming related work were 'too exhausting' they were forced to quit school. In this case they would prefer another job away from the community of origin.

In Zambia, being forced to work in the fields and other forms of menial labour clearly influenced children's decision-making. Zambian girls, in particular, identified collecting firewood and fetching water from afar as undesirable tasks.

4.3.3. A desire to learn a trade or skill to improve family prospects

The available literature on independent child migrants identifies desire for a better future as a common and influential pull factor. 'Why Children Stay' findings confirm this point, in terms of the frequency with which the responses of children who indicated low job availability in their community correlate with their having made the decision to leave home.

> " Working longer hours correlated with the decision to leave in both Ethiopia and Zambia. "

More specifically, in drawings and focus group discussions that explored reasons for leaving, children frequently identified skills or trades that would allow the child migrant to fulfil a very particular, highly individualised trade or work-related task. Very often, these trades and tasks related to improving family wellbeing, and the community of origin would serve as the geographic target for return once the skills and trades were acquired.

This circular nature of children's migration ambitions speak to the broader fact that outward migration for the sake of skills acquisition is often accepted as forming part of greater labour migration trends and patterns along known migration corridors. In Burkina Faso, for example, children identified the prospect of leaving home to work on farms or to learn a very specific skill (e.g. carpentry, driving) in order to improve their economic status and then return bearing benefits for the community of origin – i.e. to 'buy a car (sometimes for parents), build a better house, modernise the village' once they return. In Ethiopia, children regularly used the example of returning to construct a better house in the community of origin. According to key informants, constructing a house is one of the first things many returned Ethiopian migrants do. This is also considered asset-building, and families often compete on the size and quality of a house constructed using the remittances their migrant children send.

The notion of circular child migration – of leaving to acquire a specific skill for use on return to the community of origin – suggests there may be value in programming that provides access to vocational skills training not only in communities of origin, but also in countries of transit and destination. Destination countries in particular often refrain from supporting child migrants to obtain vocational skills specifically because they fear creating a pull factor. But if children or young people intend to return in order to use their newly-acquired skill back in their home community, this strengthens the motivation for transit countries, and for destination countries that receive large numbers of irregular migrants, to make it easier to attain such specifically stated skills. Such programming, however, would need to be based on thorough participatory, in-depth market research.

4.3.4. Harsh living conditions: lack of adequate food, clean drinking water, remoteness

As mentioned above, children who 'often miss meals', 'often eat smaller portions' or 'recently lost weight due to food scarcity' almost invariably were thinking of migrating away from the community. Equally important was the availability, and especially the proximity, of clean drinking water. Harsh living conditions in the village were sometimes cited generally as a reason for leaving, as was being far away from schools, markets, churches or entertainment.

4.4. FINDINGS BY COUNTRY

4.4.1. BURKINA FASO

Total no. of child participants[9](n)	Age of youngest (years)	Age of oldest (years)	No. who indicated not thinking about leaving the community of origin (STAY)		No. who indicated that they were thinking of leaving the community of origin (GO)	
			#	%	#	%
40	7	19	24	**61.5**	16	**38**

20%

8 out of 40 children are working for some form of remuneration.

Total no. of GIRLS (n)	Age of youngest GIRL (years)	Age of oldest GIRL (years)	No. of GIRLS who indicated not thinking about leaving the community of origin (STAY)		No. of GIRLS who indicated that they were thinking of leaving the community of origin (GO)	
			Total (STAY) (GIRLS)		Total (GO) (GIRLS)	
			#	%	#	%
40	7	19	24	**61.5**	16	**38**

Total no. of BOYS (n)	Age of young-est BOY (years)	Age of oldest BOY (years)	No. of BOYS who indicated not thinking about leaving the community of origin (STAY)		No. of BOYS who indicated that they were thinking of leaving the community of origin (GO)	
			Total (STAY) (BOYS)		Total (GO) (BOYS)	
			#	%	#	%
23	9	19	14	**61**	9	**39**

Demographics on participants in Burkina Faso:

- Ranged in age from 7 to 19
- Religious background: 31 Muslim, 1 Catholic, 4 Christian but non-Catholic, and the others did not know or preferred not to specify (4)
- Mother-tongue:
  - o 35 Turka
  - o 1 Seroufo
  - o 2 Dioula
  - o 1 Toussian
  - o 1 Gouroussi

- 9 children had phones

- 23 participants indicated they were in-school. Education levels ranged from the 4th year of school through to the 9th year of school.

- 8 out of 40 children (20%) are working for some form of remuneration. Jobs included piecemeal ('little') jobs, masonry, digging, doing business or trading goods and farming;

- 14 children felt that it was reasonably easy to find a job in their community; the majority of children however did not think that work was readily available.

23 CHILDREN

indicated they were in-school.

9 CHILDREN

had phones.

9   One child from this sample did not identify as 'girl' or 'boy', and indicated they were thinking of leaving their community of origin.

BURKINA FASO

- 28 out of 40 children indicated that in their communities, children were perceived to be too young to know what is good for them, 7 felt that children were free to share their thoughts but that adults did not really take these into account, and 2 children felt that children were taken seriously and listened to.

Major factors in staying

When discussing their reasons for staying, children in Burkina Faso overwhelmingly cited school and their associated career ("professional") aspirations as a reason for why they have not left and are not thinking of leaving; followed by not leaving because it goes against the advice (and in some cases, the will) of family members (aunts, grandmothers, brother).

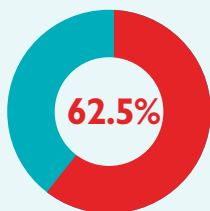Burkina Faso had the lowest number of children overall who indicated that they were planning on remaining in their community (24 out of 40, or 60%). However, it was also the context in which children who were planning to leave most frequently talked about planning to return after having made what they would deem a successful trip to their intended destination (mostly Côte d'Ivoire). Commonly-cited reasons to return included taking care of parents or families, building better houses or fulfilling other domestic responsibilities. In Burkina Faso, social and familial structures often oblige children – particularly the oldest children and boys in the household – to support or contribute to the care of families (Save the Children and RMMS, 2017). This social expectation for children to take care of families, especially in the context of poverty, could be seen to powerfully influence the decision to stay or leave for both boys and girls. Interestingly, children who stayed justified their decision by needing to take care of people at home, whereas others who left home sometimes did so for the same reason.

The comparatively low rate of girls who would choose to stay (62.5% of girls as opposed to 87.5% and 84%, respectively, in Ethiopia and Zambia) is in keeping with Burkina Faso's slightly higher than average rate of women who migrate compared with other countries internationally. In West Africa in 2015, 51.4% of all international migrants aged under 19 years were female, a figure higher than the global average worldwide of 48.6%. (Save the Children and RMMS, 2017). This observation may relate to the fact that in some contexts in West Africa, notably in Burkina Faso, girls' autonomy as demonstrated by the choice to migrate away from home for economic purposes, is not only relatively socially well-accepted, but sometimes even considered desirable for marriage (Save the Children and RMMS, 2017).

The youngest participants in Burkina Faso were two girls, aged 7 and 8. Both indicated the intention of leaving home, although they did not specify at what point in the future they would want to do so. Despite this lack of qualitative substantiation, their intention to leave is significant because their age deviates from the norm of adolescent independent migration, and implies that it is important for local actors in Burkina Faso to investigate the possible need for differentiated interventions not only by gender but also by age, in preventing unsafe migration or reducing the vulnerability of those looking to leave.

Where children noted that their families did discuss compelling reasons for migration, this narrative was dominated by the role of economic opportunities, or lack thereof. Twelve children indicated that their families regularly discussed leaving the community of origin. Reasons discussed with family members included, for instance, better job prospects and increased earning potential, the desire to live and work in the big city (Ouagadougou), family reunification, finding a husband, continuing studies and in one case, because siblings felt that their grandmother was exploiting them with work.

It was extremely common for a member of the family to already have engaged in migration: this was the case for 36 out of the 40 children who participated in the study in Burkina Faso. In 8 cases, a parent had left home; in 4 cases an uncle; in 2 an aunt; in 3 cousins, and in others siblings and and other family members. Interestingly, where mothers were present in the family, they were almost always cited as the most influential person, followed by fathers, then closely by siblings and grandparents. This underscores the overall finding in the study of the weight of influence from female family members.

62.5%

The comparatively low rate of girls who would choose to stay.

Only 5 children in the sample from Burkina Faso did not have identity documents.
In Burkina Faso, the following participants were statistically more likely to think of leaving their home community:

- Those who believed they would not realise the aspirations they held for themselves;
- Those not attending school;
- Those with family that had migrated recently;
- Those who were experiencing conflict at home or in the community;
- Those with low job availability;
- Those with low food and water availability.

Interestingly, the presence of conflict in the home was just as prevalent in the profile of children choosing to leave as the indication of feeling safe and happy. This apparent contradiction may be (speculatively) explained as a reflection of the fact that, as migration is a very common strategy to pursue better opportunities and earn an income in the Burkina Faso context, it may occur regardless of the atmosphere at home. This differs quite significantly from contexts such as Zambia, for instance, where unhappiness in the home is very clearly linked to higher rates of outward migration.

4.4.2. ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia had the highest number of children overall who indicated that they were planning to remain in the target area (82.5%). Girls were quite significantly more inclined to indicate that they would stay (87.5% versus 79% of boys).

