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LIFE IN LIMBO

The consequences of thwarted mobility for refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants in Serbia

September 2017

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The Mixed Migration Platform (MMP) is a joint-NGO initiative providing quality mixed migration-related information for policy, programming and advocacy work, as well as critical information for people on the move. The platform was established by seven partners - ACAPS, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Ground Truth Solutions, Internews, INTERSOS, REACH & Translators Without Borders (TWB) - and acts as an information hub on mixed migration in the region.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



I don't know where I'll be one year from now. Already I've been travelling and waiting for more than a year. Sometimes I feel like I'm crazy...I just want to live happily somewhere with my daughter. And I want to pay back the money I borrowed. I'm just so tired, I'm really so tired. I don't know what tomorrow will bring."¹

As of August 2017, some 69,174 refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants were in situations of limbo across Greece and the Western Balkans.² Their wait – for refugee status determination, relocation, family reunification or some other way to reach protection in their planned destinations across central and northern Europe – is characterised by limited information, uncertainty about the future and a growing sense of hopelessness.

The large majority of those stuck in limbo have been waiting for more than six months – some since before the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement in March 2016. Most intended to seek asylum in countries such as Germany, Sweden and Austria, but successive border closures and tightening EU policies prevented them from reaching their planned destinations. While many of the 69,174 have applied for asylum – especially those in Greece – only a small proportion of those in Serbia have done so,³ hoping that they may still be able to access protection, reunite with family and friends and rebuild their lives in central and northern Europe.

Eighteen months on from the EU-Turkey Statement, people once described as 'on the move' across the Western Balkans are largely immobile. Many came to Europe having fled conflict and insecurity and feel unable to return. Unwilling to stay where they are, yet with limited options to continue their journeys, their wait is becoming intolerable.

Their thwarted mobility has consequences. The situation, needs and perspectives of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants across the Western Balkans are changing. These changes have implications for providers of protection and assistance in both transit countries and countries of origin; for those responsible for integration and support in destination countries; and for EU actors and European states, who are responsible for imposing closed-border policies.

This report demonstrates how the Government of Serbia, with the support of the EU and other international donors, has invested considerable efforts to enhance migration management and tried to provide refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants with decent accommodation conditions and access to basic assistance.

1 Afghan female, 30, Kabul (participant #57).

2 This figure includes Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Cyprus. IOM (2017) [Migration Flows – Europe, Stranded Migrants and Refugees](#). Accessed 5 September 2017.

3 A total of 164 asylum applications were submitted to Serbian authorities between January and August 2017. Source: Serbian Ministry of Interior.

This study examines the role of two important influences on mixed migration in this context.⁴ The first is the availability of support, a crucial factor encouraging and enabling people to make journeys to Europe in the first place. The second is the role of closed-border policies, which intended to prevent irregular migration, but in practice have succeeded in only slowing, rather than stopping irregular movement. The effects of closed-border policies on the vulnerability, needs and intentions of people who intended to seek protection in the EU but are stuck in limbo remain under-explored, as does their effect on integration in the longer term.

The research defines ‘support’ in broad terms, encompassing moral support, financial, and other kinds of assistance. We recognise that support comes with expectations and often conditions. The providers of such support are diverse, including networks of family members, friends, and multiple formal and informal structures encountered at different points along a journey.

Focusing on the situation in Serbia, where over 4,000 people were stranded en route to EU countries due to closed border policies at the time of data collection,⁵ this research places particular focus on the economic aspects of forced migration, the growing phenomenon of indebtedness, and the impacts of thwarted mobility on people’s mental health and ability to cope with daily life ‘in limbo’.

This research draws on 60 qualitative interviews with refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants, primarily from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, who came to Europe to seek protection, but remain ‘stuck in transit’ in Serbia.

While media attention has shifted to the Central and Western Mediterranean routes, this study highlights the situation of a largely forgotten population. Yet, as the EU continues to externalise its approach to border control, such ‘limbo’ situations are likely to become increasingly common. Although drawn from research on the situation in Serbia, many of the key findings below may also be applicable to stranded populations more broadly:

- 1. The psychological strain of limbo is affecting all areas of people’s lives.** Uncertainty and stress is affecting people’s ability to maintain relationships, participate in education or training, establish a routine, stay motivated and even to imagine a future.
- 2. Despite preparation, all interviewees had underestimated the difficulty of the journey and none had prepared for this degree of thwarted mobility.** Most of the interviewees had started their journeys prior to the EU-Turkey Statement and ‘closure’ of the Western Balkans migration route, and were therefore unaware of the closed-border policies that awaited them upon arrival in Serbia. Some of those who required no financial support at the outset were later forced to turn to family and friends to cope with setbacks along the journey and to meet everyday needs in limbo.

4 Throughout this report, the term ‘refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants’ is used to include all persons in mixed migration flows, including asylum seekers, trafficked persons, refugees, and other people on the move. Unlike other MMP reports, ‘asylum seekers’ have been included in this phrase to emphasise their rights and particular vulnerabilities.

5 Fieldwork was conducted from 27 July – 8 August 2017. As of 6 August 2017, UNHCR reported 4,688 refugees, migrants and asylum seekers in Serbia. UNHCR (2017) [Serbia Update, 31 July-6 August 2017](#).

- 3. Uncertainty about the future is crippling families both in Europe and elsewhere.** Most individuals interviewed could not even imagine staying in their current location for another six months. They are determined to continue to countries where they have meaningful links and are reluctant to invest in their current situation until they arrive, especially as they do not know how long they will wait. In the country of origin and elsewhere, prolonged support of others in limbo is often affecting families' ability to meet their own needs.
- 4. People have limited access to trusted information about options for onward movement, which further exacerbates their sense of insecurity.** Legal options for onward movement are limited, while for those who qualify, waits are long. Most participants hoped that their name would be called from a waiting list by Hungarian authorities, allowing them a formal channel through which to cross the border. Limited information about this transit process, including who will qualify and how long it may take, is pushing people towards smuggling, trafficking and other dangerous alternatives.
- 5. Refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants rely on a variety of coping strategies, some of them negative, in order to meet their everyday needs in limbo.** Humanitarian aid goes a long way to meeting basic needs, but some interviewees expressed additional needs. Many people see cash assistance from NGOs as a lifeline to make up for shortfalls in other types of aid. People also borrow money, reduce expenditure on essentials and sell assistance received in order to gain additional resources. Some participants reported hearing about others who have taken on illegal employment outside the site.
- 6. For the growing number of people who borrow money, indebtedness is increasing.** While for many, terms and conditions for repayment remain favourable, personal pressure to repay debt is considerable. Prolonged limbo situations have forced people to rely on their supporters for much longer than initially planned, requiring additional funds to continue their journeys and meet some of their needs. In some cases, people agreed to conditions they later could not meet, leading to a spiral of problems. Family at home are often negatively affected – selling productive assets, borrowing from loan sharks at exploitative rates or spreading the burden among a wider network of family and friends.
- 7. People's lack of investment in their present situation is likely to make future integration more difficult.** As limbo continues, depression and other health problems are worsening, time out of work, school or training is lengthening, and family relationships are becoming increasingly strained. In some cases, short-term thinking is preventing people from accessing critical healthcare and legal processes such as divorcing an abusive partner or securing citizenship for their children. All these factors will increase the burden on services in receiving states in the longer term.

INTRODUCTION



‘The plan is starting to work. Since the agreement took effect, we have seen a sharp decrease in the number [of people] crossing the Aegean from Turkey into Greece... This is a successful deal,’ explained European Union (EU) commission president Jean-Claude Juncker in April 2016, one month after the EU-Turkey Statement came into effect.’⁶

Immediately prior to the EU-Turkey Statement, the so-called ‘Western Balkans route’ had become the primary gateway to Europe for refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants. Early 2016 saw the introduction of a series of increasingly restrictive migration policies, among them the EU-Turkey Statement. These effectively ‘closed’ the Western Balkans route and led to a significant reduction in the number of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants entering Europe, although they failed to stop irregular migration completely.

Since March 2016, thousands of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants continued to arrive in Serbia en route to the EU, but struggled to leave. Access to legal alternatives to continue their journeys beyond Serbia was limited, while tightened security at borders with Croatia, Hungary and Romania made onward movement more difficult than before. The number of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants in Serbia increased by more than 280%, from around 2,000 in March 2016 to over 7,700 by March 2017.⁷ Growing numbers of people were left in limbo – unable to continue to their intended destinations, unwilling to apply for asylum in Serbia, and reluctant to return home to their countries of origin, where many faced active conflict, insecurity and economic hardship.⁸

The Government of Serbia has striven to provide an immediate response to the needs of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants in Serbia. With the support of international donors, various facilities were refurbished and equipped as reception centres, in order to host people, and provide them with access to basic needs.

Under Serbian law, refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants arriving in Serbia must apply for asylum without delay, to avoid being considered liable “for violating the legal entry regime and residing in the country”.⁹ As in other Balkan states, this process consists of two stages:

- First, a foreigner must express the intention to seek asylum in Serbia. After an application is recorded, individuals receive a *certificate of intention to seek asylum*, which allows them to access protection and assistance in reception centres, but does not constitute the initiation of a formal asylum procedure.

6 Jean-Claude Juncker, quoted in Zlatan, E. (2016) “Turkey and EU hail successes of migrant deal” EU Observer, 20 April 2016.

7 UNHCR (2017) [Serbia Daily Update, 18-20 March 2016](#); As of 31 March 2017, IOM estimated that 7,740 refugees and migrants were stranded in Serbia. IOM (2017) [Mixed migration flows in the Mediterranean, compilation of available data and information](#), April 2017.

8 REACH (2016) [Migration to Europe through the Western Balkans](#).

9 [Republic of Serbia National Migration Management Strategy](#), 2009; Article 8, [Law on Asylum](#), Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, 109/2007.

