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FOR EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA
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UNICEF promotes the rights and well-being of children and adolescents without exclusion. Together with its partners, UNICEF works in over 190 countries and territories, transforming this commitment into tangible actions for all children and adolescents, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalised. Always and everywhere in the world.

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Preface

From Emergency to a Systemic Strategy for Rights

Almost every day, I meet children, adolescents, and young people who show how a simple act of welcoming or taking the time to listen to them can make a difference. This report is about them—it illustrates a significant team effort aimed at offering opportunities and protection through a systemic approach.

The year 2024 has brought considerable challenges: despite a decline in migration flows, child poverty continues to rise, and vulnerability remains high. The Central Mediterranean route remains one of the most dangerous in the world, placing thousands of children and adolescents at extreme risk. In this scenario, I have witnessed firsthand the extraordinary resilience of many unaccompanied and separated children, who embark on long journeys, face physical, mental, and economic hardships, and encounter countless obstacles—yet never give up on their hope for a better future. The story of Siradio, whom I would like to thank for agreeing to co-author the second preface of this report, is a testament to this.

It is precisely in this context that UNICEF, working alongside many institutional and private partners, has reinforced its commitment in Italy. For example, we have expanded protection efforts, legal assistance, and psychological support for unaccompanied and separated children, as well as those in extreme vulnerability, we have promoted family-based reception projects, which provide not only a safe shelter but also stable and meaningful relationships, and we have worked to ensure that children have real spaces for participation, turning listening into a concrete tool for action and change.

The stories collected in this report—of those who have crossed the Mediterranean in search of a better future, of those who have been able to develop their talents through education, or of those who have experienced family-based reception for the first time—deeply move me. Hearing their stories of hope and resilience strengthens my conviction that every intervention matters.

However, it is crucial that within the reception system and the broader framework of child protection, social protection, and education systems, we fully recognise and expand upon the experiences and models developed by UNICEF and its partners to implement more effective policies. In this regard, the adoption of the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum represents a strategic opportunity.

The following pages demonstrate that, despite a complex social landscape and limited resources, concrete results can be achieved: improving the psychosocial well-being of adolescents and young people, enhancing their skills, and providing them with the tools to fully participate in community life. At the same time, they highlight the ongoing work still needed: ensuring the rights of everyone, especially in a time marked by increasing poverty and inequality, requires constant collective commitment.

For this reason, I would like to thank everyone who has worked day after day alongside UNICEF: the Italian Committee for UNICEF, the European Commission, national and local institutions, civil society organisations, and the many young people I have met, who teach us to look to the future with confidence. Your financial, professional, and personal support empowers us to tackle present and future challenges with determination. Together, we can continue to protect and promote the rights of every child and adolescent, transforming our findings, ideas, and hopes into action and change.

*Nicola dell’Arciprete,
UNICEF Country Coordinator in Italy*



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Engaging with and truly listening to young people is crucial, particularly for those of us who have faced hardship and marginalisation.

I strongly believe that we, the young, represent both the present and the future of society. However, despite this, decisions are often made without directly involving us, even though we are usually the ones who experience, for better or worse, the consequences of these choices. Being heard means having the chance to drive change, build bridges rather than barriers, and show that our experiences enrich society as a whole. When young people actively participate, we create a more inclusive and just future for everyone.

My name is Siradio Bah. I am 18 years old, and I come from Guinea Conakry. I arrived in Italy in July 2021 after a migration journey that was extremely difficult, full of dangers and challenges. This experience taught me what it truly means to face obstacles—first fighting for survival and then striving for a better future, where I can make my voice heard in a new society. Today, I am actively committed to advocating for the rights of young people, migrants, and refugees.

With UNICEF, I had the opportunity to become part of the Steering Group of U-Report On The Move, a platform that allows us to amplify the voices of many young people who have had experiences similar to mine and to make these voices heard by institutions, often proposing concrete solutions. Being part of this initiative is a significant step for me because I want to help create spaces and real opportunities where young people, regardless of their geographical origin, can be heard and valued.

The Steering Group of U-Report On The Move is an incredible opportunity for us young people to influence the organisation's policies and strategies. For me, it means being able to bring my personal experience and that of many other young migrants into a context that can truly make a difference. This journey will help me develop important skills such as leadership, intercultural dialogue, and the ability to work with institutions.

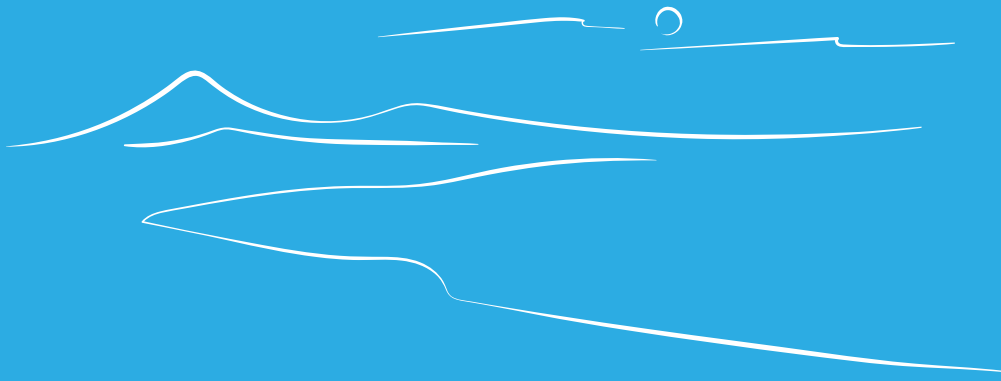
But it is also an added value for UNICEF, as it allows the organisation to gain a broader perspective and work with young people who have personally experienced the challenges we aim to highlight, address, and overcome.