87.5%
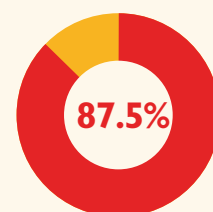
Girls who would choose to stay.

Total no. of participants (n)	Age of youngest (years)	Age of oldest (years)	No. who indicated not thinking about leaving the community of origin (STAY)		No. who indicated that they were thinking of leaving the community of origin (GO)	
			Total (STAY)		Total (GO)	
			#	%	#	%
40	11	18	33	**82.5**	7	**17.5**

Total no. of GIRLS (n)	Age of youngest GIRL (years)	Age of oldest GIRL (years)	No. of GIRLS who indicated not thinking about leaving the community of origin (STAY)		No. of GIRLS who indicated that they were thinking of leaving the community of origin (GO)	
			Total (STAY) (GIRLS)		Total (GO) (GIRLS)	
			#	%	#	%
16	12	18	14	**87.5**	2	**12.5**

Total no. of BOYS (n)	Age of youngest BOY (years)	Age of oldest BOY (years)	No. of BOYS who indicated not thinking about leaving the community of origin (STAY)		No. of BOYS who indicated that they were thinking of leaving the community of origin (GO)	
			Total (STAY) (BOYS)		Total (GO) (BOYS)	
			#	%	#	%
24	11	18	19	**79**	5	**21**

ETHIOPIA

34 CHILDREN

indicated they were in-school.

11 CHILDREN

had mobile phones.

3 OUT OF 40 CHILDREN

indicated that they are working for some form of income.

Participants in Ethiopia:

- Ranged in age from 12 to 18
- Religious background: 23 Muslim, 17 Christian
- All had Amharic as mother tongue

- 11 children had mobile phones

- 34 participants indicated they were in-school. Education levels ranged from the 5th grade through to the 10th grade.

- Only 3 out of 40 children indicated that they are working for some form of income (respectively in the 7th, 8th and 10th grade). All three participants were trading or selling something to make money.

- 11 children felt that it was reasonably easy to find a job in their community; the majority of children however did not think that work was readily available.

- Only 9 out of 40 children indicated that their families regularly discussed the possibilities associated with leaving home. In all cases, topics that dominated the conversation centred around earning a better income and improved livelihoods. Although migrating did not seem to be regularly discussed by the majority of families, 22 of the 40 participants had a family member who had recently migrated away from home. These family members included parents (in 9 cases), followed in frequency by siblings, then uncles and aunts. Destinations included the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

- 28 out of 40 children indicated that in their communities, children were perceived to be too young to know what is good for them, 7 felt that children were free to share their thoughts but that adults did not really take these into account, and 2 children felt that children were taken seriously and listened to.

Major factors in staying

When discussing their reasons for staying, family emerged as a highly influential factor for children in Ethiopia. Other factors that featured prominently in children's narrative included wanting to work in Ethiopia (as opposed to outside of the country), the desire to complete basic education, not wanting to "be illegal", fear of hardship in transit, and lack of money for the journey.

As with the factors determining the decision to go, the discussions on staying revolved around three major factors: what children would miss by migrating to other countries; what would happen to them on the way; and what would happen to them as 'migrants' in host countries.

Almost all children agreed they wanted to stay to pursue their **education.** They felt that education was their duty and that even those who wanted to migrate needed to complete their education before they left as they would not get the opportunity after. *'Educated people can be more successful even in migration'* (Boy, Sirinka, 12 years).

A second major factor was fear of missing **family, friends, and country.** The love and protection of families (parents, siblings and close relatives) were seen as irreplaceable, and as a reason to stay. Children said that not only would they miss their family but also their family would miss them, and worry day and night about their safety.

They also said they would miss their country, neighbourhood and friends if they migrated. *'Ethiopia is a unique country with its natural beauty'* (Boy, Ethiopia, 14 years).

Loss of freedom and dignity abroad was seen as another factor encouraging children to stay. Most children assumed that the ultimate destination of migrants was the Middle East, and that the jobs for migrants were low status, with women working as maids and men as shepherds. They felt that this made it highly likely they would lose their dignity and freedom.

Many children said that migrants suffered on the journey from various types of **hardship while in transit,** both within Ethiopia and outside (crossing deserts), and were maltreated by traffickers in the case of illegal migration. Rape, hunger and death were reported. Legal migration – most commonly, by travelling to different Arab countries as labour migrants through private employment agencies – was pointed to as the solution in both Sirinka and Haro. However, one group in Sirinka reported that there was a minimum age of 18 years in using migration agencies.

Anticipation of bad working conditions, human right abuses and maltreatment by employers in the host country were listed as major factors keeping children from migrating. Children said that, even after such difficulties, migrants might not receive the salary they had worked for and could return home empty-handed. They also pointed to the uncertainties involved in being illegal migrants and the possibility of being deported as reasons encouraging them to stay.

Responsibilities of different groups in encouraging children to stay
Children in Ethiopia provided particularly rich insights in listing the perceived responsibilities of various stakeholder groups they saw with regard to child migration. They divided those responsible into four categories—government, communities, parents and children themselves. Some of the key responsibilities they then ascribed to each group include:

Government responsibilities
- Creating job opportunities;
- Creating better education opportunities and services with laboratories and other facilities;
- Capturing and punishing traffickers and closing illegal migration routes;
- Creating awareness about the bad side of migration;
- Identifying why children migrate and addressing their needs;
- Creating legal migration opportunities for those who want to migrate;
- Addressing ethnic and religious conflicts;
- Respecting children's rights;
- Improving payment for all jobs;
- Assisting children to increase their love for their country;
- Contacting host countries to respect the rights of migrants;
- Avoiding corruption.[10]

Community responsibilities
- Working with children and youth;
- Controlling illegal traffickers who cheat their children and instigate migration;
- Respecting the right of children to have a good education and meet their basic needs;
- Avoiding harmful traditional practices, particularly early marriage;
- Avoiding child labour exploitation;
- Developing and strengthening mutual support;

Almost all children agreed they wanted to stay to pursue their **education.**

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[10] This suggestion is not linked with any of the reasons to go or stay. It probably comes from a campaign on corruption in recent years in the media and in school clubs.

- Reducing the workload on children;
- Giving rewards and incentives to outstanding students to help them concentrate on their education;
- Avoiding ethnic and religious conflicts.

Parents

- Providing all materials needed for children's education and following their progress;
- Controlling where children spend their time;
- Reducing the pressure on children;
- Fulfilling their children's social needs;
- Giving children love and protection;
- Making children feel good about themselves;
- Protecting children from pressure from peers and traffickers;
- Avoiding bad ways of punishing their children (prioritising advice over corporal punishment);
- Treating all children equally in the family;
- Using family planning[11].

Children

- Following their education properly with a vision to be a good citizen who helps the country;
- Avoiding addictive things (such as khat);
- Not losing hope easily in their education and other things they do;
- Not looking down on certain types of jobs
- Not surrendering to peer pressure;
- Understanding that it is possible to work and live better locally;
- Organising themselves in school clubs and teaching one another about the bad side of migration and the importance of education;
- If they want to migrate, finishing their education and reaching the right age;
- If they want to migrate, doing so through legal means.
  In both sites, children agreed that children should not migrate from their birth place for whatever reason until they were 18, as they were expected to be in school[12].

Additional observations
Generally, the push factors identified in Ethiopia were exclusively economic or related to household-level violence and/or harmful work; no broader political and security factors were mentioned as reasons to choose migration. Equally, except for education, children did not mention absence or poor quality of social services and infrastructure as factors in the decision to go. Even in Haro, where severe water scarcity was reported, the problem was not mentioned as a factor influencing migration decisions for children.

One major observation is that, in their discussions of migration, children implied that Gulf countries were their primary intended destination. Only a few children mentioned Europe and the US as ideal migration destinations (even among the few children in Sirinka who were from relatively better-educated families). It is believed that this focus on one destination (mainly for labour migration) is a result of the long experience of the people in the area moving to these countries.

The other fact that emerged was that no one raised the idea of permanently moving out of the country. Children who wanted to go, also wanted to come back after achieving their objectives. Again, this reflects the experiences of people from the area migrating to Arab countries.

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[11] It was not explained how this recommendation was related to the issues discussed as factors in going or staying.
[12] We asked them why 18 years should be the minimum age. They responded that they were allowed an ID at 18 and could then be considered adults to migrate or get married. This knowledge seems to have come from civic education in schools and in the media.
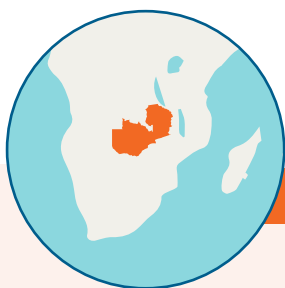
4.4.3. ZAMBIA

Total no of participants (n)	Age of youngest (years)	Age of oldest (years)	No. who indicated not thinking about leaving the community of origin (STAY)		No. who indicated that they were thinking of leaving the community of origin (GO)	
			Total (STAY) (GIRLS)		Total (GO) (GIRLS)	
			#	%	#	%
40	12	18	31	77	9	22

Total no. of GIRLS (n)	Age of youngest GIRL (years)	Age of oldest GIRL (years)	No. of GIRLS who indicated not thinking about leaving the community of origin (STAY)		No. of GIRLS who indicated that they were thinking of leaving the community of origin (GO)	
			Total (STAY) (GIRLS)		Total (GO) (GIRLS)	
			#	%	#	%
19	12	18	16	84	3	16

Total no. of BOYS (n)	Age of young- est BOY (years)	Age of oldest BOY (years)	No. of BOYS who indicated not thinking about leaving the community of origin (STAY)		No. of BOYS who indicated that they were thinking of leaving the community of origin (GO)	
			Total (STAY) (BOYS)		Total (GO) (BOYS)	
			#	%	#	%
21	12	18	15	71	6	29

Participants in Zambia:
- Ranged in age from 12 to 18
- Religious background: All participants in Zambia identified as Christian.
- 11 children had phones

- All 40 participants indicated they were in-school. Education levels ranged from the 5th grade of school through to the 12th grade.