- The second stage consists of a formal asylum application. Submission should take place within 15 days of the expression of intention to seek asylum. According to the 2007 Law (Article 25), any person failing to do so “shall lose the right to reside in the Republic of Serbia if he/she unjustifiably fails to abide by the time limit”.¹⁰

The large majority of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants who officially express an intention to seek asylum in Serbia do not go on to submit a formal asylum application.¹¹ These individuals fall into a legal grey area under Serbian law. In practice, they continue to be allowed to stay in government centres, where they receive services and aid, although there is technically no legal framework governing their status and rights.¹²

Refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants who do not file a formal application for asylum have several options: including applying for family reunification, registering for assisted voluntary return, or waiting for transit to Hungary. The latter is the most popular option, through which people’s names are added to a waiting list, until they are called. ‘The list’ began as an informal document, created by refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants waiting at border crossing points to manage the chaotic procedure, but was later formally adopted by Hungarian authorities.¹³ Names are understood to be selected based on vulnerability criteria and are communicated to Serbian authorities.

Between January and August 2017, a total of 1,912 individuals were formally admitted to Hungary via ‘the list’.¹⁴ According to IOM, a further 150 travelled home through assisted return schemes in the same period, while 164 applied for asylum in Serbia.¹⁵ Together, these individuals represent only a fraction of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants who have passed through Serbia in recent months. Many more continue to wait for solutions, unsure of how long this might take.

This study was motivated by a desire to better understand the factors that affect decision-making in situations of thwarted mobility. It examines how people plan and realise migration journeys in the first place, cope with situations of thwarted mobility, and adapt their intentions and strategies in the face of policies that restrict movement.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that the decision for an individual to move is often taken and financed, at a household level, thus ‘failed migration’ has profound implications not just for those who move, but for other family and community members who stay behind.¹⁶ Despite acknowledging the importance of these support networks, there is limited evidence as to how they function, nor the extent to which friends and family members continue to guide decision-making once journeys are underway.

Similarly, despite a growing body of evidence on ‘transit migration’ – a label under which those caught in limbo are sometimes grouped – the household economies of transit

10 Article 25, [Law on Asylum](#), Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, 109/2007.

11 In 2016, for example, 12,821 individuals registered an intention to seek asylum in Serbia, but less than 5% (574) submitted a formal asylum application. Belgrade Center for Human Rights (2017) [Right to Asylum in the Republic of Serbia 2016](#). Belgrade: Dosije studio.

12 The Republic of Serbia is a party to the United Nations 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and its Constitution provides for a right to asylum. Serbia has established a legal framework in asylum following the adoption of the Law on Asylum in 2007 as well as of various legislative acts, implementing decrees relevant to asylum procedures and reception conditions. A forthcoming revision of the New Foreigners Act is expected to address the situation of people stranded in Serbia but who are unwilling to apply for asylum, but is currently delayed.

13 “Hungary halves number of asylum-seekers accepted daily from ‘the list’” Refugee Info, 31 January 2017.

14 Hungarian Immigration and Asylum Office (IAO) through UNHCR Hungary.

15 IOM (2017) “Today IOM Serbia marks the return of 150 migrants through #AVRR program compared to 49 cases this time last year!” [Twitter] 10 August 2017; and Serbia Ministry of Interior, through UNHCR Serbia.

16 See for example: Fawcett 1989; Massey et al. 1993; Faist 2010; Cohen & Sirkeci 2011; and REACH 2017.

migrants tend to be poorly documented.¹⁷ In contrast, the wealth of literature on refugee livelihoods can provide useful insights into how economies can develop and function in diverse situations of longer-term displacement, including the use of a range of coping strategies to make ends meet, participation in formal and informal labour markets, and the creation of new, often innovative, livelihood opportunities in the face of adversity.¹⁸ Some aspects of refugee livelihoods, however, remain underexplored. Information about the value of savings, debt and remittances are often omitted from livelihood studies altogether, or reported on in a way that prevents meaningful comparisons between contexts and over time.¹⁹ To understand how refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants cope in limbo situations, such information is clearly relevant, yet largely unavailable.

Based on 60 qualitative interviews with refugees, migrants and asylum seekers in Serbia, this study attempts to fill some of these gaps. Drawing on available secondary data to situate and triangulate findings, the study examines the support networks, coping strategies and intentions of Afghans, Iraqis, Syrians and ‘other’ nationalities in Serbia. These nationalities reflect the three largest groups of irregular arrivals to Europe since 2016, as well as the diversity of origins of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants in Serbia.²⁰

The following section describes the methodological approach of the study and provides basic information about participants interviewed. Findings are divided into three sections: the first examines the nature of support received by those who made the journey to Europe, together with the expectations and conditions that accompanied people’s journeys. Section Two focuses on life in limbo in Serbia, looking in particular at people’s coping strategies, as well as their changing relationships and dependence on their supporters. Section Three discusses the effects of limbo on plans, aspirations and future intentions, focusing in particular on the psychological impacts of limbo and discussing the possible implications for integration in the longer term.



Two Afghan children play outside Vranje reception centre, Serbia. This converted motel was opened in May 2017 and is home to some 134 Afghan families. July 2017. Photo by: Megan Passey / DRC

- 17 A good introduction to relevant literature on transit migration is provided by: Collyer, Düvell, and de Haas 2010. See also Gunvor Jónsson (2011) Non-migrant, sedentary, immobile, or ‘left behind’? Reflections on the absence of migration. Oxford: IMI Working Papers Series 2011, No. 39.
- 18 Betts et al. (2017) provides a good review of relevant literature in: Betts et al. (2017) Refugee Economies Forced Displacement and Development. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 19 World Bank & IMPACT (2016) Social Context Analysis of Livelihoods and Social Cohesion Impacts in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq as a Result of the Syria Crisis. Unpublished draft.
- 20 Other nationalities included in this study include 5 Pakistanis, 2 Iranians, 1 Sudanese, 1 Somali and 1 Ghanaian.

METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPANT PROFILES

This research took a qualitative approach, beginning with a review of available secondary data, including academic literature, humanitarian situation updates, needs assessments and reports from national and local media. This was followed by a series of in-depth individual interviews with refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants in Serbia. The decision to conduct individual interviews was made in recognition of the sensitive nature of some of the topics of interest, which can be difficult to discuss in groups. The qualitative approach was used in order to understand *why* and *how* decisions were made, and to capture the narratives linking situation to action.

During the analysis phase, interview data was triangulated with findings from the literature review. In addition, several key informant interviews were conducted with people working closely with affected populations, such as NGO aid workers, which helped to place findings in context. Valuable additional input was gained from discussing preliminary findings with several representatives of authorities and humanitarian stakeholders in Belgrade.

Identification and selection of participants

Primary data was collected from refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants in formal sites in Serbia. At the time of research design, 94% of those who had registered with authorities were accommodated in 18 government-run reception, asylum and transit centres.²¹

Participants were selected from five centres across the country: Presevo, Vranje and Bojanovac in the South; Krnjaca in the centre; and Sombor in the North. The purposive sample was designed to include the top three nationalities arriving in Europe (Afghan, Syrian and Iraqi), as well as other common nationalities among refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants in Serbia, such as Pakistani and Iranian. In addition to nationality, participants were selected in order to allow indicative comparisons between males and females, (unaccompanied) minors and adults, and those travelling independently and with family.

Primary data was collected from 60 participants between 27 July and 8 August 2017. Trained teams of Protection Officers and interpreters conducted semi-structured interviews with selected participants, each lasting 30-60 minutes. They engaged participants in a conversation around five main questions, using prompts to elicit further information if needed (see Annex 2). All participants gave informed consent prior to participating and were free to terminate the interview at any time.

In the large majority of cases, interviews were conducted in the participant's mother tongue (Arabic or Farsi), and where possible, by interviewers and translators of the same gender. Due to a lack of interpreters for Dari, Pashto, Urdu and Kurdish, a small number of interviews were conducted in a second language (English, Arabic or Farsi), if the participant felt comfortable to do so.

²¹ [UNHCR \(2017\) Serbia Update 17-23 July 2017.](#)

Data collection teams were debriefed following each interview, allowing both interviewers and interpreters to check their understanding and contribute additional analysis, as well as to highlight any inconsistencies or concerns related to reliability.

Limitations

Due to the purposive selection of participants from only a small number of reception and accommodation centres in Serbia, data and findings are not generalizable to all refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants residing in Serbia. Instead, the methodological approach provides detailed information on individual experiences, and allows for the observation of general trends among the targeted population, as well as the identification of differences and similarities according to gender, age, nationality, and means of travel.

While the process of questioning, data cleaning, and debriefing helped to triangulate information and identify inconsistencies, it is important to note the following challenges and limitations:

- **Several of the discussion topics were sensitive** – particularly the discussions about money and use of coping strategies. Illegal, harmful or exploitative practices, for example, are likely to have been under-reported, due to fear of the possible consequences of doing so. One approach to mitigate non-response was to ask what *other people* do, which often elicited further details.
- **The effects of recall bias can be significant** when conducting research in situations of prolonged immobility, often preventing participants from remembering the precise details of their journey.²² In the words of a member of the data collection team, “People are starting to lose their sense of time – for all of them, it’s becoming vague and increasingly difficult to remember when and how.” Checking questions were used in many cases to verify answers provided and help pin down timeframes more precisely.
- **Language barriers limited access to certain individuals and population groups**, particularly Pashto, Dari, Urdu and Kurdish speakers. The sample of ‘other’ nationalities was particularly affected, limiting our understanding of these individuals, who represent a growing proportion of those in Serbia.
- **Data was collected from only five of a total of 18 sites.** Even between the selected reception, asylum and transit centres, the conditions, services and atmosphere varied considerably. Any challenges identified are neither exhaustive, nor necessarily applicable to other centres. Findings may also be quite different for the small minority of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants not accommodated in government centres.²³

22 Eleni Coundouriotis “In Flight, The Refugee Experience and Human Rights Narrative” in: Sophia A. McClennen, Alexandra Schultheis (Eds.) (2015) *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Human Rights*. London: Routledge.