Engaging with institutions is always a challenge, but it is also an opportunity. In the past, I have participated in meetings with local administrations on projects related to active citizenship. I have realised that, despite the obstacles, making our voices heard with preparation and determination leads to positive and productive dialogue. In 2022, in Rome, after first connecting with UNICEF through the U-Report On The Move platform, I had the opportunity to take part in a meeting about the foster care of unaccompanied and separated children. Here, I was able to share what I had learned in the previous months about the possibility of living with a family, the importance of finding a supportive emotional and relational environment, and the need for concrete assistance in daily life, as well as in the process of inclusion and integration.

Beyond individual cases, there are numerous opportunities for personal growth, and I know I must be ready to seize them in the future.

I strongly believe that every story, every voice, and every experience is valuable and can contribute to positive change. My life experience has taught me that even in difficult times, honesty, determination, and the opportunity to be heard can make a difference. Becoming part of the UNICEF Steering Group is not just an opportunity for me; it is also a way to represent many young people who, like me, want to build a better future. I believe in the possibility of acting as a bridge between those who often go unheard and the institutions, so that no one feels excluded and every young person can actively participate and contribute to society.

*Siradio Bah
Steering Group Member
U-Report On The Move*



1,3 Million children and adolescents in absolute poverty in Italy (13,8% of the total, the highest figure recorded since 2014)[1]

66,000 migrants and refugees arrived by sea in 2024 (-58% compared to 2023 arrivals, which totalled approximately 157,000 people)[2]

8,000 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), down from 18,800 the previous year.

2,200 people died or went missing in the Mediterranean in 2024, including 1,700 along the central Mediterranean Route, among them many children

18,600 UASC hosted within the reception system in 2024, with approximately 300 voluntarily leaving reception facilities

+24,000 migrant and refugee children, adolescents and young people reached with Child Protection interventions, including gender-based violence prevention and response

+7,400 disadvantaged people - including UASC - reached through skills development and participation initiatives

+700,000 people reached with prevention messages and access to services

+20,000 UASC, adolescents, and young migrants and refugees will be reached in 2025, along with over 200,000 through online interventions.

[1] Istat, ottobre 2024. https://www.istat.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/REPORT_POVERTA_2023.pdf

[2] Cruscotto Statistico, Ministero dell'Interno, http://www.libertacivilimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto_statistico_giornaliero_31-12-2024_fine_mese.pdf

[3] OIM, Missing Migrants Project, <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean>

[4] Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, Dashboard, <https://analytics.lavoro.gov.it/t/PublicSIM/views/PresenzadeiMinoristranierinonaccompagnatiinItalia/PresenzadeiMinoristranierinonaccompagnatiinItalia?%3Aembed=y&%3Aiid=5&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y>

1. Context and UNICEF's Presence in Italy



Despite being one of Europe's largest economies, Italy has some of the highest child poverty rates, with stark inequalities across regions and vulnerable communities. The country faces multiple social challenges, including high school dropout rates, disparities in access to healthcare and well-being services for children and young people, and difficulties with inclusion and protection for the most vulnerable families. Additionally, issues such as discrimination and gender-based violence persist.

On top of these challenges, Italy serves as a **primary arrival and transit point for migrants and refugees. The Central Mediterranean route is one of the most dangerous in the world:** since 2014, over 31,300 people have lost their lives in the Mediterranean, including 24,500 along this route alone. Many of these victims are children and adolescents, exposed to enormous risks both during their journey and upon arrival in the country.

In response to these challenges, UNICEF, established in 1946 to support children in the post-war period and active in Italy since 1974 through the Italian Committee for UNICEF, launched an operational program in 2016, managed by the Office for Europe and Central Asia. This program aims to ensure protection, including a specific focus on preventing and responding to gender-based violence, inclusion, and skills development for the most vulnerable. Over time, these programs have expanded to meet the needs of children, adolescents, and young people in Italy facing hardship.

UNICEF also supports the implementation of the Child Guarantee, an initiative by the European Commission aimed at ensuring that every child at risk of poverty and social exclusion has access to essential rights and services. In this context, UNICEF works with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Department for Family Policies and the Ministry of Health.

In addition to direct interventions, the organisation works toward systemic and sustainable change by providing technical assistance, strengthening institutional capacities, and promoting public policies that safeguard the rights of children and adolescents in Italy.



2. Migration focus: unaccompanied and separated children, young people, women and families



In 2024, migration flows to Italy decreased, with **66,000 migrants and refugees arriving by sea** via the Central Mediterranean route, compared to 157,000 in 2023. Among these, approximately 20% **were children, including 8,000 unaccompanied children.**

The Central Mediterranean migration route remains one of the most dangerous in the world: in 2024, around **2,328 people died or went missing in this part of the Mediterranean, including over 100 children.** Further migrants arrived via Italy's northern land borders through the Balkan route, though updated data on these entries is not available. Up to 31st December 2024, Italy's reception system hosted **18,625 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC)**, a decrease from 23,000 the previous year. The population of UASC in first and second-level reception facilities in Italy consists mainly of **males (88%).**

In terms of age distribution: **53% are 17 years old; 23% are 16 years old; 8% are 15 years old; 14% are under 15 years old.** The majority of unaccompanied children arriving in Italy come from countries severely affected by prolonged crises which have damaged their socioeconomic systems, education, and healthcare services. **The most represented countries of origin among children in reception facilities include:** **Egypt** – over 3,700 children (<18, 20% of the total); **Ukraine** – 3,500 children (<18, 18% of new arrivals); **Gambia** – 2,100 children (<18, 11% of total recorded entries); **Tunisia** – 1,700 children (<18, 9.6% of new arrivals); **Guinea** – 1,500 children (<18, 8%).