- 6 out of 40 children are working for some form of remuneration. Jobs included delivering goods, knitting and selling wares, plaiting or doing hair, and doing piecemeal jobs. Out of these children, those who felt that they had to work, and for whom working constituted the greater part of their day (more than 8 hours per day), cited this as a reason for wanting to leave home. Other children from the Zambian sample who wanted to work but could not find jobs, also cited this as a potential influencing factor to leave. Those who had jobs which did not leave them feeling exploited without exception fell within the category of wanting to stay.

- 16 children felt that it was reasonably easy to find a job in their community; the majority of children however did not think that work was readily available.

- 15 out of 40 children indicated that in their communities, children were perceived to be too young to know what is good for them, 14 felt that children were free to share their thoughts but that adults did not really take these into account, and 11 children felt that children were taken seriously and listened to.

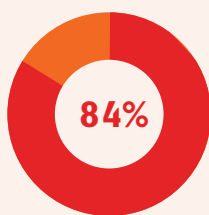**40 CHILDREN**
indicated they were in-school.

11 CHILDREN
had phones.

6 OUT OF 40 CHILDREN
indicated that they are working for some form of remuneration.

ZAMBIA

84%

Girls who would choose to stay.

" It's my auntie who advised me to stay and that one day I will be well known. "

Boy, 12, Ethiopia

Major factors in staying

When discussing their reasons for staying, children in Zambia were inclined to cite family, friends and education as the most important reasons. Family influence was often described by referring to a female family member: mothers, grandmothers and aunts featured strongly in influencing children against leaving home. Also very influential for this group was awareness and agency, particularly involvement in their community through volunteering or other activities which allowed them to feel as if they were engaged and instrumental in informing local change that affected their prospects.

Children were more likely to think about leaving, conversely, because:
- They had no work;
- They worked over eight hours a day;
- They aspired to higher education levels and university;
- Their families talked about leaving;
- Their families had migrated to another village;
- They had no caregiver;
- They often missed meals;
- They had a mobile phone;
- They contacted friends on their mobile phone.

Water and its availability featured strongly in the drawings and discussions of children during qualitative sessions. Across the board, this was an important influencing factor against which even children who wanted to stay were powerless in their expectation of ultimately having to leave.

4.5. CAN WE COMPILE A PROFILE OF CHILDREN WHO ARE UNLIKELY TO WANT TO LEAVE?

Below, we present a brief aggregate of the key profile features of children consulted for this study.

4.5.1. Age

Age did not emerge as a significant predictor of whether a child would indicate that they were inclined either to stay or to go. Two children, aged seven and eight years old, were among those indicating that they wanted to leave, whereas many children of sixteen and older intended to stay. This is slightly counter-intuitive, as many interventions for children who independently migrate are inclined to focus on adolescents and youth, but should not be over-interpreted, as the girls in question fell outside of the age sampled. In a potential replication of this study, it may be worth lowering the age range in any rigorous sampling to better understand how younger children think about staying/leaving.

4.5.2. Gender

The increase in female migration in Africa (see Section 2.3) means it is imperative to understand the perspective of girls. Although this study's formative nature precluded a comprehensive gendered comparison of boys and girls, care was taken to collect disaggregated data and identify significant results particular to either sex. The findings here represent only that which emerged as significant from a questionnaire and focus groups discussions that covered a broad range of potential influencing factors, and therefore did not probe any single issue deeply. They do, however, provide a starting point for more detailed, specific research into a far wider range of potential factors that may influence girls to stay.

Girl participants in the study were slightly more likely to intend to stay, but not significantly so. They were slightly more likely to stay than boys when a caregiver was present or when they had the opportunity to complete schooling.

The emphasis on education as an influencing factor was generally more pronounced for girl than boy participants, and echoes an emerging trend captured in migration research during the past decade of young women in Africa engaging in independent migration to pursue education goals, as opposed to following a husband or partner (Hiralal, 2018). Girls cited not living within an acceptable distance from school as a factor that would make them leave their community.

Interestingly, in Burkina Faso and Zambia, girls with migration aspirations who had been persuaded to stay mostly indicated influence from female family members: mothers, grandmothers and aunts featured in the narrative of girls who decided in the end not to leave. Girls in Ethiopia who had decided against leaving, despite originally having migration aspirations, did not cite influence from anyone as the reason for changing their mind. Instead, they cited lack of money for travelling, fear of exploitation and wanting instead to work in Ethiopia as reasons for staying.

4.5.3. Profile
A profile of a child most likely to choose to stay in their community of origin is constituted purely on the basis of demographics and findings from this study, and therefore of limited generalizability. However, as an illustrative exercise, this profile would thus appear as follows:

This child lives with a caregiver in a home where they feel loved and connected, in close proximity of the school where they intend to complete their education. They eat regularly and have access to clean water. Not having access to a phone or computer, they are more likely to engage directly with friends than to use a social media or messaging platform. They may perform a range of chores at home, or even work to earn a small income for the family, but do not perceive the work as harmful or as too harsh—hours are acceptable to the child in their context. They have an astute understanding of the risks associated with unsafe migration and know what exploitation and trafficking mean. When it comes to aspirations for life and livelihood, they know what they want from life and more importantly believe with great conviction in their own ability to realise their aspirations.

4.5.4. What about children who really want to leave, but stay because they have no choice?
Carling (2017) points out that migration is a function of first the aspiration to migrate and second the ability to realise that aspiration. The enormous variation in the balance of constraints and choice among adult migrants pertains equally to children who are potential migrants. In learning more about what this range of choice looks like for children, and how they negotiate it, 'Why Children Stay' needed to differentiate between research participants who were proactively choosing to stay—motivated by a sense of prospects in their immediate environment—and those who were staying because they had abandoned migration aspirations owing to circumstances beyond their control.

Out of the overall 31 children who indicated thinking of leaving across all three sites, 19 (60%) indicated that they had proceeded to a stage of migration planning advanced enough to think about, make plans to leave, or actual undertake initial steps along a migratory journey – but then decided against it. Reasons for abandoning migration aspirations included a careful, deliberate balancing of positive and negative motivations. Only one child said he did not really know why he had decided against leaving despite having the aspiration of going.

> " Life there was hard, and what I was looking for…well, I never found it. "
> Boy, 16, Zambia

60%
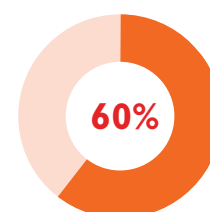
Out of the overall 31 children who indicated thinking of leaving, 19 (60%) indicated that they had proceeded to a stage of migration planning.

Positive motivations related to factors that could be deemed protective include:
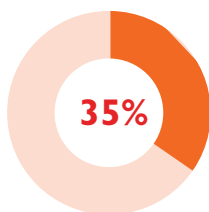
- Deciding to first reach a specific educational benchmark (this varied from child to child but was always secondary, e.g. Grade 8, or in other cases to obtain a certificate). School was given as the main reason for staying by the vast majority of children who had started to plan a journey but abandoned this in the end;
- *'Wanting to work in my own country'*;
- Not wanting to work illegally and face possible exploitation;
- Wanting to be older before making the journey (the participant in question was 16 years of age);
- Family influence *('A big brother does not want me to leave'; 'my mum's position, because I know she will not agree'; 'It's my auntie who advised me to stay and that one day I will be well known'; 'parental unwillingness')*.

Some reasons for abandoning migration aspirations related to circumstances in the external environment that were beyond children's control. Three of the nineteen children who had started making plans to leave but, in the end, decided not to cite such reasons. These included:

- Not having the money for traveling;
- Having nowhere to go (not having a person or a place in their frame of reference where they could expect to be reasonably well received: *'I didn't leave because I have nowhere to go'*);
- Lack of transportation.

Two reasons given did not clearly fall into a positive (protective) or negative bracket because they were viewed as negative and limiting by the research participants but in their own right may be indicators of a functional, protective environment:

- Being held back against their will by parents, who refused to give consent;
- Not being able to obtain an ID card, in order to get a passport to migrate legally.

Out of the 31 children in the study who indicated that they had been thinking of leaving, 11 (35%) had actually put their plans into practice and left, only to return. Children who had indeed left home but later returned ranged in age from 10 to 18 years. Reasons for return included:

- Continuing education;
- Becoming short of money during the journey;
- Changing their mind after migrating internally within the country and deciding against migrating across borders *('I decided I didn't really want to work in another country')*;
- Finding that circumstances did not offer much in the way of different prospects from the home community and therefore did not warrant living away from home;
- Being fetched back by family members;
- Hard living conditions *('no food or shelter or family support')*;
- Engaging in seasonal migration for field work and returning because the season was over.