23 At the time of data collection, only 6% of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants were reportedly accommodated outside formal sites. UNHCR (2017) [Serbia Update 17-23 July 2017](#). Having expressed the intention to seek asylum in Serbia, individuals must report to their assigned asylum centre within 72 hours, unless they have informed the asylum office of their intention to stay in private accommodation.

Analysis and presentation

Cleaned transcripts were analysed alongside debriefing forms, amounting to two data sources for each interview. Information was then compiled and manually coded around selected indicators and emerging themes.

Due to the loose structure of the interviews, and the sensitive nature of some of the questions, not all participants provided relevant information for every indicator. During the data cleaning process, missing or unreliable responses were flagged and excluded. As a result, the number of interviews from which data is drawn can vary. Where figures are used to present quantitative information, the total number of relevant responses is stated as a footnote. It is important to note that such figures are illustrative and indicative, rather than generalizable, but may still provide useful insights. Quotes are used throughout this report to introduce themes and illustrate findings in participants' own words. All names are pseudonyms, and a full list of interviewees is provided in Annex 1.

Who is in limbo and how did they get there?

Although participants for this study were purposively selected based on nationality, sex and age, basic information about their profiles, prior experience of displacement and journeys is helpful to frame the findings discussed later in the report.

Figure 1: Characteristics of interviewed participants

Interviewed sample	
Nationality	18 Afghans, 17 Iraqis, 15 Syrians, 10 'other' nationalities ²⁴
Sex	34 males 26 females
Method of travel	21 alone 39 with family
Age	11 minors (13-17) 49 adults (18+)

Interviewed participants ranged from 13 to 46 years old, and the average age of interviewed adults was 30. For those travelling with family, the average group comprised of 4.7 individuals, typically including two or three children under the age of ten. Iraqi families were the most likely to be travelling in large groups, with up to nine members, while Syrian family groupings tended to be smaller, with an average of 3.8 individuals.

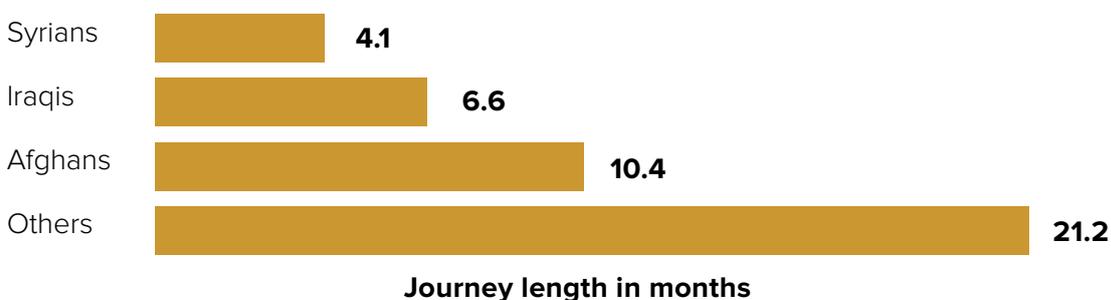
Prior to leaving for Europe, over half of participants had been living in their area of origin. The rest were living as refugees in another country (23%) or were internally displaced (15%). Syrians and Afghans were most likely to have previously experienced cross-border displacement, while Iraqis were the most likely group to report being internally displaced. Several participants had experienced multiple displacements, some spending months in

²⁴ This group consisted of: 5 Pakistanis, 2 Iranians, 1 Somali, 1 Ghanaian and 1 Sudanese.

situations of internal displacement, before fleeing across an international border. In a few cases, people had been displaced in the past, but were living again in their areas of origin when they decided to leave for Europe.

The length of the journey to Serbia ranged from less than one month to more than two years, although in most cases, took several months and involved multiple steps. On average, the longest journeys were recorded by Afghans and by other nationalities. Longer journey times broadly correlate with greater distances travelled, with people of 'other' nationalities beginning their journeys in the most distant locations, such as Pakistan, Sudan, Somalia and Ghana. It should be noted that the 'start' of the journey to Serbia was considered as the last place of habitual residence – for refugees and internally displaced persons, the length of time since leaving home was often significantly longer.

Figure 2: Average length of the journey to Serbia, by nationality ²⁵



Almost half of those interviewed (43%) began their journeys prior to the closure of the Western Balkans route and implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement in March 2016, although a fraction (5%) had already arrived in Serbia. Due to closed-border policies, the large majority entered the country with the assistance of smugglers, entering Serbia via either Bulgaria (47%) or the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (fYRoM) (45%). Small numbers entered through Kosovo, Montenegro or arrived directly by plane.

Participants had spent between six and 26 months in Serbia, with an average stay of nine months. On average, Syrians and Iraqis reported the shortest stays in Serbia (8.6 and 8.4 months respectively), Afghans averaged 10.3 months, and people of other nationalities averaged 12.3 months. Despite spending months in Serbia, many people had moved between reception, asylum and transit centres during this time. Most transfers had been organised by Serbian authorities, although some participants had moved of their own accord.

²⁵ Based on data from all 60 participants.

THE NATURE OF SUPPORT

The large majority of participants included in this study had left countries affected by conflict and insecurity to come to Europe. Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia and Sudan are all among the top ten refugee-producing countries in the world, while conflict in Iraq has caused over 4.6 million people to be displaced, including more than 260,000 across international borders.²⁶ All participants hoped to receive international protection in EU countries, which would enable them to restart their lives, find work and access functioning services. Many had meaningful links with their intended destination, such as the presence of family, friends, diaspora communities and promises of work. Although the search for safety and security was a common preoccupation, people gave a variety of reasons for coming to Europe, consistent with a wealth of recent literature on the motivations of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants travelling to Europe.²⁷

While motivations are clearly important, this study is more concerned with how people move, rather than why. When conflict and insecurity are widespread, many people would like to flee, yet relatively small numbers actually do. For example, a survey of Syrians in late 2015 found that 46% “would leave the country if given the opportunity”, primarily to Europe, while almost as many, 43%, said they would be likely to leave in the next 12 months.²⁸ Although significant numbers did leave their homes in Syria in 2016, only a fraction of those intending to leave for Europe actually did so.

Building on previous research, including a study by the Mixed Migration Platform investigating the formation and development of plans to leave home, we suggest that the availability of ‘support’ may play an important role in overcoming barriers and enabling movement.²⁹

This section seeks to investigate the nature of ‘support’ – considered as a mixture of social and financial resources – that enabled people to begin their journeys.

Other people are instrumental in the decision to move

The decision to leave home and travel elsewhere is rarely taken alone. Other people, including those who do not intend to move, often play an important part in planning and supporting decisions to leave.³⁰ For people in situations usually described as ‘forced’ migration or displacement, choices may be very limited, and information scarce, prejudiced or incomplete, but migration decisions are usually made based on an understanding that what lies ahead is better than what will be left behind.³¹

26 UNHCR (2015) [Global Trends, Forced Displacement in 2015](#). Geneva: UNCHR.

27 Studies of particular relevance to the contemporary migration to Europe include: Cummings, C, Pacitto, J, Lauro, D, & Foresti, M (2015) *Why people move: understanding the drivers and trends of migration to Europe*. London: ODI; and Crawley, H, Düvell, F, Jones, K, McMahon, S & Sigona, N (2016) “Destination Europe? Understanding the dynamics and drivers of Mediterranean migration in 2015”, MEDMIG Final Report.

28 Nekvasil, Nader & Mohamed Younis (2015) “[Nearly Half of Syrians Would Leave Syria if They Could](#)”, Gallup news, 30 November 2015.

29 REACH (2017) [Separated Families: Who stays, who goes and why?](#) Amman: Mixed Migration Platform.

30 See for example: Fawcett (1989); Massey et al. (1993); Faist (2010); Borjas (2007); Cohen & Serkeci (2011).

31 Cohen, J & Serkeci, I (2016) “Migration and Insecurity: rethinking neoliberalism in the neoliberal age” in Carrier, J (Ed.) (2016) *After the Crisis: Anthropological Thought, Neoliberalism and the Aftermath*.



The Taliban approached me and asked me to work with them. They threatened me that if I did not accept their ‘offer’, either there would be a car bomb, I would disappear, or my family would be kidnapped...we decided to go only 24 hours before leaving. I told my wife my plan and she accepted my decision. I also asked the permission of my parents, who agreed that it was the best option. My sister was also in the house at the time and asked if she and her husband could come too. It was very quick.”³²

Among refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants interviewed in Serbia, the decision to leave was commonly described as joint, rather than individual. Decisions tended to be made at family level, influenced not only by members of the immediate family who were physically present at the time, but by others who had already reached intended destinations, or were living as diaspora elsewhere.

Participants indicated that moral support, from immediate family, extended family and friends, was the most common type of support received. Mentioned in the large majority of interviews, moral support took the form of encouragement, reassurance and sometimes promises, for example that others would travel at a later date, when safety and resources allowed.

The nature of financial support

Just under half of the participants in our sample (26 out of 60) reported receiving financial support prior to leaving. For those who did, financial support was provided by immediate family members, such as parents(-in-law), siblings, and grown-up children; followed by members of the extended family such as uncles or cousins; and finally, by friends. For all nationalities, loans were more common than gifts and frequently came from individuals in multiple locations. Although literature suggests that members of the wider community are often mobilised to pay for migration, no participant in our sample mentioned the involvement of wider networks beyond family and friends to finance their journey from the outset.³³ There was evidence, however, that this happened later on, in a small number of cases.

For those who received financial assistance, the reported amount varied considerably, ranging from EUR162 to EUR8,000 per person. This variation reflects how in some cases, the journey was entirely financed with external support, while in others, gifts or loans served only to top up existing funds. For all nationalities, loans were more common than gifts. People generally borrowed much larger amounts of money than they received as gifts.