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[5] Ministero dell'Interno, Cruscotto Statistico, http://www.libertacivilimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto_statistico_giornaliero_31-12-2024_fine_mese.pdf

[6] OIM, Missing Migrants Project, https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean?region_incident=All&route=All&year%5B%5D=13651&month=All&incident_date%5Bmin%5D=&incident_date%5Bmax%5D=

[7] Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, <https://analytics.lavoro.gov.it/t/PublicSIM/Views/PresenzadeiMinoristranierinonaccompagnatiinItalia/PresenzadeiMinoristranierinonaccompagnatiinItalia?%3Aembed=y&%3Aiid=5&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y>

3. UNICEF's Strategy



Despite the lower number of sea arrivals in 2024 compared to the previous year and the extension of special measures introduced by the Italian government, significant challenges remain in the protection and care system. Following the declaration of a state of emergency due to the sharp rise in migrant flows via Mediterranean routes, transfers from hotspots have been accelerated. Nevertheless, children and young people continue to endure prolonged stays in emergency and first reception facilities, which lack the necessary design and resources to accommodate them properly. The availability of places in second-level reception facilities (SAI) for unaccompanied and separated children remains insufficient to adequately meet the needs of children and adolescents. Protection standards and access to essential services show inconsistencies and qualitative gaps across the country, increasing the risk of children leaving reception centres and being exposed to violence, exploitation, and abuse, particularly for unaccompanied and separated children and adolescents.

With emergency funding and European Commission contributions for 2023-2024, UNICEF has bolstered its humanitarian response, prioritizing key landing sites, transit hubs, and first reception facilities. This enhanced on-the-ground presence has enabled timely monitoring of arrival, transit, and reception sites and has supported the capacity-building of institutional actors involved in the response.

With staff deployed across the country, UNICEF has worked closely with the Italian government at both central and local levels to strengthen emergency response mechanisms, assisting in managing the most vulnerable cases and

facilitating their referral to appropriate services.

UNICEF has supported unaccompanied children and young migrants and refugees by providing **information and guidance** on available services from the moment they arrive in Italy and through increasingly specialised support over time. The organisation has also enhanced **psychosocial, legal, and employment counselling services** through the Here4U service on the U-Report On The Move platform and fieldwork in first and second reception facilities. These efforts aim to offer mental health support programs for unaccompanied children, young migrants, refugees, and families.

At the same time, UNICEF has continued to promote **alternative reception solutions** to traditional reception centres, focusing on family-based care. This includes guardianship, foster care, mentoring for young adults and mother-child families. These solutions help diversify reception pathways, reducing costs while enhancing social inclusion outcomes.

UNICEF has also worked alongside local institutions to ensure access to **education, training, and professional guidance to support school-to-work transition and the social inclusion of disadvantaged children and adolescents**.

Language barriers, precarious legal status, and school dropout rates, exacerbated by frequent relocations, continue to pose significant challenges. In response, UNICEF has promoted educational initiatives to support the following: Italian language learning for newly arrived students in primary and secondary schools; 21st-century skills development and entrepreneurship education for students in disadvantaged secondary schools,

[8] These include the declaration of a state of emergency due to the exceptional increase in the flow of migrants entering the country via the Mediterranean migration routes, renewed last October for a further six months



including those with migrant backgrounds; guidance on educational and vocational training pathways for unaccompanied children, young migrants, and refugees.

A key pillar of UNICEF's intervention is ensuring that children and young migrants and refugees, or those with a migrant background, are **actively involved in decision-making processes that affect them**. This is achieved through structured channels and discussion forums, which provide safe and inclusive spaces where they can express their opinions, share experiences, and propose solutions for issues directly impacting their lives. UNICEF is committed to ensuring that these voices are heard, fostering constructive dialogue with institutions to help co-create more effective and sustainable solutions to inclusion and protection challenges.



4. Results achieved and specific areas of intervention



Protection and support for children, families, and women at risk and/or survivors of gender-based violence

24,025 children, young migrants and refugees, along with caregivers, who had access to mental health services and psychosocial support

952 UASC, young migrants and refugees in family-based care or community support projects
8,983 people reached through direct interventions for prevention, mitigation, and response to gender-based violence

19,719 people who accessed safe channels to report exploitation and sexual abuse by humanitarian workers

2,713 children who received individual support for managing the most vulnerable cases

- **Protection of UASC** (Unaccompanied and separated Children) and young migrants and refugees living outside the reception system, with identification and management of cases, including referrals to local socio-health services and specialised protection services.



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Protection in Emergency Contexts

- **Monitoring presence and providing support to migrant and refugee children in border and transit areas**, such as Lampedusa and Ventimiglia, and managing individual cases with greater vulnerability.