> "Parents need to engage their children more in their life."
>
> Teacher (male), 33, Ethiopia

35%

Out of the 31 children in the study who indicated that they had been thinking of leaving, 11 had actually put their plans into practice and left, only to return.

4.5. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Key informants included professionals from within the NGO sector, social workers, teachers, community members (in some cases community members were also teachers or social workers), traditional leaders and parents.
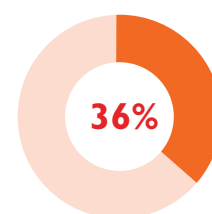
Key informant questionnaire responses largely echoed the findings, provided by children themselves – albeit with a notable difference in perceived importance of the family, and especially parents, in children's thinking processes around migration during their formative years. Whereas children may mention plans to leave home to professionals or other community members in the months or weeks before leaving, the same children may have discussed plans with parents for years.

Adult key informants living in the targeted communities indicated varying degrees of support for children wanting to leave. In Burkina Faso, 36% of adults interviewed indicated that they would support children wanting to leave. In Zambia and Ethiopia the figures were 50% and 77%, respectively. Nonetheless, almost all key informants emphasised the need to promote safe migration and to raise children's awareness of risks and educate them about how they ought to go about staying safe should they decide to leave.

Adults who indicated that they would NOT support a child's decision to leave were asked what action they believed should be taken to protect children from unsafe migration. They suggested:

- Education and awareness-raising about risks of unsafe migration;
- Strengthening and supporting families to provide for their children, and to better involve their children;
- Involving the authorities *('Any stranded-looking kid should be taken to the police station')* both when identifying children at risk and if aware of trafficking or smuggling activities *('Everyone needs to inform authorities if they encounter a trafficker')*;
- Increasing recreational opportunities in communities and at home.

> **"Adult key informants living in the targeted communities indicated varying degrees of support for children wanting to leave."**

36%

In Burkina Faso, 36% of adults interviewed indicated that they would support children wanting to leave.

50%

In Zambia, 50% of adults interviewed indicated that they would support children wanting to leave.

77%
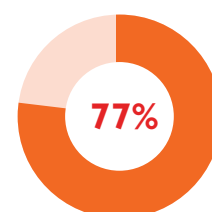
In Ethiopia, 77% of adults interviewed indicated that they would support children wanting to leave.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS
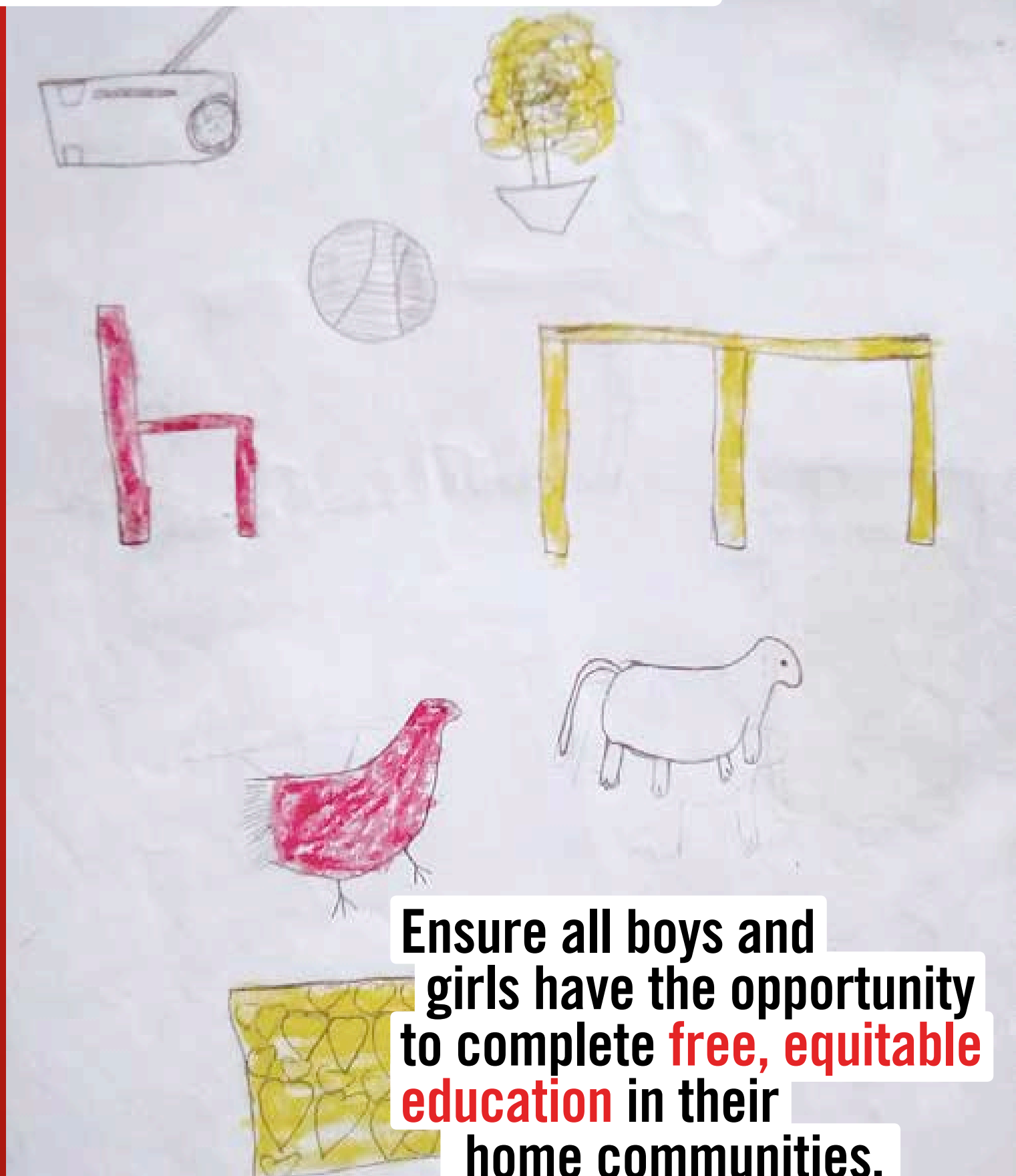
Ensure all boys and girls have the opportunity to complete free, equitable education in their home communities.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study make it possible to distil a number of elements with which to benchmark a strategic approach for intervening in communities with high rates of outward migration. These are listed below, accompanied by suggested interventions to include in programme design.

- **Seek out and include communities of origin as priority targets in programming at key moments during planning cycles;**
- **Be evidence-oriented and child-centric: identify context-specific protective factors through a participatory, gender-sensitive approach;**
- **Work across thematic sectors to reinforce protective factors;**
- **Put families, especially female family members, and peers at the centre of dialogue and messaging;**
- **Strengthen resilience by involving child beneficiaries as active, decision-making participants.**

Note that the interventions suggested below are only those which evidence from this study substantiates as potentially useful. This is not intended as an inclusive list of interventions by sector or as a complete programme.

5.1.1. Prioritise the inclusion of communities of origin in programming

Evidence from this study suggests that programming that promotes access to regular meals, strengthens kinship care and family - or community-based protection mechanisms and/or realises the opportunity to complete schooling locally will have a significant impact on the vulnerability of potentially mobile child populations, *regardless of whether it is implemented as part of a typical migration or pre-migration intervention.* It follows that state and non-state actors with an interest in improving the situation for children at risk of unsafe, unaccompanied migration can achieve impact at scale in prevention of unsafe migration by proactively including more communities of origin as target locations for education, health and nutrition and child protection programmes.

Intervention	Indicator guidance
Seek out and include communities of origin as priority targets in new project and pro-gramme proposals	Increase in the number of communities with high rates of outward migration that are included in successful proposal applications, by year

5.1.2. Identify context-specific protective factors

Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning are vital to increase evidence of what works to promote local prospect in communities of origin and ensure children survive, learn and are protected. Establishing what it is that influences the majority of children to stay in communities of origin is very different from finding out which push factors are making the minority leave.

In listening only to children who have left or who are in the process of independent migration, programmes hoping to devise intervention strategies to prevent unsafe migration run the risk of formulating an overly negative and skewed understanding of what needs to change. Evidence from 'Why Children Stay' suggests that aspects of the external environment that promote a sense of prospect for children who are choosing to stay, and that therefore are already present in the community as protective factors, are likely to be more influential in creating sustainable change.

Identifying these protective factors should form an essential part of baseline assessments or ideally even of pre-inception planning. This should inform monitoring and evaluation strategies by providing material for indicators and benchmarks of progress.

> **Key message:** not all children want to leave—in fact, most want to stay.

Understanding the different ways in which girls and boys value factors in their immediate environment as relevant to their sense of local prospects is important to ensure interventions are effective and relevant to both sexes. Therefore, it is important to ensure that baseline strategies are gender-sensitive and will render disaggregated results.