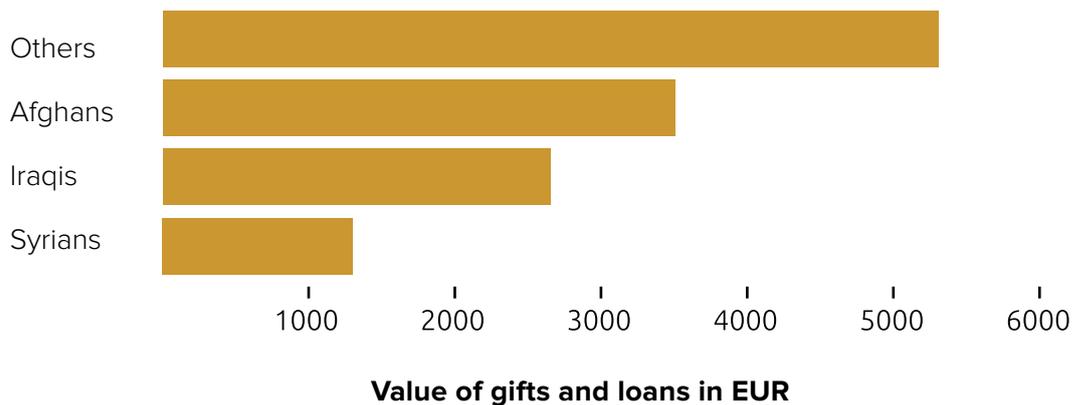
The value of loans and gifts differed significantly by nationality. As shown in Figure 3, those who made the longest journeys tended to receive the largest amounts of financial support. ‘Other nationalities’ and Afghans received the most financial support on average,

³² Afghan male, 28, from Mazar-i-Sherif (participant #36).

³³ Faist, T (2010) “The Crucial Meso-level” in Marco Martiniello, Jan Rath (2010) Selected Studies in International Migration and Immigrant Incorporation. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

while Syrians received the least. In most cases, one family member – usually the head of family – managed finances on behalf of the other family members, leaving that individual responsible for much larger amounts than those shown here. These figures are calculated from a small subset of the sample, as not all those who received gifts or loans wished to disclose the sum.

Figure 3: Average value of support received prior to arrival in Serbia, per person³⁴



The desire for financial independence emerged as a common theme throughout discussions. People avoided asking for financial support when they could afford not to, although some were forced to later on. When people did receive money, they hoped to repay those who had helped them, sometimes even when the support was provided as a gift.

Even for those who did not receive financial support prior to leaving, setbacks during the journey often changed their ability to support themselves. Experiences and violations along the route such as robbery, abandonment by smugglers, injury, apprehension, refoulement, pushbacks, policy changes and border closures all served to oblige people who had not previously required support to ask for it later on, or, as in the example below, to turn to others who had not previously been asked.

Box 1: Changing dependence on others over time

In 2014, Khalid left his home in Mosul, Iraq, when armed groups arrived in the city. He sustained a bullet wound to his leg, which continued to cause him severe pain. He spent a year and a half in Dahuk, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, but his wound did not heal and doctors advised him to travel to Germany for treatment. He financed his journey with his savings and a loan from his father. “Before I came to Serbia – in Iraq, Istanbul and Bulgaria – I used my savings. But Bulgarian police took my last 200 euros as we were crossing the border to Serbia. After this I started asking my friends in Germany for help. They send me money via Western Union. They are ready to do whatever it takes to help me get there.”³⁵

³⁴ Based on data from 20 interviews in which participants received financial support and reported its value.

³⁵ Iraqi male, 32, from Mosul (participant #21). All names have been changed to protect the identity of participants.

Support is more than loans and gifts

While moral support, gifts and loans were most common, participants mentioned several other forms of support, which had helped them along their journeys. Most could be broadly described as “social capital”.³⁶

Some participants received support with the facilitation of journeys, including the organisation of transport, provision of information, sharing of contacts and help with documentation. Others spoke about promises of employment upon arrival, for example from members of the extended family who owned businesses or had contacts.

Others had arranged to receive support along the route. When family members or friends lived in transit countries, they sometimes provided accommodation and practical assistance to those in transit.



It was my uncle who paid the smugglers and arranged everything. He used to own a textile factory in Syria, which he sold to come to Germany. Now he has been there three years. He has refugee status and is in the process of setting up a new factory. There are no conditions, but he expects me to join him in Germany, where he will give me a job.”³⁷

Both in transit and upon arrival in Serbia, the ability to form informal groups was an important source of support and means of coping for many. Usually defined by nationality, language and age, such ‘collectives’, in which people pooled financial resources and food, were most common among some of the most marginalised groups, particularly Pakistanis, providing protection and access to resources.³⁸

As with the availability of financial resources, the greater a person’s access to information, language skills, connections, and support networks, the better their ability to make informed decisions about where they were going and overcome a range of challenges faced en route. Together with gender, family status, religion and social class, such social assets could be mobilised to negotiate with smugglers and other stakeholders; facilitate access to humanitarian aid; and alter other people’s perceptions of them as threatening or vulnerable, depending on the situation.³⁹

Many expectations, few conditions

Due to the joint nature of decision-making, family remaining in the area of origin or living in the planned destination country or elsewhere, tended to share hopes and expectations about the outcome of the journey. Expectations were closely related to people’s reasons for leaving: to reach safety; reunite with family; find work; benefit from required medical treatment; start or continue education; or access documentation.

³⁶ Faist (2010).

³⁷ Syrian male, 30, from Hasekeh (participant #57).

³⁸ Faist (2010).

³⁹ See also: Krystalli, R & Wilson, K (2016) “The Financial Journeys of Refugees: Charting a research agenda – Is corruption a relevant framework?” CDA Perspectives [Blog].

Few participants mentioned conditions imposed by family or friends in relation to their journeys. When they did, almost all related to the repayment of loans. As much as possible, financial support had been provided within family networks and was therefore on advantageous terms to the borrower.⁴⁰ In most cases, supporters had been able to afford their contribution to a family member or friend's journey without going into debt. As a result, terms for the repayment of loans were for the most part generous, based on informal agreements within families. Repayment was generally not expected prior to arrival in the intended destination, and even then, not until the person who migrated had found work.⁴¹

Despite this, many felt “under pressure” to reach their planned destinations and repay money they had received, even when it had been provided as a gift. In some cases, feelings of pressure were exacerbated by regular phone calls with friends and family, while in others, participants explained that pressure was largely self-imposed and seldom discussed.

The expectations and conditions faced by unaccompanied minors and young adults were often different to those of adults and families. As in the example below, the idea of leaving for Europe was sometimes suggested, and paid for, by someone else.⁴²



My uncle suggested that I come to Switzerland to live with him. I like my country and my city at home, but when people asked me ‘Why wouldn’t you go to Switzerland if you could?’ then of course you go.”⁴³

In this and other cases, the person travelling had relied upon a supporter already in Europe to finance and manage the journey. Due to a lack of up-to-date information about policy changes along the route, the supporter had underestimated the difficulties of travel and encouraged travel without fully understanding the risks. While this participant faced no pressure to pay back a loan, he was well aware of the investment that had been made, and was afraid of disappointing his supporters.

Although the minors we spoke with did not always have a decisive role in decision-making, all believed that their parents had wanted the best for them. A study conducted in Serbia by Save the Children and partners reached a similar conclusion, finding that children believed that “a decision on migration was actually the only one their parents could have made to secure better conditions for their lives”, although it recognised that both they and their parents often lacked access to sufficient information about what awaits them on the journey or upon arrival.⁴⁴

40 See also: Wilson K & Krystalli R (2017) Financial Inclusion in Refugee Economies, an essay. The Fletcher School, Tufts University.

41 This was also commonly reported in REACH (2017) Separated Families, Who Stays Who Goes and Why? Amman: Mixed Migration Platform.

42 Echavez, C. et al (2014) Why do children undertake the unaccompanied journey? Motivations for departure to Europe and other industrialised countries from the perspective of children, families and residents of sending communities in Afghanistan, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit & United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

43 Pakistani male, 15, from Gujrat (participant #20).

44 Aleksandra Galonja et al (2013) Children on the move: status and programmes of support and protection of children on the move in the Republic of Serbia. Belgrade: Citizens' Association for Combat against Trafficking in Human Beings and all Forms of Violence against Women, Atina.

LIVING IN LIMBO

Despite awareness of the risks inherent in irregular migration, no participant had envisaged being stuck in Serbia for so long.⁴⁵ The majority explained that they had no savings left and depended on external assistance to meet all or part of their everyday needs.

People staying in government-run reception, asylum and transit centres in Serbia are entitled to assistance to meet their most basic needs. All sites provide shelter, food, toilets, bathing facilities, healthcare and non-food items, such as clothes and toiletries, but the availability and adequacy of such assistance varies, both between sites and over time.⁴⁶ While services are generally provided on site, most refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants are allowed to leave centres during the day to access local shops and other services. However, in over half of the centres, permits are required to move outside, resulting in some limitations on movement. Additionally, in some centres permits are required to leave the site and there are some limitations on time spent outside the centre.



Washing dries in the grounds of Presevo Reception Centre, where a former tobacco factory has been converted into accommodation for families from Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan. July 2017. Photo by: Megan Passey / DRC

45 See for example: Crawley, H, Düvell, F, Jones, K, McMahon, S & Sigona, N (2016) "Destination Europe? Understanding the dynamics and drivers of Mediterranean migration in 2015", MEDMIG Final Report; REACH (2017) Separated Families, Who Stays Who Goes and Why? Amman: Mixed Migration Platform.

46 A comprehensive overview of the type and level assistance provided in each site is available here: UNHCR (2017) [Serbia Center Profiles, July 2017](#).