Voluntary Guardianship and Family-Based Care

- **Strengthening the voluntary guardianship system** by providing direct support to guardians in their mandate to promote the best interests of the children under guardianship, documenting and analysing the intervention model, providing technical assistance to municipal social services and juvenile courts in districts hosting significant numbers of UASC, promoting peer-to-peer support among guardians, supporting regional authorities in continuous training (also through the launch of a dedicated, free multidisciplinary e-learning course), and facilitating dialogue between guardians' representatives and institutions to collaboratively develop operational practices to address identified bottlenecks.
- **Promoting family-based care for UASC** by developing operational guidelines, work models to identify UASC from the emergency phase to facilitate their access to foster care pathways, raising awareness and training potential foster families through civil society and local communities, municipalities, and FAMI centres at national level.
- **Promoting a mentoring model for young migrants and refugees**, connecting young migrants and families or individuals open to reception after specific training, which includes components related to the care of survivors of gender-based violence and those with mental health vulnerabilities.
- **Strengthening the coordination of existing networks** through the Community of Practice, including the capacity-building of operational resources and the dissemination of operational tools for financial planning of funds available to support

family-based care for children, adolescents and assistance for young adults. Another key tool is support for local government to harmonise coordination and processes among various stakeholders. Government efforts include the involvement of prefectures, municipalities, and the judicial system regarding the issue of unaccompanied and separated children.





Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

- **Enhancement of the Here4U online mental health and psychosocial support** service for young refugees and migrants integrated into the U-Report On The Move platform.
- **Promoting the MHPSS approach and disseminating best practices** and reference standards for supporting the psychosocial well-being and mental health of young migrants and refugees by facilitating the work of the MHPSS Community of Practices – which includes excellence in both public services and the private social sector – and supporting the working group itself through targeted documents aimed at professionals and actors from public and private services, as well as those involved in reception and integration processes.
- **Promoting the MHPSS approach by disseminating operational tools:** UNICEF has adapted the Expression and Innovation Kit for Adolescents to the Italian context and initiated its pilot phase in reception settings for adolescents and young migrants, refugees, and UASC under the Adolescent Wellbeing program. Activities have also been integrated into orientation workshops for skills development as part of the Skills4Youth program.
- **Peer support as a psychosocial well-being tool**, through the testing of the “I support my friends” Toolkit. Migrant, refugee, and UASC youth have been trained on topics such as basic psychological first aid, active and empathetic listening, and other core psychosocial skills.
- **Strengthening the skills of frontline staff in the reception system:** through training initiatives for operators working in reception facilities, as well as for professionals from socio-health services, as part of the Here4U project.
- **Strengthening the reception system’s capacity on MHPSS topics**, through participation in the co-construction and implementation of webinars for Prefecture staff and reception workers, organised by the Ministry of the Interior in collaboration with UNHCR and UNICEF, to promote, within the national reception system, mechanisms to mitigate the risk of gender-based violence and protect children, adolescents and young people by adopting specific operational tools.
- **Improving public policies and services:** UNICEF is also involved in the implementation of the Technical Support Instrument (TSI), a European Union program that provides technical assistance to Member States to improve policies and public services. As part of this project, UNICEF supports national and local authorities in strengthening the integration of health, education, and social services for the mental health of adolescents (ages 10-19). By training professionals, engaging directly with young people in the co-design of solutions, and promoting coordinated intervention models, UNICEF contributes to ensuring more effective and accessible support, with particular attention to the most vulnerable groups.



Cross-Cutting Actions

- **Strengthening the Italian Child Protection System** by providing technical support to institutions and training activities for frontline workers to enhance institutional response capacity and improve the quality and sustainability of services.
- **Research and development of technical manuals and operational guidelines.** UNICEF-supported research projects aim to produce evidence-based knowledge to inform and guide programmatic and policy actions. UNICEF also contributes to the drafting of technical documents to harmonise approaches and methodologies and ensure minimum quality standards.

Curry pizzoccheri, needle and thread

"I feel like we haven't done anything special. We're just a mum and dad, we have a simple family, we like to help and it doesn't cost us much to add one more chair at the table." This is how Beniamino begins to tell the story of the foster care journey he started with Chiara.

"We've learned that in foster care, to welcome someone, it's important to make space: both physical space – getting rid of some things – but also mental space, so you need to empty it out to let it be filled by the person who arrives."

Nasim is 18 today and has been in foster care since he was 16. In his home country, he couldn't meet the needs of his mother and sisters on his own, so he came to Italy alone from Bangladesh, after a period in Libya that he doesn't remember fondly. "I arrived when I was young," he says. "I missed my parents, I didn't know anyone in Italy. They treated me like a son."

There was no shortage of challenges, first and foremost the language barrier. "I'm a translator. I work with words, yet we had to learn to communicate in another way," adds Beniamino. "Sometimes deeper things are communicated, but you need to be imaginative. At first, we covered the room with little notes, but then we started communicating with glances, laughter, repeating things that made us laugh, even with food."

And as they tell their story, a steaming, curried, pizzoccheri (Lombard buckwheat pasta) arrives on the table.