Important stakeholders and sources of information for establishing a baseline include:

- Children, including both those who are looking to stay and those who will leave;
- Civil society;
- Family members, and especially female family members (these may not always be the biggest influencers within the family of children's decision-making, depending on context);
- Government authorities that work with children;
- Teachers;
- International NGO staff;
- Migrants who have returned to their community of origin.

A participatory approach is essential to understand what is creating a sense of local prospects for children who stay. Evidence generated through such an approach is valuable to the unfolding dialogue of the importance of child-centric migration research, and takes into account the reasoning behind decision-making in order to inform more nuanced programming.

Intervention	Indicator guidance
Conduct pre-intervention participatory research or assessments to establish protective factors specific to the context	% of programmes in communities of origin that were preceded by research or rapid assessments
Establish a gender-sensitive baseline of protective factors for reinforcement	% of programmes in communities of origin that have a complete baseline at inception stage % of protective factors that are gender-specific
Through involvement of key stakeholders, identify the most influential people in children's lives in the specific context for the purpose of messaging and dialogue	N/A
Conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation by involving community stakeholders, civil society and children	N/A

5.1.3. Work across thematic sectors to reinforce protective factors
Programming needs to be multi-sectoral and integrated if it is to create viable local prospects while eliminating factors that are harmful to children's developmental trajectories and aspirations. Sector-specific recommendations include:

Education

Intervention	Indicator guidance
Improve opportunities for children, especially girls, in communities of origin to complete a quality education locally	% of communities of origin where children are able to complete secondary school % increase in girls completing education in communities of origin % decrease in out-of-school children and youth in communities of origin
Increase access to schools for children, especially girls, who do not live in close proximity to schools	% of children, disaggregated by gender, who live within reasonable walking distance to school
Collaborate with Child Protection sector to eradicate corporal punishment in school settings	% of schools in communities of origin where corporal punishment is banned
Collaborate with Health and Nutrition sector to expand access to school-based nutrition interventions in communities of origin	% of schools in communities of origin that benefit from School Health and Nutrition interventions
Increase access to targeted vocational skills-building in communities of origin, as well as in transit and host countries	# of children trained
Consider including life skills training that focuses on climate adaptation. Equip children with "green" skills : how to better protect their natural habitat and engage in green business, such as climate-smart agriculture.	

Child protection

Intervention	Indicator guidance
Scale up positive parenting to communities of origin to eradicate corporal punishment and promote family strengthening	% of communities of origin benefitting from positive parenting programmes
Collaborate with Education sector to eradicate corporal punishment in school settings	% of schools in communities of origin where corporal punishment is banned (etc.)
Scale up interventions in communities of origin that prevent and reduce domestic and physical violence in the home and community	% of communities of origin benefiting from violence prevention interventions % decrease in child beneficiaries in communities of origin who indicate violence as a reason for wanting to leave home
Strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms in communities of origin	% of communities of origin with strengthened mechanisms to protect children at risk
Promote kinship care for children without a primary caregiver and other children in need of care and support	% of children in community of origin who have a designated caregiver % of children who express a sense of belonging and feeling cared for
Through peers and female family members, raise awareness of the risks of unsafe migration and how to stay safe for those who have made the decision to leave	% of children in community of origin who can explain what exploitation is and list the risks of unsafe migration

Child poverty

Intervention	Indicator guidance
Reduce household-level vulnerability through child-sensitive social protection	% of households in communities of origin where children eat more than one meal per day[13]
Collaborate with Education sector to increase access to targeted vocational skills-building in communities of origin, as well as in transit and host countries	# of children trained

Child rights governance

Intervention	Indicator guidance
Secure the cooperation of mobile phone companies in child rights and business principles interventions to highlight the influence of mobiles on potentially mobile child populations and collaborate to implement awareness-raising on the risks of unsafe migration as well as information for safe migration	Number of new partnerships with corporate sector in a given year

5.1.4. Involve families, especially female family members, and peers in dialogue

This is a principle rather than a specific intervention. Involving influential figures is key in helping promote a healthy dialogue around issues related to potential mobility. In Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Zambia, it is important to involve female family members (grandmothers, mothers, aunts, sisters) as credible and influential sources of information to children. Male family members are important too—fathers, brothers, uncles and grandfathers—and peers. As discussed above, children who discuss migration aspirations with family tend to do so long before they mention these aspirations to external adults such as teachers, community members, aid workers or other adult professionals with whom they interact.

5.1.5. Strengthen resilience by involving potential child migrants as active participants

A child-centric approach recognises the agency of each individual potential child migrant to exercise their own judgement and reasoning in the decision to stay or go. Children living in cultures of migration—like children everywhere—apply for the most part very intentional reasoning in deciding their course of action to realise their own life aspirations. This has important implications for programming in communities of origin, where the absence of factors the *child deems protective* can increase vulnerability to unsafe migration, or where loss of a sense of possibility or prospects can have the same effect.

Intervention	Indicator guidance
Promote access to mental health and psychosocial support interventions that strengthen children's sense of connectedness and belonging	% of children who express a sense of belonging and feeling cared for
Promote access to mental health and psychosocial support interventions that strengthen children's confidence in their ability to fulfil their life goals or aspirations	% of children who indicate that they believe they will fulfil aspirations ('make it')

[13] Eating more than one meal per day had statistical significance for children across the three countries in this study—this may not necessarily be the same in other contexts.

> **Key message:** change is possible in communities with high rates of outward migration, if we apply an informed approach.

5.2. POLICY AND ADVOCACY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENTS AND DONORS

5.2.1. To governments in countries of origin

Step up commitment and accelerate progress towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular:

SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms. Notably, by 2030, scale up nationally appropriate social protection systems to include the poor and vulnerable (1.3) in all communities of origin; ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and vulnerable in communities of origin, have equal rights to economic resources (1.4); build resilience of those in vulnerable situations to reduce vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other disasters (1.5).

SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. Notably, in communities of origin, by 2030, escalate the implementation of practical measures that will double the agricultural productivity and income of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers and people at risk of displacement, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment (2.3).

SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Notably, by 2030, ensure all boys and girls have the opportunity to **complete** free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education in their home communities (4.3). Specifically include a focus on promoting access for children who live far from their nearest school; increase the number of youth and adults in communities of origin who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for decent employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship (4.4); and eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training (4.5) for children at risk of unsafe migration.

SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Notably, step up efforts in communities of origin to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation (5.2).

SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Notably, in countries of origin, by 2020, reduce substantially the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training (8.6); and take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour, eradicate forced labour and, by 2025, end child labour in all its forms (8.7).

SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Notably, significantly reduce all forms of violence and related deaths in communities of origin (16.1); and end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children (16.2).

Accelerate progress towards the provisions for countries of origin in the African Common Position on Migration and Development (2006) and related regional and pan-African frameworks.

5.2.2. To governments in countries of destination

Providing vocational training on targeted skills specified by independent child migrants in transit or destination countries may be conducive to helping returnees reintegrate into their home community and may well prevent repeat migration for those who have migrated in search of skills to take home.

5.2.3. To regional economic communities and regional consultative processes

Amplify the narrative around communities of origin as places where children want to stay in regional consultative processes, and support states to increase commitment to relevant SDGs and development instruments that will expedite development of communities of origin, especially in their capacity to nurture child and youth development.

5.2.4. To donors

Include or prioritize communities with high rates of outward migration in geographic criteria for proposed projects and programmes by funded partners for all funding streams, not only programming in communities featuring high rates of migration and displacement.

Donors with a strategic interest in addressing push factors should include communities of origin as priority locations when establishing geographic criteria for new projects and programmes. In particular, programming that promotes access to regular meals, strengthens kinship care and family- or community-based protection mechanisms and/or realises the opportunity to complete schooling locally would be expected to have a significant impact on the vulnerability of potentially mobile child populations. The relevance of these interventions makes this a strong recommendation for the sites in this study but it quite likely extends also to other contexts. This implies that, across funding streams, interventions do not necessarily need to be delivered in the context of typical 'migration' programming in order to add value to the greater ambition of preventing unsafe migration.

Deliver on and step up commitments made to the agenda to eliminate all forms of violence against women and children

Violence (specifically sexual violence and violence in the home, conflict in the community and corporal punishment at school) stood out in this study as a daily reality that induced mobility, even for children who did not want to leave. As such, it presents a significant threat to the success of any other intervention that targets the alleviation of hardship or promotion of protective circumstances for children in communities of origin, especially for girls in contexts where gender-based violence is prevalent. Children who choose to stay because they are limited by family responsibility or other factors are likely to be even more vulnerable if experiencing violence, because the factors that curb their migration aspirations may also prevent them from escaping violence. The agenda to eliminate all forms of violence against women and children is particularly relevant for communities of origin, and its realisation is essential for the prevention of unsafe migration.

Continue global climate efforts and support concerned actors to implement their National Adaptation Plan (NAPA) and access the Green Climate Fund.

Although the formative scope of this report precluded rigorous exploration of climate related factors, it should be anticipated that these will grow in relevance and severity in coming strategic periods. For this reason, programme efforts in communities of origin would not be comprehensively addressing sustainable wellbeing if climate related factors are missing from programme and advocacy agendas.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.3.1. Research in new contexts, including conflict and urban settings

The 'Why Children Stay' study was conducted in three low- and middle-income African countries where—despite its presence— conflict does not predominantly characterise the research settings. Instead, all three settings can clearly be characterised as typical developing country contexts where adult migration patterns have historically been associated with economic development.