Figure 4: Location of assessed reception, asylum and transit sites



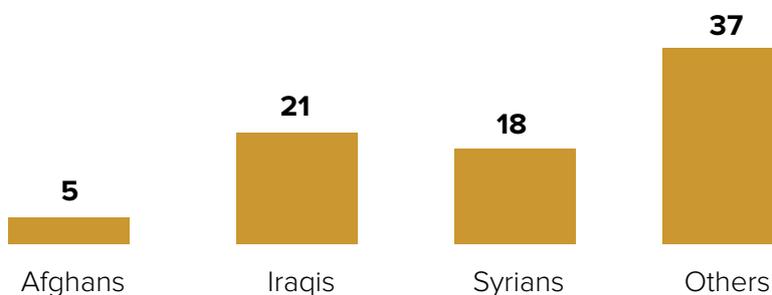
Meeting basic needs

Despite the provision of regular meals and the distribution of non-food items in all centres, all but three participants reported spending additional money to meet some of their needs. The large majority used cash assistance, provided in the form of gift cards, to make such purchases. At the time of writing, cash assistance was available in four of the five assessed sites (all but Sombor) and in 15 of the 18 reception, asylum and transit centres in Serbia. Most participants considered cash assistance provided by NGOs as a vital source of support, while almost a third described it as their only source of income.⁴⁷

After cash cards, financial support from abroad – in the form of gifts or loans from family and friends – was the second most common source of income. For those who received remittances, the quantity and frequency varied significantly. Some participants explained that they could comfortably rely on regular payments, while for others, support arrived only sporadically, amounting to very little. Reported reliance on other sources of income was very limited, but included spending savings, selling assets or assistance and working informally.

Taking into account the total value of cash assistance and all other income sources, weekly incomes range from EUR0 – 100 per person. As shown in Figure 5, reported incomes varied significantly between the different nationalities, but largely mirrored reported weekly expenditure.

Figure 5: Average weekly income per person, by nationality (EUR)⁴⁸



The marked difference between nationalities is likely explained by several factors: Afghans were both the least likely to report receiving money from abroad, and when they did, to receive smaller amounts. In contrast, Iraqis and ‘other’ nationalities received some of the largest amounts from friends and family elsewhere. However, the main explanation for the larger income of ‘others’ is likely necessity – during data collection we encountered several cases in which participants of ‘other’ nationalities were not registered to receive meals and distributions, as they had moved from another site of their own accord, or had avoided a planned move to another site.⁴⁹ As a result, additional financial resources were required.

⁴⁷ At the time of writing, all cash assistance was provided by [Philanthropy](#), the Charitable Fund of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC).

⁴⁸ Based on a total of 48 responses: 13 Afghans, 14 Iraqis, 13 Syrians and 8 Others.

⁴⁹ In mid 2017, authorities made several attempts to relocate single males from Sombor transit centre to other sites. However, many did not want to be moved and hid from authorities in the woods. Since Sombor is located close to the border with Hungary, it is seen as a good location from which to attempt to cross irregularly. In another case, two Syrian minors had moved from Presevo to Krnjaca, where they hoped it would be easier to get in contact with smugglers. Camp management in most sites allows people to come back after an absence of more than 24 hours, but each case is dealt with on an individual basis.

Supplementary food emerged as the single biggest expenditure for almost all participants, often accounting for their entire weekly budget. Meals are regularly provided in all the assessed centres, but most people we interviewed preferred to make their own meals. Participants explained that they preferred to cook for themselves because of cultural preferences, wishing to maintain an adequate intake of fruit and vegetables, pleasing their children, or meeting specific dietary requirements. The latter was reported to be particularly problematic for individuals with medical complaints, who had been advised to follow a specific diet by doctors.

“ We receive two cash cards every month. We rely on this because it is the only source of income we have. Normally we spend around 30 euros a week, but sometimes we spend all 85 euros at once, for example if we need to buy clothes. When we don't have enough money [at the end of the month], we have to rely on food and distributions in the camp. It is very hard not to be able to fulfil the wishes and needs of our children.”⁵⁰

The remainder of the weekly budget was spent on clothing, items for children and hygiene items (soap, shampoo, toothpaste etc.), as well as cigarettes. In one reception centre, several families reported spending a proportion of their weekly budget on hygiene items, explaining that such items had not been distributed for some time. This illustrates the utility of cash assistance in allowing people to compensate for shortfalls when aid is unavailable or delayed. Other types of reported expenditure include transport (public buses and taxis), communications (mobile phone credit and data) and social activities, such as going out for coffee.



A young Iraqi looks out of the window of her family's accommodation in Presevo Reception Centre. While meals are provided by volunteers, many families prefer to cook their own food, growing herbs and drying chili peppers to flavour recipes from home. July 2017. Photo by: Megan Passey / DRC

⁵⁰ Syrian female, 28, from Aleppo (participant #44).

People who do not have money are prepared to do anything

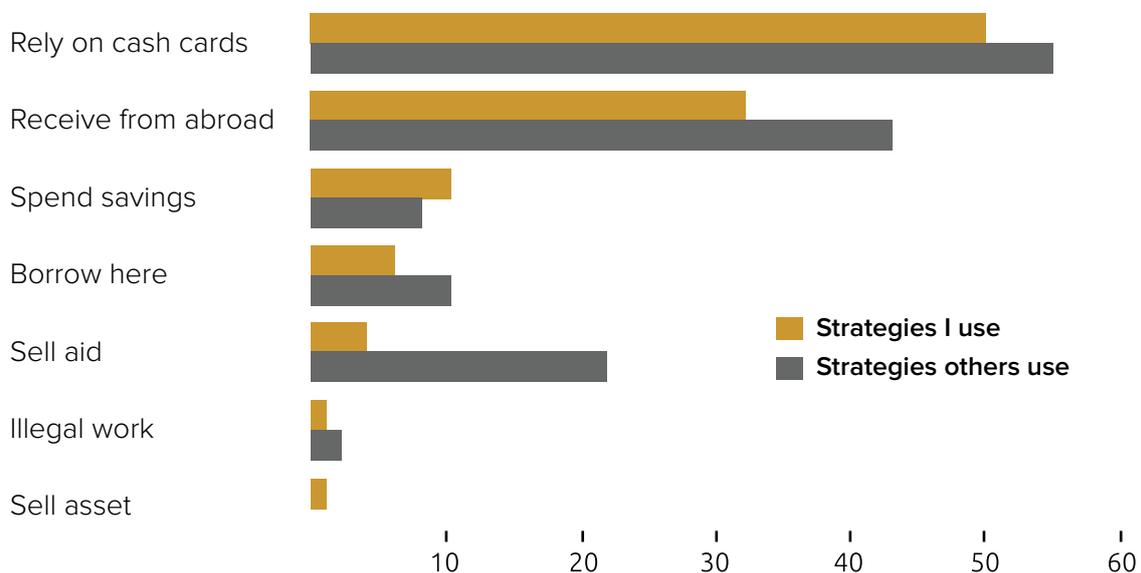


People who don't have money are prepared to do anything. People accept to do all sorts of [illegal] things...I met a family in Belgrade (...) I couldn't do anything to help them, but when I say people will do anything, I mean it.”⁵¹

Over half of interviewed households reported a shortfall at the end of every month or more frequently. When available resources were insufficient to meet some of their needs participants resorted to a range of strategies in order to cope. These varied from simply foregoing the desired items in the short-term and waiting for the next distribution or remittance payment, to finding other means to access resources, such as borrowing from others, selling assets, or resorting to illegal activities, as in the example above.

Participants were asked about what they did to meet their everyday needs, as well as what others did. As can be seen in Figure 6, there is some disparity in responses between 'strategies I use' and 'strategies others use', which is telling of the sensitive nature of some of the activities mentioned.

Figure 6: Frequency of reported coping strategies⁵²



Many of the strategies reported could be considered 'negative', placing people at risk of apprehension, physical harm, or abuse, or reducing a family's capacity to cope in the longer term. In addition to the strategies shown in Figure 6, other common coping strategies include volunteering in the centre in exchange for extra cash cards – for example helping with translation, unloading deliveries, or acting as a community leader – or reducing expenditure on essentials. Less common strategies included taking on

⁵¹ Afghan male, 28, from Mazar-i-Sharif (participant #36).

⁵² Based on responses by all 60 participants.

illegal work outside the reception or asylum centre, for example working on construction sites or in cafes in downtown Belgrade; relying on gifts from others; running errands for people unable to leave the centre; or brokering transactions for other people via Western Union. In the most extreme cases some people were reported to have resorted to illegal activities, such as working for smugglers.⁵³

Box 2: Brokering transactions

For participants receiving money from friends and family elsewhere, Western Union was the most commonly reported means of doing so in Serbia. Transactions were normally arranged directly between sender and receiver by phone or social media, but since a valid passport or photo ID was needed, a third person was often required to broker the transaction. Participants reported relying on others in the site to act as a broker, usually someone of the same nationality, who they trusted. On top of the official transaction fees, this person was normally paid a commission of 10-15%, or provided with some other form of compensation, such as a packet of cigarettes.

While interviewees reported no problems or risks with this system, key informant interviews revealed that issues had been flagged in other sites, including one instance of a woman from outside the reception centre, who had frequently facilitated transactions with refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants, but one day 'disappeared', leaving those expecting money empty-handed.

Support can be a burden, affecting lives elsewhere



Of course it has affected [my family back home] that we haven't reached Germany. They are trying to live but not enjoying their life. Just like us. Only here there are no bombs, but it's still hard.”⁵⁴

When asked whether their current situation had influenced the daily lives of other family members not in Serbia, the majority of participants denied that there was any effect aside from worry. However, many were hesitant to ask for money, or mentioned receiving very small amounts only sporadically, suggesting that it was not always easy for other family members to pull together enough money to send.

53 Taylor, L & Cardi, V (2017) "[Penniless and alone, migrant children in Serbia sell sex to survive](#)". Thomson Reuters Foundation, 16 February 2017.