<https://www.unicef.it/media/pizzoccheri-al-curry-ago-e-filo-in-poche-mosse-nasim-chiara-e-beniamino-sono-famiglia/>



Prevention, Mitigation, and Response to Gender-Based Violence

- **Strengthening the availability and accessibility of gender-based violence response services for refugee and migrant women and girls** through activities that engage those in reception and staff, including mobile teams, psychosocial support services, awareness-raising activities, and information about available services. This ensures the safety, resilience, and access of women and girls to essential services and activities for their well-being and promotes their socio-economic inclusion, in addition to gender-based violence response services.
- **Mitigation of gender-based violence risk** through the promotion of access to information tailored to gender, culture, language, and age for refugee and migrant girls and women, and the adoption of specific measures in interventions.
- **Awareness-raising about specialised services** available for gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, and the corresponding rights of access, including through the U-Report On The Move platform.
- **Strengthening the capacity of service providers on gender-based violence topics** through the development and implementation of training programs, both in-person and online.
- **Inter-agency collaboration on gender-based violence issues**, including the development of informational campaigns on gender-based violence and anti-trafficking national helplines, the development of tools and policies to support institutions, and the creation of training resources, including two new e-learning modules.
- **Support to institutions** for the development of policies, strategic plans, and protocols for the prevention, mitigation of risk, and response to gender-based violence, considering the specific needs of migrant and refugee girls and women.
- **Coordination of prevention activities for sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)** within all policy interventions and specific mechanisms, monitoring their implementation, and working with all UNICEF program implementation partners in Italy.
- **Support and strengthening of Safe Spaces for girls and women and the related Community of Practices**, aimed at supporting the development and strengthening of the safe spaces model across the national territory.



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4. Results achieved and specific areas of intervention



4.2 Skills Development and Participation

18,000 UASC, migrant and refugee youth enrolled in and participating in the U-Report on the Move platform (+5,000 in 2024)

1,890 UASC, migrant and refugee youth reached with Skills4YOUth, a work orientation and skills development workshop in over 122 facilities and CPIAs
920 disadvantaged students (including students with a migration background) reached through the UPSHIFT program for 21st-century skills development

833 children with a migration background (newly arrived students) reached via the Akelius platform for Italian language learning in a hybrid mode

395 children with a migration background reached through socio-recreational workshops

701,183 people reached with prevention messages and access to services

120,543 people who participated online and in person in actions for social and behavioural change engagement

18,694 people who shared their concerns and questions through feedback mechanisms

Educational Paths and Skills Development

- **Italian language learning** – A program aimed at using the Akelius platform for the development of linguistic and digital skills, involving teachers and newly arrived students in Italy (NAI) in primary and secondary schools. Through the use of tablets provided to schools and teacher training on the innovative "hybrid or mixed" approach to language teaching (blended learning), the Akelius platform is used by NAI students in classes to improve their Italian as a second language.
- **Skills development and professional orientation.** In the 2023-2024 biennium, UNICEF implemented the Skills4YOUth initiative as part of the PROTECT program funded by the European Commission, at first and second reception centres and Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA). Based on two tools created by UNICEF – the Vademecum for professional orientation and the Expression and Innovation Kit for Adolescents – the Skills4YOUth workshop was delivered by two mobile teams in over 400 facilities and CPIAs across Italy, reaching over 4,000 UAM and migrant and refugee youth. UNICEF also launched an e-learning course inspired by the workshop experience, aimed at adults who work with UAMs and youth (reception workers, educators, guardians, cultural mediators, etc.), to contribute to their training on skills development and job orientation. Over 300 people participated in the online launch event, and within a month of its launch, over 120 people had already enrolled in the e-learning course.



- **Development of 21st-century skills (entrepreneurial and life skills).**

UPSHIFT is UNICEF's flagship initiative to facilitate orientation, active citizenship, and social inclusion of disadvantaged students, including those with a migration background. In collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Merit and Regional School Offices, the model is active in all years of secondary schools and can be incorporated into Cross-Curricular Competence and Orientation (PCTO) and Civic Education courses. Thanks to teacher training and the involvement of young mentors from the business world or private sector, students participate in workshop-based activities analysing concrete social challenges and designing innovative solutions in the form of products or services with social impact.



Priscila, running towards her dreams

"Choosing a profession," – confesses Priscila, a 19-year-old from Cape Verde – "is very difficult. When you're little, you make a choice maybe because your friends are doing it. I wanted to be a veterinarian because my friends wanted to, but when I watched an operation, I realised it wasn't right for me. And then I didn't know what to choose anymore. Today, I know that I would like to work in the world of art and entertainment, where there's animation and happiness."

Career guidance is a crucial step for migrant and refugee adolescents and young people who are taking their first steps to educate themselves, find a job, and build their future in Italy. However, this journey is often hindered by challenges related to language, access to information, recognition of previous education, and bureaucratic procedures.

This is where Skills4YOUth (S4Y) comes into play, which, through a play on words, summarises the main objective: the development of skills "for you" but also "for young people." Through interactive and participatory workshops at reception centres and Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA), Skills4YOUth guides adolescent and young migrants and refugees in the process of self-discovery, enhancement, and development of their skills.

"The workshop was interesting" – says Priscila – "We were surrounded by different people who had one goal: to find what's best for themselves." She then she continues: "I felt like a five-year-old child, it was fun and interesting, it was different from school workshops. It helped me understand many things about myself."