Most obviously, replicating Phase 1 of 'Why Children Stay' in additional country contexts would add to the generalisability and triangulation of findings. Acknowledging the growing urban character of global migration, further research could also help compare and contrast the motivations for children to stay in urban communities of origin with those in rural/peri-urban environments. Similar research in conflict and fragile security settings would provide a key opportunity to investigate children's decision-making in communities where protective factors are under greater threat from violence. Violence is already featured as a significant push factor in this study, even for children who indicated that they would otherwise not want to leave and who had many other protective factors in place. Expanding to a conflict setting would provide an interesting opportunity for comparison: any protective factors identified in development contexts in this study that bear out as deciding influencers even in the presence of conflict would be very significant indeed. It may also provide valuable evidence for support to children on the move affected by violence, at origin, transit and destination.

5.3.2. Relationship between factors

This study was formative by nature, and its scope did not allow for rigorous investigation of the relationship between specific protective factors. Understanding which factors are dominant and which less so, which protective factors remain protective in the presence of specific push factors and which potentially combine to strengthen the likelihood that a child may stay presents much scope for statistical modelling and further quantitative research into this area of focus.

5.3.3. Agency and resilience, sense of prospects, and decision-making process (age, gender)

Much remains to be learnt about the sense of agency applied by children who stay. Research into their thinking processes can provide valuable insights into understanding their decision-making when it comes to deciding to leave home, how their migration aspirations link to migration outcomes and how best to protect and promote the resilience of all children involved in mobility. There is, in particular, a key opportunity to deepen the level of analysis around the negotiated household-level decision-making processes leading to children's ultimate decisions to stay or leave, which involve collective and, often, contested inputs from key stakeholders and peers.

5.3.4. Disability, LGBTQIA, and other forms of non-conformity that make children vulnerable to discrimination and social exclusion

The scope of the 'Why Children Stay' study did not allow for detailed probing into the factors that influence children living with a disability or children who identify as LGBTQIA and who think about staying. Similarly, children who leave home due to the effects of bullying or discrimination because of ethnicity or religion, or other manifestations which render minorities vulnerable to stigmatisation or ostracizing were not investigated. These are essential areas of research for refining programme strategies, so that they are evolved enough to cater to the needs of children in groups of non-conformity.

5.3.5. Evaluate which interventions are most effective

Finally, action research employing 'test and invest' methodologies can better identify and evaluate migration interventions working effectively to improve prospects for children in communities of origin.

> **Key message:** Promote mixed-method, child-centric research for children involved in mobility.

6. CONCLUSION

The majority of child inhabitants of communities of origin prefer to stay.

> " Findings reiterate
> the importance
> of strong families,
> community-
> based care and
> protection, and
> access to quality
> education. "

Despite the various conditions of hardship that are responsible for comparatively high rates of migration from their towns or villages, the clear majority of child inhabitants of communities of origin prefer to stay. They live in communities facing multiple deprivations and fragile development contexts, and negotiate the same challenges in their day-to-day existence as do peers for whom migration is the chosen course of action to avoid stagnation and attain better prospects. Yet the children who remain in communities of origin do so, in most cases, intentionally – because they perceive the choice to stay as the one that gives them the best chance of realising their own aspirations. They are for the most part positive, highly adaptive, strategic thinkers, and apply considerable depth of agency in making the decision to remain.

This report has attempted to identify the factors that matter most to these children who make the decision to remain at home. Its findings reiterate the importance of strong families, community-based care and protection, and access to quality education as well as other factors that advance children's sense of local prospect.

The results of the 'Why Children Stay' study are not intended as an argument for or against a child's decision to migrate. These findings show that much can be done to enhance the capacity of communities of origin as environments where children may survive, learn and be protected. Moreover, the study hopes to ignite a research agenda that builds on child-centric approaches, to better understand and support those children who do decide to stay, and all children in their decision-making related to mobility.

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APPENDIX 1: DATA ANALYSIS

Meta-analysis of Session 1 data across all three sites

The 'Why Children Stay' study included a core sample of 120 child participants. This group divided as 51 females, 68 males and 1 participant who did not provide their gender; this translates into a slight gender skew towards males, with 42.5% female and 56.7% male overall (0.8% undefined).

After data collection and collation, analysis of children's responses was conducted by a team comprised of a child development/protection expert, our research analyst and the study co-lead. To guide the investigation, this team defined six clusters within which to consider the data, including: education; social protection (state, community, family, health); livelihood security; food security, nutrition and health; communications and connectivity; and awareness and agency. Note that these clusters were for exploratory investigation based on what data was received, and are not necessarily definitive in their own right.

Education
Over 88% of the children were in school; only 10% were not, with a fractional percentage not in school but wishing to attend. 87.5% wished to continue their education, with 11.7% not intending to do so.

Social protection
In terms of human security, 84.2% (101 children) reported that their area was calm and stable, while for 15.8% (19) it was not.

Concerning documentation, 119 children provided an answer: over 57% (69 participants) said they did not have documentation whereas 39 did—and 11 also did, just not in their possession.

97.5% of the children (n=117) described themselves as religious and 2 as not, with 1 abstention. The major religions represented were Christianity at 52.5% (63) and Islam at 45% (54).

The vast majority of children reported that their parents were still alive at 89.2% (107); for 12 children or 10% their parents had deceased. Children also predominantly still lived with their parents—30% do not.

With respect to family talk of leaving, for the vast majority this did not occur (71.7%); 25% of children reported that their family did discuss the possibility of migrating away from home. 77 children (64.2%) said family members had migrated; for 43 (35.8%) this was not the case.

Food security, nutrition and health
98 children or 81.7% had not lost weight owing to lack of food, where 18.3% (22) had. Regarding water supply, two thirds of participants had an adequate supply and one third did not; 84.2% could access toilets and baths and 14.2% could not.

Awareness and agency
From the total of 120 children, 72.4% (89) had not thought of leaving home, while 25.8% (31) had. Moving from thought to action, of those 18 children who had tried to leave, 10 had succeeded and 8 had not. The 10 who had succeeded had returned because they had fulfilled their initial aspiration through migration; the 8 who felt that they had not succeeded had returned owing to factors outside of their control that cut their journey short or curtailed their migration plans. Reasons here included inadequate funds ('ran out of money'); difficult living conditions or hardship, including specifically lack of shelter and food, and no family

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[1] Because of the formative nature of this study, items included in the questionnaire for Session 1 explored as comprehensive a range of topics so as to be able to identify factors that influenced children to stay. This prevented a deeper probing of the nature of the conversation about migration within families (e.g. positive versus negative, risks associated with the journey, etc.); this would be a very worthwhile topic for further exploration of the decision-making processes of children who are potential migrants as well as potential voluntary non-migrants.

STAY
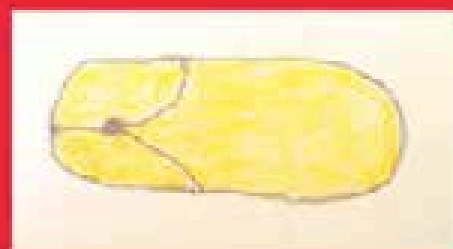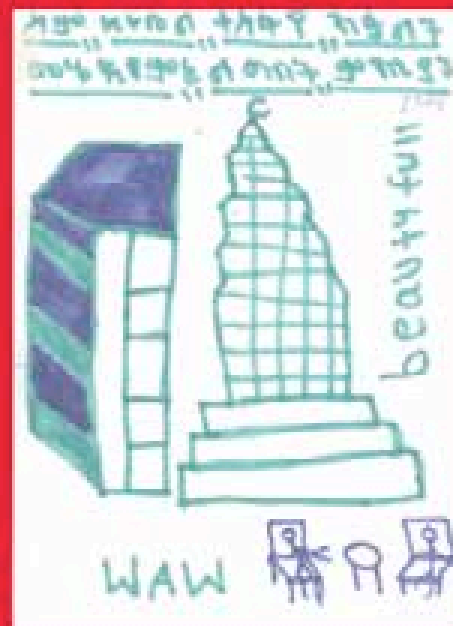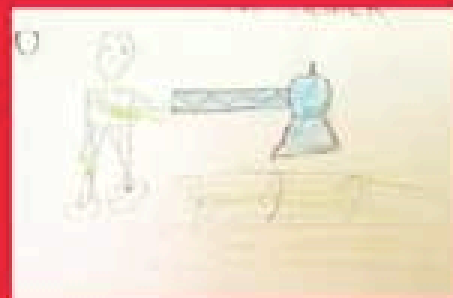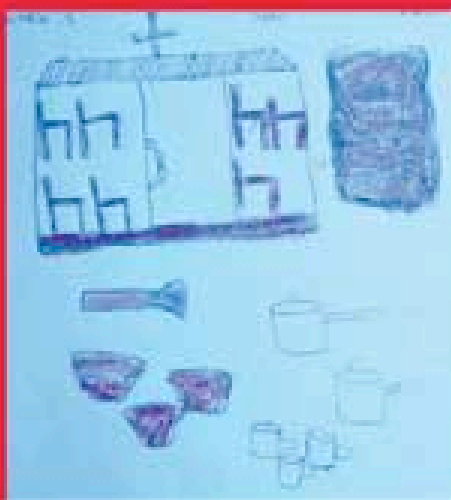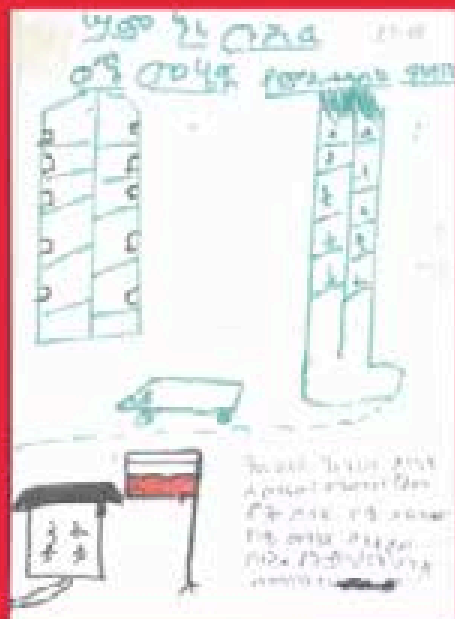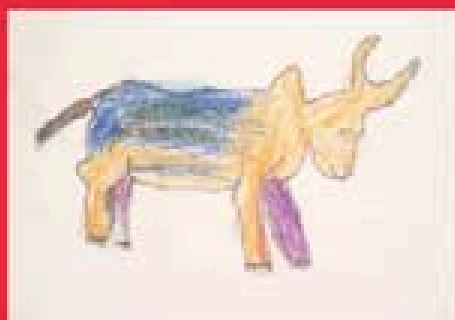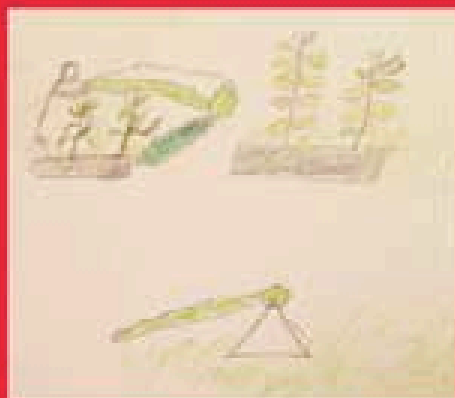
support ('life there was hard and what I wanted…I never found it'); being forced to return by family members ('Dad followed me'); and not finding the improved prospects that they had imagined they would. It is noteworthy that the majority of children who labelled their return 'unsuccessful' had engaged in internal migration (as opposed to cross-border or international migration), often only to the next village or town.