54 Afghan male, 24, from Wardak (participant #14).

Box 3: Balancing basic needs and unpaid debts

Mona left her home in Dara'a with her husband and two children. They financed the journey by selling animals from their farm and borrowed the rest from her husband's uncle. The uncle did not have enough money and borrowed from others.

"The moneylenders have become impatient as my husband's uncle is unable to return the loan...he is able to meet the basic needs of his family with produce from his farm, but repayment of the loan is putting him under pressure. He faces a risk to his reputation and we can do nothing to help him until we arrive".⁵⁵

Multiple setbacks and prolonged limbo situations had forced refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants to rely on their supporters for much longer than initially planned, often causing problems for those back home. Several participants mentioned that remaining family members had also hoped to travel to Europe, but were unable to do so because they lacked the resources to leave.

In a small number of cases, remaining family members had sold productive assets, such as cars and livestock, borrowed from loan sharks at exploitative rates, or spread the burden of debt among a wider network of family and friends. In the most severe cases, a failure to repay money had resulted in threats to those left behind, disputes and even violence.



I know it's often difficult for my brother and relatives to get together the money to send...when they don't have any savings, there are other ways of getting money. People in Pakistan sell buffalos, motorbikes, this kind of thing. But afterwards, there's no buffalo to sell, no bike. Then we ask other relatives to lend money – it's difficult...the constant asking for money can lead to fighting between family members and with other relatives...it can even lead to shooting."⁵⁶

The example above stands out in several ways. The participant is well aware that his repeated demands are becoming a nuisance for his brother, extended family and even possibly the wider community, and is also aware of some of the practical consequences of his demands on their everyday lives. At the same time, he lacks any alternative options, and therefore continues to ask for support. Other participants showed a more limited awareness of any impact at all on those left behind. This is somewhat surprising considering research which shows that the departure of a family member often had considerable impacts on those 'left behind', causing those who stayed to move into cheaper accommodation, sell assets, or take children out of school to make up for reduced income.⁵⁷ One possible explanation for this discrepancy could be that a mutual desire to reassure, reduce anxiety and ultimately protect others at a distance causes both sides of the family to avoid talking about the challenges they face, leaving those in limbo partly unaware of the extent to which their situation may be affecting others.

55 Syrian female, 20, from Dara'a (participant #45).

56 Pakistani male, 17, from Sialkot. (participant #53).

57 REACH (2017) Separated Families, Who Stays Who Goes and Why? Amman: Mixed Migration Platform.

Deteriorating relationships and pressure to continue

Concerns about the wellbeing of those left behind, worries about the length of the journey, and uncertainty about the future were very common among interviewees. Many participants gave evidence of deteriorating family relationships, for example limiting contact with those to whom they had previously been close; refusing to discuss certain topics; not picking up the phone; or going long periods without any contact at all.



My family is worried since I have been on the road for the last year and a half. My mother calls me every day, crying. Sometimes I don't answer the phone.”⁵⁸

In a small number of cases, relationships had considerably worsened, especially when large sums of money were owed but could not be repaid. A few participants reported having cut off contact with those who had supported them altogether, either to avoid discussions about repayments, or to somehow hold them responsible for the decision to travel to Europe in the first place.

Box 4: Excessive pressure and changing relationships

Taban was working as a translator for a Turkish company in Mogadishu when he started to receive threats from local armed groups. His company provided him with money and a visa to travel to Turkey. “My father put me in touch with my uncle in Norway who said: You should come here – you’ll get a house, a car, things you’ll never believe. He gave me gas!” But Taban’s experience along the journey was very difficult and he became stranded in Greece. “It was terrible....I wanted to come back, but my father said: No, Greece is nothing, you should go forward. My family didn’t allow me to come back...My uncle in Norway destroyed my whole life. We don’t speak any more – I blocked him”.⁵⁹

For unaccompanied minors and young adults like Taban, the opinions of supporters sometimes conflicted with their own ideas about the journey. In such cases, no participant reported being persuaded against his or her will to begin the journey, rather the disagreement occurred during travel, as a result of difficulties or setbacks. Several minors interviewed in this study reported that they had wanted to stop, apply for asylum or turn back, but had been persuaded against it. In such cases, minors reported struggling to adequately explain the difficulties they faced, which made it more difficult for their family members to adjust their expectations. While our sample of minors was only small, participants aged under 18 were more than twice as likely as adults to report feeling under pressure from others to continue their journeys.

In contrast, adults were more likely to speak about changing relationships with those within their travelling group, mentioning increased arguments, tensions, and in a few cases, sexual or gender-based violence.

⁵⁸ Afghan male, 17, from Kabul (participant #17).

⁵⁹ Somali male, 21, from Mogadishu (participant #32).

IMAGINING A FUTURE

Consistent with other studies on migration trajectories, participants' plans and aspirations had been shaped by their experiences throughout the journey.⁶⁰ This final section examines the extent to which past experiences and current limbo have affected peoples' ideas about their future in Europe, and asks whether aspirations and intentions have remained the same.

Fear, uncertainty and psychological strain



Everyone here is stressed and under pressure. They all have psychological problems. We're always talking about our problems.”⁶¹

The inability to continue journeys, coupled with a lack of access to information has resulted in a great deal of uncertainty, affecting every aspect of life in limbo. Many participants – both adults and children – showed signs of psychological distress.

For the majority of participants, prolonged limbo had made the future difficult to imagine. Many were unable to imagine the possibility of staying in Serbia for another six months, although in many interviews it was inappropriate to ask this question, as people were already too upset. When asked where they saw themselves in a year's time, the most common answers were: “I don't know” and “it depends on God's will”. Other answers gave an indication of the extent of people's hopelessness and depression: one Afghan man, who was acting as community leader and appeared very motivated in the rest of his interview simply replied “it's all black”, while a young Afghan woman, who had been a victim of gender-based violence, replied “I'll probably be dead”.

The psychological strain of limbo was all consuming and mentally exhausting, affecting multiple areas of life. Faced with uncertainty about their current situation, participants wavered between hope that they might be able to continue their journeys, and fear that they would be sent back along the migration route.

Many participants struggled to invest themselves in their current location, focussing only on immediate concerns, but not daring to begin processes that may take time to complete.

In one case, parents had turned down medical treatment for their son, who had been offered surgery for a serious heart condition. His father refused the offer of treatment, explaining that the family preferred to wait until they arrived in Austria. The child's mother was very distressed and believes her son to be in imminent danger, but was afraid that starting the treatment now may jeopardise the family's ability to leave Serbia if their names are called on the transit list.

60 Hagen-Zanker & Mallett (2016). Crawley et al (2016).

61 Afghan female, 17, from Kabul (participant #38).

With regards to education and training, the Serbian authorities have made efforts to enrol children at schools in locations around the country. According to the authorities, by the end of September 2017, 603 refugee, asylum seeker and other migrant children were enrolled in public school, 525 of whom have started classes. In some cases, short-term thinking and a refusal to admit that they might stay had discouraged some parents from enrolling children in school, or from sending their children to classes. Similar problems were reported for adult education, such as language lessons or computer classes. Several participants explained that they had lost interest in activities, felt too depressed to participate, or did not see any point in starting something prior to arrival in their planned destination.

Legal processes were often seen in a similar light. Key informants explained how parents were content to register births – and were helped to do so by the Serbian authorities with support from NGO workers – but explained that they lacked the motivation to obtain citizenship for new-born children at their country’s embassy, preferring to deal with it upon arrival. In other cases, participants were afraid to start legal processes at all – for example to prosecute a perpetrator of gender-based violence, for fear it would take too long and prevent them from leaving – or to continue processes once begun, because it was understood to be impossible without entering the asylum system.

For all participants, particularly those suffering from psychological distress, limited access to trusted information was negatively affecting their ability to make informed decisions about their future. Despite the presence of multiple protection actors and the provision of free legal advice by NGOs, several persistent challenges have inhibited the effective transition of information.

First, NGOs can only explain what the asylum process is and how it works, but can provide no certainty about whether or not people’s claims will be accepted, since asylum claims are determined on an individual basis. Confirmation bias – the process by which people are more likely to accept information that supports what they already believe, or would like to – means that refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants simply do not want to hear this sort of ambiguous information, making it harder for them to accept. NGOs are also able to provide information on alternative options, such as applying for asylum in Serbia or accessing assisted voluntary return, but most people are not interested in these options, as evidenced by the low number of applications.⁶²

The most attractive option is the list, controlled by the Hungarian authorities, by which small numbers may transit to Hungary each week. Processes and eligibility criteria are not transparent enough, and several participants expressed their concern about potential corruption.

Other options, such as family reunification, are subject to meeting a range of criteria, including age, relationship and the asylum status of family in a planned destination, for which many participants do not qualify. For those who do, processes are often slow and people are impatient to get on with their lives. Several participants in this and other studies explained that they had entered family reunification or resettlement processes prior to starting their journey to Europe, but became fed up with waiting or lost hope that it would ever happen.⁶³ Once in Serbia, many drop out of formal processes, believing that irregular onward travel would provide a quicker solution to reaching their intended destination.⁶⁴

62 As of 30 August, a total of 153 applications had been filed for asylum in Serbia, while IOM reported having assisted 150 people to return home from Serbia voluntarily.

63 See for example: REACH (2016); and Crawley et al (2016).

64 In 2016, 484 of the 574 formal asylum applications submitted in Serbia (84%) had to be abandoned, as the applicant had left their reception centre, or the country, by the time they were called to interview.

Regardless of an individual's preferred option, a lack of interpreters, particularly for Urdu, Pashto and Dari, can prove an additional barrier to accessing information and advice. As a result, people who struggle to speak Serbian, English, Arabic or Farsi often struggle to access information in a language they can understand. Signage in reception, transit and asylum centres, for example, is sometimes reported as only being written in English, although efforts have been made to provide information in Arabic and Farsi. Some NGOs rely on refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants to translate, but this is problematic when dealing with protection-sensitive issues, as information provided cannot be confidential.