<https://www.unicef.it/media/skills4youth-valorizzare-le-proprie-competenze-per-orientarsi-nel-mondo-del-lavoro-costruire-il-proprio-futuro/>



Access to Information and Active Participation

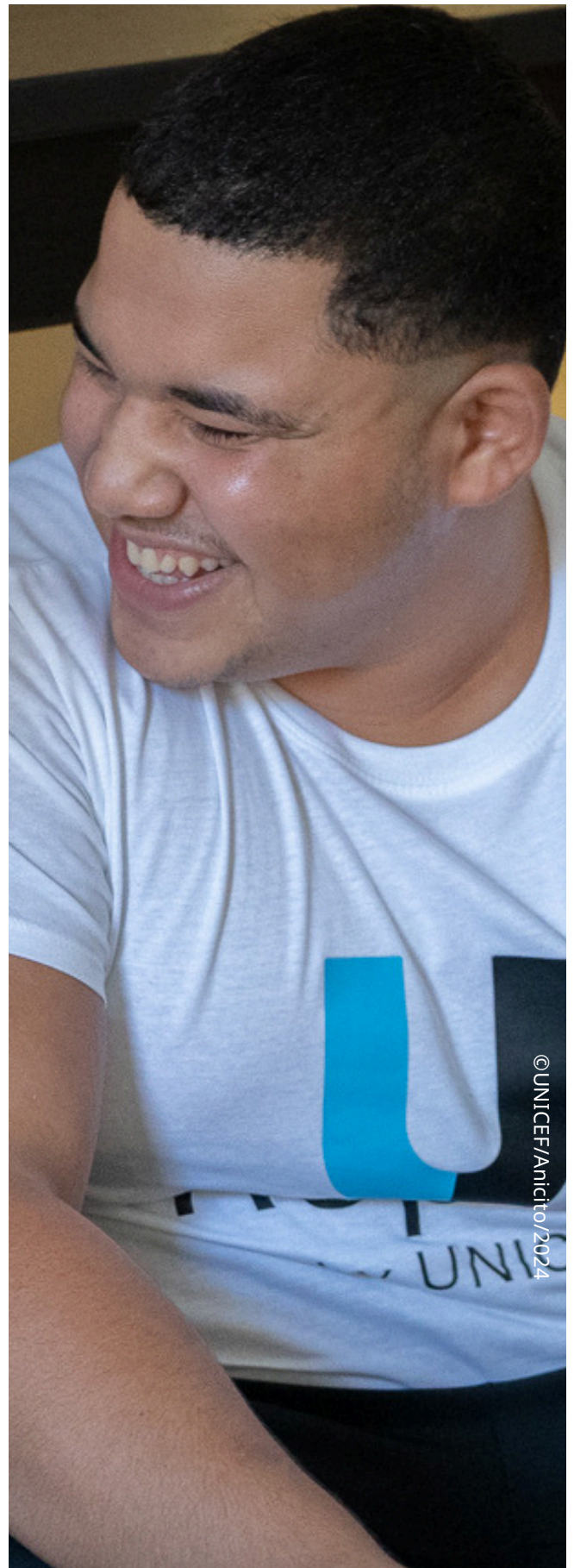
- **UASC opinions, information about rights and services.** The U-Report On The Move platform collects the needs, opinions, and well-being levels of UASC and migrant and refugee youth in Italy, giving voice to their concerns and aspirations to inform UNICEF's interventions. Active in 102 countries, with over 37 million global users, in Italy the platform allows adolescents and youth to identify their needs, anonymously express their opinions on issues of interest, and access key information about their rights and available services via *Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok*. These materials are available in various formats such as live chats, reels, carousel cards, and info pills. All content is documented on the U-Report On The Move website and translated into the seven languages of the platform. In 2024, thanks to psychosocial and recreational activities delivered in person by a UNICEF mobile team at first and second reception facilities across various Italian regions, 5,000 new U-Reporters joined the platform.
- **Countering Discrimination.** The OPS! Campaign focuses on combatting prejudice and intersectional discrimination related to racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and/or ableism. Over the years, the project has added an educational component aimed at young activists fighting discrimination: the OPS! Academy, which has trained a total of 200 people. In 2024, as well as continuing to raise awareness among adolescents and youth about unconscious biases through the OPS! web app, which was used by almost 40,000 people in just one year, including 36,421 adolescents and youth up to 24 years old, UNICEF

also launched the survey "So far, so close" to delve deeper into the perceptions that adolescents and youth in Italy have of their peers with a migration background. The survey involved 1,000 adolescents and youth between 15 and 24 years old, who responded to a questionnaire developed in collaboration with IPSOS-Lattanzio KIBS.

- **Active Participation.** The Youth Advisory Board is the consultative body consisting of young people between 14 and 21 years old, tasked with participating in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the National Action Plan for Children's Rights (PANGI). In 2024, the YAB, whose members represent the categories at highest risk of child poverty and social exclusion (adolescents and young migrants and refugees, those raised outside family care, members of ethnic minorities, and those with disabilities), continued to work in weekly meetings, participating in institutional gatherings, events, and platforms both nationally and internationally, to ensure the inclusion and participation of girls and boys in the European Child Guarantee. The YAB's recommendations regarding mental health and psychosocial well-being for adolescents, the need for a more inclusive school system, and for open and accessible youth spaces, have reached not only relevant institutions but also over 30,000 young people across Italy. The Youth Sounding Board is a group of 15 unaccompanied and separated children and migrant youth aged 15 to 19, formed in 2023 under the Adolescent Wellbeing program. In 2024, the YSB conducted surveys to assess the accessibility of MHPSS services, highlighting challenges faced by migrant youth such as language barriers and difficulties



accessing documents and support services. The group also contributed to the creation of "Ciao come stai? A small guide to mental health and psychosocial wellbeing written WITH and FOR migrant and refugee youth," currently available in Italian and English, and soon online in French, Arabic, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Bengali. At the end of the process, some members joined the Youth Advisory Board to continue the reflections initiated.