Reasons provided for returning by those who labelled their migration attempt successful included wanting to start school or complete studies (for more than half of the children in this sub-group school was the reason for return); the season for field work having come to an end (seasonal movement); and, for one child, 'realising that I do not really want to migrate to another country'.

51.7% said they would tell their support network if they were to leave, while 35.8% would not.

67.5% were aware and 28.8% were not aware of the dangers of migration; 84.2% of children were aware they could not cross borders legally and only 14.2% were not.

25% of the sample were not aware of the risks associated with exploitation, while 72.5% were aware. A slightly higher number—30%—were not aware of the risks related to trafficking, with a corresponding lower number who were aware (69.2%). Notably, a much more mixed picture emerges when we asked whether the children were able to protect themselves: here, over half replied 'no' (50.8%). 35% of the participants reported being able to protect themselves.

Finally, and somewhat tellingly for future planning and programming purposes, 65% of children remarked that there was no formal or informal opportunity for them to participate in decision-making or planning for community development, in civil society activities that would develop responsible citizenship or engage in public or political dialogue. Only 32.5% suggested that they had the opportunity to engage in this type of activity.

Analysis of children's drawings and focus group discussions: Sessions 2 and 3

In these sessions, each individual participant was asked to creatively express her or his thoughts on the themes 'stay' and 'go' by drawing whatever images they associated with them. The original brief involved asking the children to reflect on these themes as a binary—that is, 'What would make you stay?' or 'What would make you go?' After further consultation with the Save the Children gender colleagues, however, the scope was divided into four questions in order to capture greater nuance, particularly around gender. These were as follows:

1. What would make an imaginary child stay or go?
2. What would make a child like YOU stay or go?
3. What would make a girl child stay or go? (suggested by Save the Children gender colleagues)
4. What would make a boy child stay or go? (suggested by Save the Children gender colleagues)

This expanded approach undoubtedly added value to the study, but also ramped up the complexity of the task, both for participants and for the field workers, who had an additional three series to administer.

Drawings were blind-scored, by recording what they appeared to be (e.g. tree, snake, school) or if the image was unclear or not provided. Items were then inventoried for each series and their frequencies recorded. A summary of categories is provided at the end of each country section; this is elaborated upon with respect to the findings of Session 3, during which the children unpacked their drawings with one another in peer-related focus group discussions.

Analysis of Session 4

Session 4 consisted of a short self-assessment during which children who had participated in the study reflected on their participation.

88% of children felt good or very good about sharing their experiences.
90% of children indicated that they felt good or very good about the opportunity to participate in similar research projects given the chance.

Analysis of adult key informant interviews

In an attempt to triangulate the approach to our research, we interviewed a total of 36 adult key informants—12 in each site for Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Zambia. Some analysis of the demographics may prove helpful to frame the broader findings obtained.
In terms of gender balancing, despite our efforts there was a clear gender skew towards males among key informants. Ethiopia displayed the highest percentage of females at 28%, with Burkina at 25% and Zambia the lowest at 18%.

Education revealed an interesting picture. In terms of school attendance, high rates were reported across the adult sample, from 92% in Burkina to 77% in Zambia, with Ethiopia at 83%. Burkina Faso had the highest rate of primary school completion, followed by Ethiopia then Zambia. The same pattern repeated with respect to secondary school education, albeit the percentage was at over 60% as compared with 30% for the lowest level of education. Notably, the Zambian site had only 5% with secondary school education. Post-graduates were most prevalent in the Zambian context at 14%, followed by Burkina Faso at 8%. Interestingly, primary education was less common than secondary for both Burkina Faso and Ethiopia, whereas in Zambia this pattern was reversed. In Zambia, however, graduate education was more common, at 59% (compared with 22% for Ethiopia).

Where ID documentation was concerned, only members of the Ethiopian sub-sample recorded 'no' (at 11%), for non-documentation. Burkinabe more often had ID than Zambians, just not on their person (25% vs. 18%). Ethiopians had the highest levels of documentation at 89%, compared to 75% and 73%, respectively, for Burkina Faso and Zambia.

In terms of work, Ethiopians showed markedly higher unemployment (33%) than Burkinabe and Zambians (at 8% and 5%, respectively). 92% of Burkinabe adults reported having a job, followed by Zambians at 86% and Ethiopians at 67%.

Within the adult key informant interview category, we triangulated between parent/relative, active and influential community member and child care/protection professional. Ethiopia had the highest familial representation, at 50%, followed by Burkina Faso at 42%. Zambia, by comparison, had only 9% in this category. In terms of community members, Ethiopia had 28%, Burkina Faso 25% and Zambia only 5%. Given these results, it is little surprise that Zambia had the highest sub-sample of child professionals, at 64% in contrast with Burkina Faso and Ethiopia at 25% and 22%, respectively.

The entire Burkinabe sub-sample reported having their own children; in Ethiopia and Zambia 78% and 77%, respectively, were parents.

As regards religion, 91% of the Zambian sample were Christian; in Burkina Faso 83% were Muslim and 17% Christian. Ethiopia had 72% Christian and 28% Muslim.

[2] Given the diversity of the country sites and variance in interpretations of the task at hand, unlike in Burkina Faso and Zambia, the Ethiopian drawings are interpreted in relation to the narrative content provided with the images.

Remittances received were very low in Ethiopia (17%), non-existent in Burkina and not applicable for 55% of the Zambian sample.

When asked of their plans for migration, parents and community members responded similarly to their children, with more indicating they were considering staying than leaving. The percentage of those indicating 'yes to staying', however, were much higher for parents than for community members. Interestingly, the pattern was inverted for professionals, where for the majority the answer was 'no to staying', almost double the number who answered 'yes'.

When asked about their perceptions of how frequently they thought children were considering leaving, professionals and community members both recorded higher values for 'sometimes' than for 'often' than parents. Professionals were most likely to believe children 'hardly ever' considered migration, while parents indicated 'often'. Asked when they believe children's thoughts of leaving had first started—i.e. the duration of these thoughts— community members and professionals both assumed months rather than years. However, the proportion attaching more significance to months than years was much greater for professionals. For parents, the only value recorded (50% of that sub-sample) was years. No values were recorded for days or weeks.

In terms of associated children who had actually left, parents recorded an even split of those who did have children or left and those who did not (i.e. who's children stayed), at 43% for each. More professionals said 'yes' than 'no', 38% to 29%, while community members said more 'no' than 'yes', at 29% compared with 19%.

Concerning how long those children who had left remained away, none of the adults recorded values for days or weeks. Professionals stated 22% and 17% for months and years, respectively; parents matched the number for months (22%) but a much higher proportion recorded years (58%). By contrast, 56% of professionals recorded months and 25% years. The above demographics and related findings may be helpful for differential programming purposes, according to training and development planned with different adult stakeholders, ranging from families to communities and child-focused professionals.