Finally, people access information from multiple sources, which are often contradictory. In such situations trusted sources have greater weight and typically include friends, family, community leaders and other people of the same nationality. Smugglers – often of the same nationality, speaking the same language and selling a quick and attractive solution – are more likely to provide the information people want to hear.

NGO workers described one example of how trusted information channels can be utilised to prevent the spread of rumours and improve access to information. In this example, the management of one reception centre had arranged for community leaders to visit the Hungarian border and see 'the list' for themselves and report back. Although the news they brought was difficult – many learned they would have to wait for more than a year – key informants described how it also brought a sense of relief.

Changing aspirations and intentions

Most participants had fled their areas of origin for fear of persecution, violence, conflict, discrimination or lack of opportunity. Despite the difficulties encountered along the journey and their current thwarted mobility, very few participants felt that the situation back home would be better than before, and therefore had no plans to return. Indeed, some understood that the situation had deteriorated further in their absence, for example hearing from their families: "Don't come back - it's not safe".⁶⁵

For the large majority, their intended destinations remained the same and the presence of friends and family in a planned destination also continued to be a strong motivating factor for that specific location.⁶⁶ Countries in central and northern Europe continued to represent what they hoped would be a "better life" – the possibility to live in safety and security; to find decent work; to access education; receive healthcare for specific illnesses; get documentation; and reunite with friends and family.

Why not stay?

Despite access to some assistance, and reports of kindness from the local population, most participants were not prepared to consider staying in Serbia.

This sentiment was for multiple reasons: first, because it was never their plan, since for almost all participants, "Europe" meant EU countries. Second, many felt ties to specific countries, for example because of family, friends and diaspora communities. Third, prospects in Serbia were seen as limited, due to high unemployment and lower wages

65 Afghan male, 24, from Wardak (participant #14).

66 Crawley, H (2016) "[Beyond 'mass movement': understanding the dynamics of migration into Greece](#)" in Humanitarian Exchange, 67 September 2016.

compared to many EU countries.⁶⁷ Even if they were able to get a job, many felt it would not be possible to adequately provide for their families. Finally, some participants explained that they continued to feel unsafe, and feared deportation.



I feel unsafe and unsettled. I am tired of not being anywhere and I want to settle down. I am waiting to have surgery [for a bomb blast injury] and then I want to get on with my life. My head is full of worries.”⁶⁸

According to a report from the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, the Serbian security forces have prevented a high number of migrants from irregularly entering Serbia between July 2016 and 2017, although only one collective deportation has been documented so far this year.⁶⁹

Why change plans?

Only ten participants reported that their planned destinations had changed since the start of the journey. Most commonly, such changes were from one European country to another. In light of restrictions on movement, small numbers were prepared to try another safe country, provided it was easier to reach. Others remained undecided and open to suggestions.



First we wanted to go to Norway but then we changed our minds. Norway is a safe country, but we got some information that Germany is good and Norway is too far. Maybe France [or] Italy would be possible – anywhere that I am free.”⁷⁰

A small minority of participants had changed their plans completely: two had applied for asylum in Serbia and one had applied for assisted voluntary return.

The two participants who had applied for asylum explained that they had given up on the possibility of moving forward, and intended to stay in Serbia. Both were awaiting the first instance decision on their case, and looked forward to having the right to work – a right afforded after nine months in the asylum system. In the one case of assisted voluntary return, the participant explained that she had given up hope of reaching Germany either legally or otherwise, did not want to stay in Serbia, and was unwilling to continue her stay in uncertainty.

Why continue?



I spent too much time and money, I can't go back. At any rate I must go. I can't go back home without anything.”⁷¹

67 According to the latest figures from the [Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia](#), unemployment among those aged 15-64 stood at 15,2% (as of Q1 2017), while the average gross salary stood at 66,251 RSD or 556 EUR per month (as of July 2017).

68 Syrian female, 28, from Deir-ez-Zor (participant #45).

69 Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (2017) Right to Asylum in the Republic of Serbia in 2016. Belgrade: BCHR.

70 Iranian female, 29, from Karaj (participant #25).

Unwilling to return home or to stay in Serbia, the large majority of participants (50 of the 60 people interviewed) considered onward movement to be their only viable option. Most hoped to continue their journeys via Hungary and were waiting for their names to be called from ‘the list’ to transit to Hungary. Others intended to cross borders irregularly, either with the assistance of smugglers or on their own.

Only those with significant financial resources were able to pay for the services of smugglers – an option described as “out of reach” for those who had exhausted their savings and lacked support of family or friends to provide additional resources.

Those who intended to cross on their own were primarily single males, for whom waiting times were understood to be considerably longer. Some people interviewed – most commonly Pakistanis – explained that they did not qualify to be on the list at all because of their nationality. As they were not Syrian, Iraqi nor Afghan, they felt that there was no legal channel at all through which they could continue their journey and were therefore obliged to cross via their own means.

Many participants had attempted to leave Serbia irregularly in the past, due to frustration with long waiting times, impatience to reach their planned destination, and the perception that they lacked any other alternatives. Several had experienced significant violence at the hands of authorities, and reported having been pushed back without the chance to request asylum.



Police in Hungary are very bad. They are very strict and use sticks and dogs. They are hitting people and taking videos, beating people very badly. Please ask the EU to tell Hungarian authorities not to beat us. They can deport us, but no beating – it’s like we’re not human.”⁷²



Women cross the football pitch in Krnaca. July 2017. Photo by: Megan Passey / DRC

⁷¹ Pakistani male, 34, from Gujranwala (participant #55).

⁷² Pakistani male, 17, from Sialkot (participant #53). This story is consistent with other sources, see for example: UNHCR (2017) [UNHCR concerned about asylum seekers being pushed back from Hungary to Serbia](#).

CONCLUSIONS AND LOOKING FORWARD

This research has demonstrated how closed-border policies in the Western Balkans have had devastating effects for those in 'limbo' in Serbia, as well as on their families and supporters.

Participants in this study fled persecution, conflict, insecurity and a lack of opportunity in their countries of origin. Without legal pathways to access humanitarian protection in Europe, they chose irregular migration – risking their lives at the hands of smugglers for want of other options. Now in Serbia, the large majority do not consider themselves to have access to a durable solution to their displacement. Waiting on the fringes of Europe, they aspire to reach a country with which they have meaningful links. Access to family, friends, diaspora communities, functioning services and opportunities to earn enough money to support their families are all considered important, yet limited legal options, slow processes and limited availability of trusted information, have left people in mental limbo, as well as physically immobile.

For those lacking assets to undertake migration journeys by themselves, the availability of external support was crucial. They had mobilised social and financial capital throughout the course of journeys, allowing them to overcome difficult situations, respond to shocks and protect themselves in the face of adversity.

Prolonged immobility in Serbia has eroded people's financial and social capital, exhausting savings, stretching support networks, and often worsening relationships with supporters. Both people in transit and others elsewhere are affected. Those in wait face growing levels of indebtedness, while family and friends elsewhere are becoming more vulnerable, especially at home.

The psychological strain of limbo is affecting all areas of life, resulting in short-term decision-making, a lack of motivation and growing sense of hopelessness among those in limbo. Many adults and children are not taking up available opportunities for education, training and healthcare in Serbia, because of their distress and uncertainty about the future.

Limited access to information about future options – particularly 'the list' and the transit process to Hungary – is similarly exacerbating people's sense of insecurity and pushing them to consider dangerous alternatives for onward travel, including smuggling.

People's lack of investment in their present situation is likely to make future integration more difficult, be it in Serbia or elsewhere. As limbo continues, depression and other health problems will likely worsen, time out of work, school or training will lengthen, and family relationships risk becoming increasingly strained. All these factors will increase burden on services in receiving states in the longer term.

This qualitative study raised several important issues, contributing to available evidence about the nature of support networks, dependency, and the multiple impacts of life in limbo. It also raised significant questions, which further research will be required to answer. In particular, there is a need to better understand the impacts of limbo on mental

health, both now and in the longer term. Further research is also required to determine the long-term impact of 'limbo' on refugees' ability to integrate in their final destinations, representing an important area for future study.

The situation in Serbia has many parallels with other countries on the fringes of Europe, where thousands of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants wait in limbo. Irregular movement has not stopped since the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement and the 'closure' of the Western Balkans route. Despite tightening restrictions people are continuing to make dangerous journeys, and will keep doing so in order to access protection in Europe. Efforts to improve the availability of safe, legal alternatives to irregular migration are sorely needed. Once in place, information about such options needs to be carefully disseminated in order to reach all those in need of international protection. A coordinated approach by all stakeholders is required to ensure people have access to safe and legal alternatives before they are forced to embark upon dangerous journeys, as well as en route.

Looking forward...to EU policy makers:

- 1. Do more to address situations in which refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants face violent pushbacks and are routinely denied access to asylum processes in EU countries.** Collective expulsions to Serbia from neighbouring countries are illegal and contravene EU and international law. The EU should ensure that all countries respect human rights and abstain from refoulement and violent treatment of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants.
- 2. Increase access to safe and legal alternatives to irregular migration for all of those in limbo, as well as those who have not yet left home.** Irregular movement is a last resort, often attempted in desperation only after alternatives have failed. However, failure to provide safe alternatives and a paucity of trusted information about the few available options has caused thousands of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants to use irregular pathways to their planned destinations instead, exposing them to physical harm and exploitation. The lack of accessible migration pathways, including for education and unskilled workers, is creating an additional and unnecessary burden on asylum systems in transit and receiving countries.