"Impronte di Luce", the winning idea by Aya and Ghila for UPSHIFT

"At first, it was difficult to reconcile so many different ideas, but then we learned to work as a team, and that's how we created our company, 'Impronte di Luce'" says Aya, while Ghila next to her recalls: "When they told us we had to create a company, I was shocked and thought, 'We'll never be able to do it, it's impossible.' But we even ended up winning. So, it is hugely satisfying."

Participation and victory at the final public events were a rewarding and formative experience. [...] "Despite the difficulties, we managed to win and learn." says Ghila. The experience with UPSHIFT provided the young people not only with technical knowledge but also with important transversal skills, both life and entrepreneurial skills, which are essential for meaningful personal growth. Aya shares: "I feel more confident now; I can speak in public without feeling anxious." Ghila also confirms: "I used to be unable to speak in front of many people, but now it's very easy." [...]

<https://www.unicef.it/media/un-impronta-per-il-futuro-con-upshift-i-giovani-danno-voce-alla-propria-creativita/>





Protection and Safeguarding of children's rights

- **15,000** children will be reached by quality protection services (including mental health and psychosocial support, legal counselling, and case management), along with improvements in protection standards.
- **27,000** migrant and refugee women and children will have access to risk mitigation, prevention, and/or gender-based violence response interventions through direct actions and online information.
- **600** unaccompanied children and young people will have access to family-based accommodation solutions.

Skills development and participation

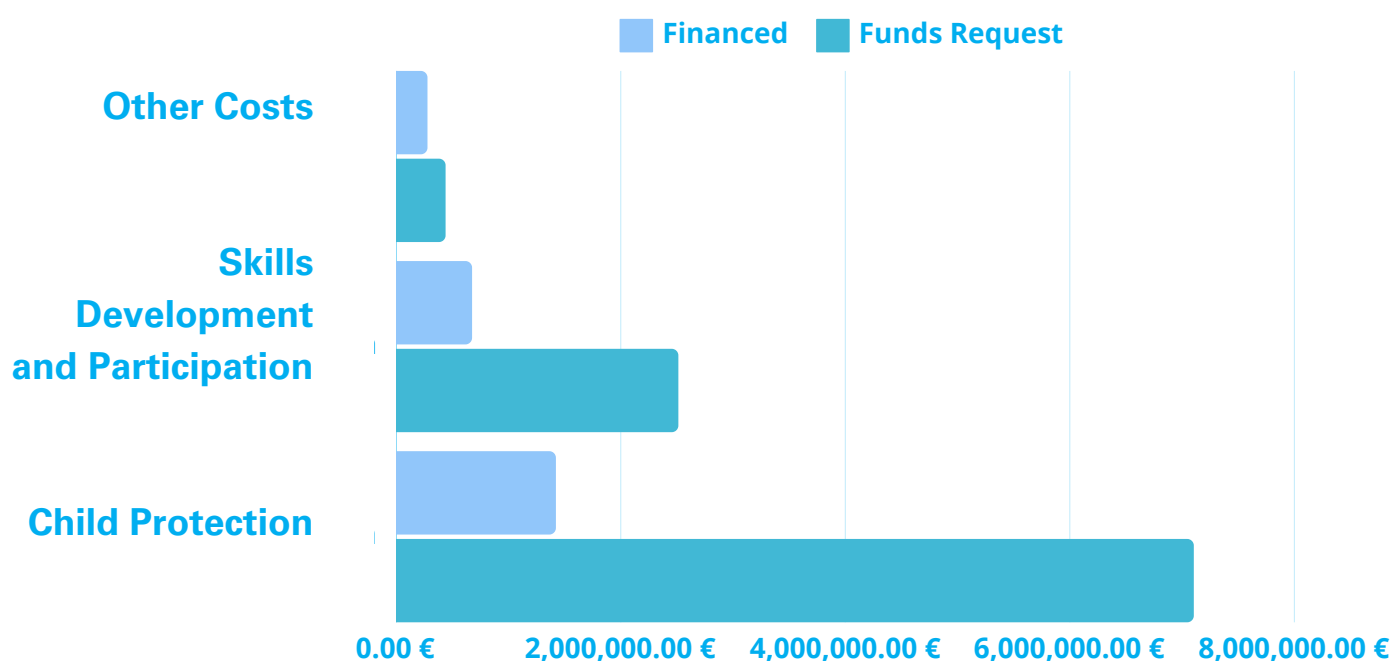
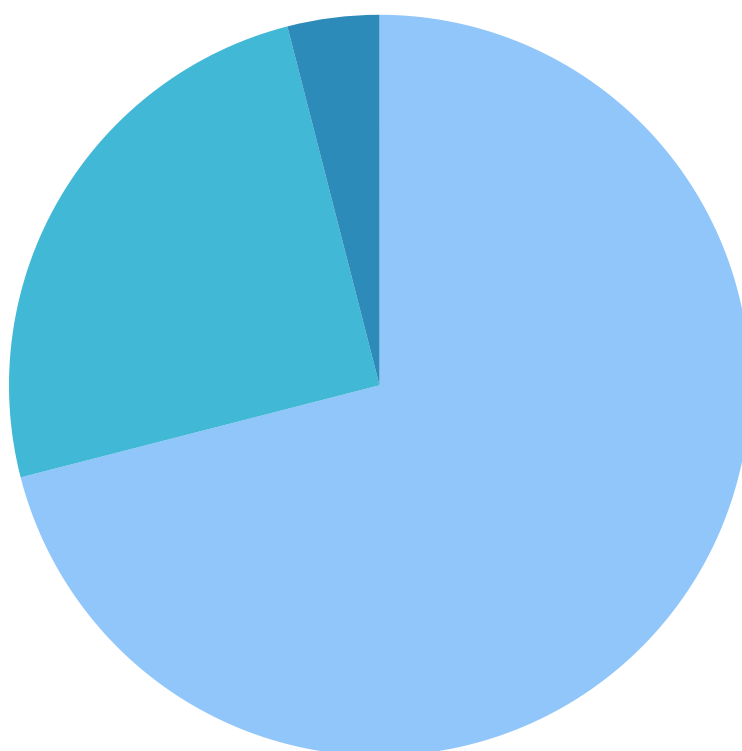
- **1,600** children and adolescents will have access to skills development and career guidance programs.
- **5,400** young people and adolescents will benefit from participation, empowerment, and social inclusion pathways.