APPENDIX 2: GLOSSARY

Adolescent: Persons aged 10 to 19 years[3].

Asylum seeker: Persons who are seeking to be admitted into a country as refugees and are awaiting decision on their application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments are known as asylum seekers. If their application is refused, they must leave the country and may be expelled, unless permission to stay is provided on humanitarian or other grounds[4].

Children on the move: Children moving for a variety of reasons, voluntarily or involuntarily, within or between countries, with or without their parents or other primary caregivers, and whose movement, while it may open up opportunities, might also place them at risk (or at an increased risk) of inadequate care, economic or sexual exploitation, abuse, neglect, and violence. Children can be on the move accompanied or unaccompanied, or may be separated. Unaccompanied children on the move are children who are not accompanied by a parent, guardian, or other adult who by law or custom is responsible for them[5].

Children who choose to stay: Where relevant, this report takes care to reflect the exact status of migration or lack of it as it exists at the time of conducting this research. Therefore, children who choose to stay are those who indicate that they have made the decision to stay. This decision may have been influenced by positive associations with the immediate environment (or community of origin), or may have been reached after weighing up the pros and cons of a situation that is experienced by the child as mostly negative and restrictive, but still reflects the outcome of a decision-making process, and therefore, in this report, we have chosen to refer to it as "choice".

Country of origin: The country that is a source of migratory flows (regular or irregular)[6].

Community of origin: Used in this report to denote a community known as a source of migratory flows.

Irregular migrant: This usually means someone who, owing to illegal entry or the expiry of his or her visa, lacks legal status in a transit or host country. The term applies to migrants who infringe a country's admission rules and anyone who is not authorised to remain in the country where he or she is living. Irregular migrants are also called undocumented migrants or migrants in an irregular situation. Save the Children, together with other human rights focused agencies, does not use the term 'illegal migrant', as it implies criminality. Migration in itself is not a crime, and the term is discriminatory since illegality as a status when applied to migrants is used to deny access to rights and leads to a perception, and policies, that legitimise prosecution and punishment[7].

Migrant: There is no universally accepted definition of a migrant. The word is usually understood to apply when the individual concerned has made the decision to migrate freely, for reasons of "personal convenience", with no external compelling factor. This term therefore applies to persons, and family members, who move to another country or region to better their material or social conditions and improve the prospects for themselves or their family[8].

Mixed migration includes irregular migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, victims of trafficking, stateless persons, unaccompanied and separated children and other vulnerable persons on the move. The Mixed Migration nomenclature does not normally include Internally Displaced People (IDPs) but this study includes them, in recognition that today's IDPs are often tomorrow's migrants (forced, involuntary or otherwise)[9].

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3 UNICEF, 2011
4 Save the Children (2018). Ibid.
5 Save the Children, 2016.
6 IOM, 2018. https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms
7 Save the Children (2018). Protecting Children on the Move. A guide to programming for children affected by migration and displacement.
8 Save the Children (2018). Protecting Children on the Move. A guide to programming for children affected by migration and displacement.
9 Save the Children (2018). Young and on the Move in West Africa.

Non-migrant: Usedw in the literature review section of this report to refer to subjects of studies that have investigated the phenomenon of persons who refrain from migrating despite living in contexts with high rates of outward migration, this term is avoided in the actual report and its findings due to the potential for confusion[10] (for instance, its' use would require clear differentiation from absence of migration aspirations, "children left behind" or other constructs of immobility. Instead, we choose to refer to children who choose to stay).

Refugee: A refugee is a person who meets the criteria of the UNHCR Statute and qualifies for the protection of the United Nations, provided by the High Commissioner, regardless of whether or not s/he is in a country that is a party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951 or the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, or whether or not s/he has been recognised by the host country as a refugee under either of these instruments[11].

Regional consultative process: Regional consultative processes on migration (RCPs) are state-led, ongoing, regional information-sharing and policy dialogues dedicated to discussing specific migration issue(s) in a cooperative manner among States from an agreed (usually geographical) region, and may either be officially associated with formal regional institutions, or be informal and non-binding[12].

Regional economic community: The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are regional groupings of African states. ... Generally, the purpose of the RECs is to facilitate regional economic integration between members of the individual regions and through the wider African Economic Community (AEC), which was established under the Abuja Treaty (1991)[13].

Separated children are those without parents or with their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but with relatives / extended family or others with a customary responsibility (defined in context) or in government regulated care placement.
A trafficked child is a child who has been recruited, transported, transferred, harboured or received with the purpose of exploitation[14].

Smuggling (of migrants): Article 3(a) of the Smuggling Protocol defines "smuggling of migrants" as "The procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident."[15]

Unaccompanied children (also called unaccompanied minors) are those separated from both parents or from their previous legal or primary caregiver and other relatives. They are typically either with other unrelated adults who are not by law or custom responsible for their care, or with no adult care. They may be with other children who may or may not be related to them[16].

Youth: Persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years[17].

10 See Jónsson, G. (2011). Non-migrant, sedentary, immobile, or 'left behind'?
Reflections on the absence of migration. International Migration Institute, Working Papers Paper 39, April 2011. University of Oxford. https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/academic/wp-11-39-non-migrant-sedentary-immobile-or-left-behind.pdf
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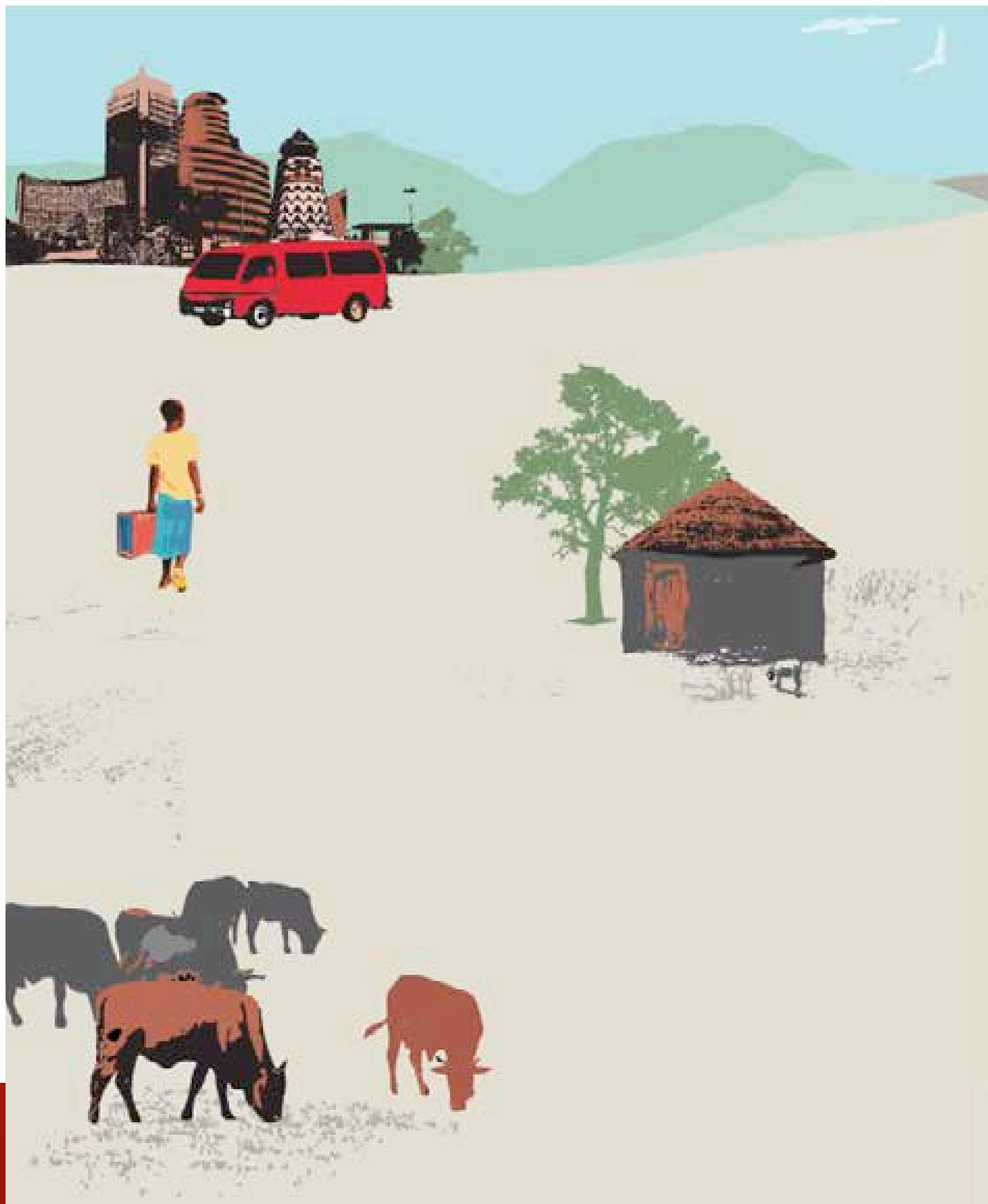12 https://www.iom.int/regional-consultative-processes-migration
13 African Union, 2018. https://au.int/en/organs/recs
14 Save the Children (2018). Ibid.
15 IOM, 2018.
16 Save the Children (2018). Ibid.
17 UNDESA definition