Looking forward...for people in limbo:

We suggest the following to stakeholders working with refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants in both Europe and countries of origin:

- 1. Strengthen access to clear and accessible information about rights and options and enhance provision of translation service.** Limited access to trusted information is encouraging short-term thinking and incentivising people to use smugglers or other dangerous alternatives to continue their journeys to central and northern Europe. Providing trusted information would allow people to make informed decisions with a longer-term perspective; enable them to make use of their time in limbo; and begin to plan and prepare for their futures. Information about the 'list' prepared by Hungarian authorities might include details of eligibility, estimated waiting times, and next steps once accepted."
- 2. Enhanced efforts to provide harmonised protection and assistance services in reception centres.** This includes aligning the provision of cash assistance,

volunteering opportunities, non-food items, education and livelihoods programming, with the population of each site and the capacity to deliver. All people should be offered psychosocial assistance in order to cope with the stresses of life in limbo. Parallel efforts to enhance the active participation of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants in the running of centres should be promoted. Further, motivating people to have a greater say in the selection of activities on offer, meal planning, and general improvements, would not only increase their sense of agency, but might pave the way for more innovative solutions.

3. **Encourage initiatives that enhance people's skills, knowledge and livelihoods, to prevent a resort to negative coping strategies.** Livelihoods interventions such as the vegetable gardens started in Kikinda and other sites, represent a good example of such an initiative, enabling self-sufficiency, increasing choice, and reducing household expenditure on food.⁷³
4. **Assist vulnerable people in countries of origin who incurred debt to enable family members to seek international protection in Europe through tailored support.** Measures such as the inclusion of migration-related indicators in vulnerability criteria may help those most in need to reach available support and avoid entering into a spiral of debt.

Looking forward...to academics, researchers and think tanks:

1. **Conduct further research to better understand the context for refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants in both Serbia and other limbo situations. Recommended areas for further research include:**
 - The long-term effects of living in limbo on people's ability to integrate into a new society.
 - The long-term and short-term impacts of limbo on the mental health of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants.
 - The viability of, and possibilities for, alternative legal pathways to Europe.

⁷³ In a few sites, refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants have been provided with land in which to grow vegetables, providing them access to an additional source of fresh produce.

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ANNEX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Form ID	Country of origin	Sex	Age	Location of Interview
1	Syria	F	33	Presevo
2	Iraq	M	44	Presevo
3	Syria	M	20	Presevo
4	Syria	F	35	Presevo
5	Iraq	F	41	Presevo
6	Syria	M	24	Presevo
7	Iraq	M	13	Presevo
8	Iraq	M	40	Presevo
9	Iraq	M	25	Presevo
10	Iraq	M	40	Presevo
11	Syria	M	33	Presevo
12	Syria	M	30	Presevo
13	Afghanistan	M	23	Presevo
14	Afghanistan	M	24	Presevo
15	Afghanistan	F	23	Presevo
16	Pakistan	M	17	Presevo
17	Afghanistan	M	17	Presevo
18	Afghanistan	F	18	Presevo
19	Iran	F	30	Presevo
20	Pakistan	M	15	Presevo
21	Iraq	M	32	Krnjaca
22	Iraq	M	25	Krnjaca
23	Syria	M	39	Krnjaca
24	Syria	M	25	Krnjaca
25	Iran	F	29	Krnjaca
26	Afghanistan	M	26	Krnjaca
27	Syria	F	20	Krnjaca
28	Sudan	M	46	Krnjaca
29	Ghana	F	20	Krnjaca
30	Iraq	M	17	Krnjaca
31	Iraq	F	20	Krnjaca
32	Somalia	M	21	Krnjaca
33	Afghanistan	F	25	Krnjaca
34	Afghanistan	M	17	Krnjaca
35	Afghanistan	M	25	Krnjaca
36	Afghanistan	M	28	Vranje
37	Afghanistan	F	35	Vranje
38	Afghanistan	F	17	Vranje

39	Iraq	F	40	Bujanovac
40	Iraq	F	40	Bujanovac
41	Iraq	F	35	Bujanovac
42	Iraq	F	28	Bujanovac
43	Syria	F	36	Bujanovac
44	Syria	F	28	Bujanovac
45	Syria	F	28	Bujanovac
46	Syria	F	27	Bujanovac
47	Afghanistan	F	30	Vranje
48	Afghanistan	F	38	Vranje
49	Afghanistan	M	42	Sombor
50	Iraq	F	33	Sombor
51	Iraq	F	23	Sombor
52	Afghanistan	F	14	Sombor
53	Pakistan	M	17	Sombor
54	Afghanistan	M	15	Sombor
55	Pakistan	M	34	Sombor
56	Syria	M	19	Sombor
57	Syria	M	30	Sombor
58	Iraq	M	35	Sombor
59	Pakistan	M	35	Sombor
60	Afghanistan	M	30	Sombor

ANNEX 2: QUESTIONING ROUTE

Household Economies and Coping Strategies Questioning Route

V4 21 July 2017

This questionnaire is intended for individual interviews with refugees/migrants/asylum seekers in asylum, reception and transit centres in Serbia. It is part of a study conducted by DRC and the Mixed Migration Platform, which aims to understand how family and friends support people's decision to travel to Europe, and how the inability to reach an intended destination affects people currently in Serbia, as well as others who supported their journey.

This is a qualitative study, based on 60 semi-structured, individual interviews. The primary focus of this research is on understanding the coping strategies currently used by refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, with a view to improving programming to support the most vulnerable. It also examines how people's relationships, future aspirations and intentions have changed since leaving home.

A. Basic information and selection criteria

Please fill in this section before the interview begins

Form ID:

Interviewer name:

Participant gender: Woman Man

Participant nationality: Afghan Iraqi Syrian Other

Location of interview (reception centre name):

Date of interview (dd/mm/yyyy):

B. Introduction and informed consent

Please read this section to the participant

Hello, my name is _____ and I work for a humanitarian organisation called the Danish Refugee Council.

I would like to speak to you today because we are conducting a survey of people in the reception centres in Serbia.

The interview will last 30-40 minutes. It aims to better understand how family and friends support people's decision to travel to Europe, and how the inability to reach an intended destination affects like you in Serbia, as well as others who helped to finance their journey.

The interview is completely confidential and the answers you give will have no impact on any assistance you may receive or any services you may access. We guarantee that the information we gather data will be properly processed, managed and protected in accordance with legal frameworks on personal data protection.

We are interested in hearing about your experiences in order to better understand your challenges, concerns and aspirations. When you answer these questions, please answer honestly and give as much detail as you can. If at any point you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer the question and can move on to the next one. You can also stop or pause the interview at any time.

Before we start, do you confirm that you agree to take part in the interview? Yes No

If the person agrees, please continue with the interview. If not, thank them for their time.

Is it ok if we record this interview? This is to help us record accurately what you say. Yes No

C. Participant profile

Age:

Place of origin? *List town/city, country*

Before you started your journey to Europe, were you an IDP or Refugee? IDP Refuge No

If IDP or refugee, where were you living? *List town/city, country*

When did you start your journey to Europe? (*mm/yyyy*)

When did you arrive in Serbia? (*mm/yyyy*)

From where did you enter Serbia? Bulgaria FYRoM Other _____

Are you travelling alone or with the family? Alone Family

If with family, with whom? *List relationship and ages*

Was it an individual or a joint decision to travel to Europe? Individual Joint

Did you receive support from anyone (eg. friends, family) to come to Europe? Yes No

Did you borrow money in order to finance the journey to Europe? Yes No

If yes, how much?

If no, please skip straight to question 2.

D. Open questions

The following questions should prompt an open conversation with the participant. Use prompts as needed to guide the discussion.

1. Can you tell me about who was involved in the decision for you to travel to Europe and how they supported your journey?

Prompts:

- What was your intended destination in Europe? Why?
- Who supported the journey? *List all.*
- What sort of support did they provide and when? (*eg. loan / gift / sale of assets etc.*) *As much as possible, note how much and from whom.*
- Were there any expectations or conditions related to the support they provided?

2. Here in Serbia, how do you manage to meet your basic needs and access the services you need?

Prompts:

- How often do you need to buy food, clothes, medicines and other essentials? *If possible, ask / calculate how much they spend on these in an average week. Think about ranking expenditure from biggest to smallest.*
- How do you manage to pay for them? (*eg. spend savings / work informally / receive money via Western Union / borrow / beg / sell assistance, etc.*) *If possible, note how often these strategies are employed, by whom, and how much money is earned.*
- Are there any risks as a result of doing this? If so, what? *For families, think about **who** is at risk.*

- d. Are there ever times when you don't have enough money to meet your basic needs? If so, how often?
- e. When other people don't have enough money to meet their needs, what do they do?
- f. Do they face any risks as a result of this? If so, what?
- g. Who are the people in this location who struggle most to meet their needs?

Note: for those people who were not supported to travel to Europe, now skip to question 5.

3. Can you tell me about any changes to your relationships with the people who supported you since you left for Europe?

Prompts:

- a. Have your relationships with the people who supported your journey changed? If so, how?
- b. Are you required to support others who are not in Serbia? (*eg. family/friends, debt repayments*)
How do you do this and how often?

4. Can you tell me about the current situation of the people who supported your journey to Europe? Has your experience had any effect on them? If so, how?

Prompts:

- a. How do the people who supported you to make the journey manage to meet their basic needs? (*eg. food, water, healthcare, education, housing, livelihoods etc.*)
- b. How has the fact that you have not yet reached your intended destination affected them?
- c. When they don't have enough money to meet their basic needs, what do they do? *Who does this and how often?*
- d. What are the risks they face as a result of these coping strategies?
- e. Have their aspirations and intentions changed as a result of your experience? If so, how?

5. Have your aspirations and intentions changed as a result of your current situation? If so, how?

Prompts:

- a. If you have to stay here another six months, would your intentions be any different? If so, how?
- b. Where do you see yourself one year from now?
- c. If you had the opportunity to work in Serbia, would you take it?
If **yes**, what kind of work would you like to do?
- d. Would you need any training or other support to do this? If so, what?

End of interview

This is the end of the interview. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about before we finish, or do you have any questions for me?

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today – we really appreciate your attention and support.