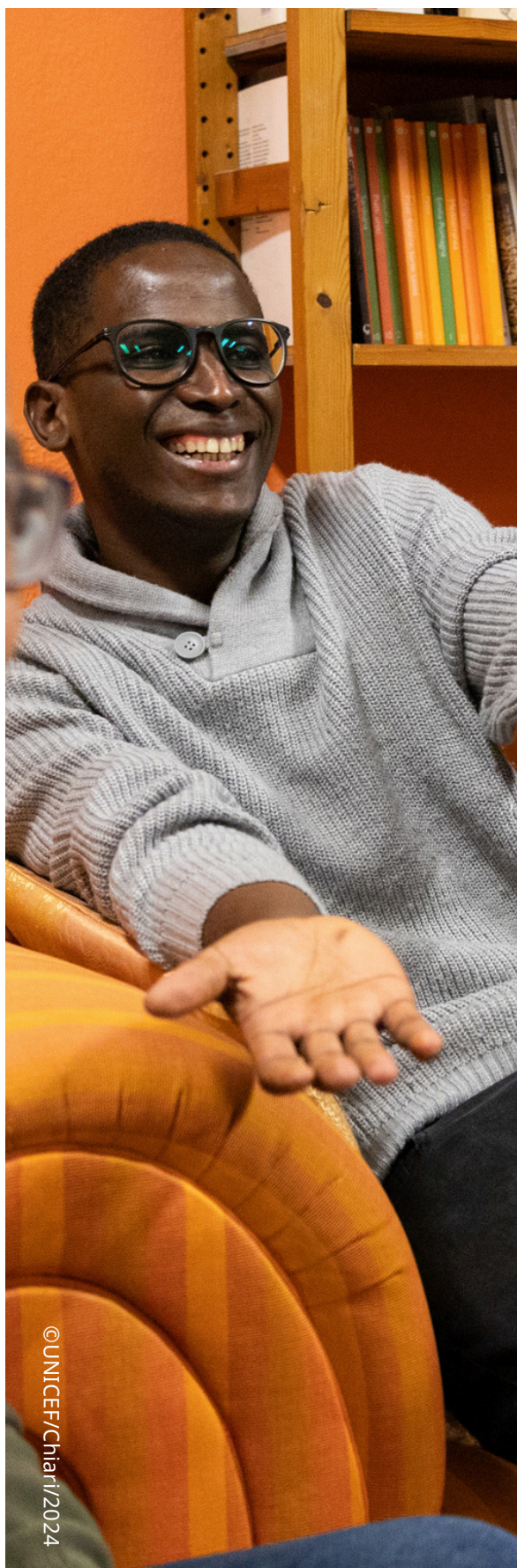
Social and behavioural change

- **245,000** people will be reached with information and messages about prevention and access to services.
- **50,000** people will be engaged in community participation activities.
- **40,000** people will use feedback mechanisms on services.



With an estimated funding requirement of approximately 10 million dollars to adequately address the needs of vulnerable individuals, there remains a financial gap of around 7.6 million dollars.





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Korka, and the meeting that has changed his life

"The first time we met, I didn't know what to expect or who I would find in front of me. I struggled because, since the moment I arrived in Italy until just before this, I had only been with people who had gone through the same experience as me," recalls Korka, a young adult from Guinea. "I was afraid of doing something wrong. But they were kind right away. From then on, I thought okay, I can give it a go."

"He was so shy," smile Marco and Anna, his mentors. "He had trouble speaking. But this was touching. The journey didn't start overnight, it began with meetings to get to know each other. We met in a café, which then became the place where we met two or three times, first alone, then with Carlotta and Niccolò, our two children. We liked Korka straight away."

"They asked me to stay with them, and that's when I felt very light, from then on I started to open up," says Korka.

"We didn't think about the age issue, we didn't have any preconceptions, we didn't have any ideas before meeting Korka," says Marco. "The first thing is to empathise with others. When we decided to do this, we decided to empathise with Korka's life. We wanted to welcome him with the awareness that his was a very different world from ours, and we could give him a chance for redemption from a certain point of view."

<https://www.unicef.it/media/anna-e-marco-sfogliano-le-ultime-foto-dal-cellulare-nell-album-di-famiglia-korka/>

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Further Reading

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