



**At a crossroads  
Unaccompanied and separated  
children in their transition  
to adulthood in Italy**

**Research questions and methodology**

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# Research objectives

Analyze the transition to adulthood of UASC in Italy

Provide empirical evidence of factors that facilitate or constrain this transition

Impact of **legal status** on the transition to adulthood

Access to **education**, vocational and on-the-job training

Access to the **job market** and the risks related to informal labour and **exploitation**

Access to adequate **housing solutions**

The **role of formal and informal relationships**

Relationship with **families of origin** and the possibilities of family reunification

Experiences with **volunteer guardians**

The risk of **onward movements**

# Description of the sample

185 UASC and former UASC

Lombardy 55

Latium 52

Sicily 78

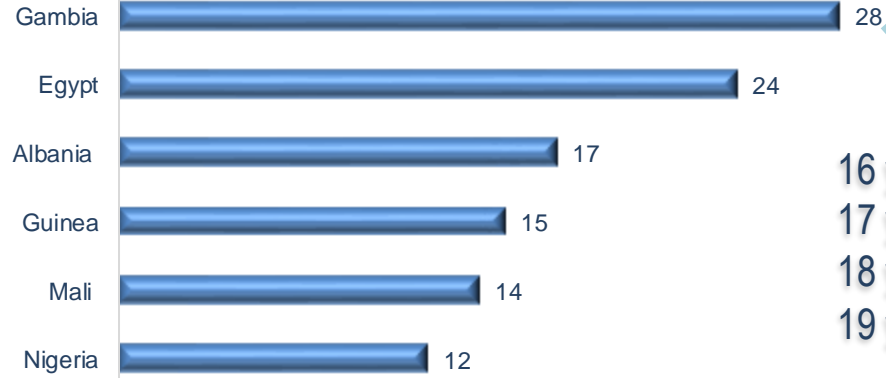
Institutional 13

55 Key Informants

Social 33

Ministries and UN agencies 9

## First UASC nationality



16 yrs – 14%  
 17 yrs – 27%  
 18 yrs – 20%  
 19 yrs – 16%

166 male  
 19 female

48	residence permit for UASC
9	continued protection by social services until 21 yrs ( <i>proseguo amministrativo</i> )
17	international protection
28	humanitarian protection
17	permit for special cases
22	applied for asylum

# Methodological approach and research tools

Mixed methods

Quantitative technique

Secondary data on demographic characteristics and conditions linked to legal status

Questionnaire addressed to 39 Adult Learning Centers (CPIAs)

Two *U-Report on the Move* polls to collect opinions of UASC on their education and training pathways and internship experiences

Qualitative technique

Biographical interviews and FGDs with UASC and former UASC

Interviews with key social and institutional informants

Desk review

Three case studies (1 x each region) to identify «good practices»

# Peer research approach

**10 Former  
UASC**

Training on  
methods for  
conducting  
interviews

- comfort of respondents
- peer-to-peer relationships
- lower level of power imbalance
- similar experience
- emotional proximity



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**Research results**

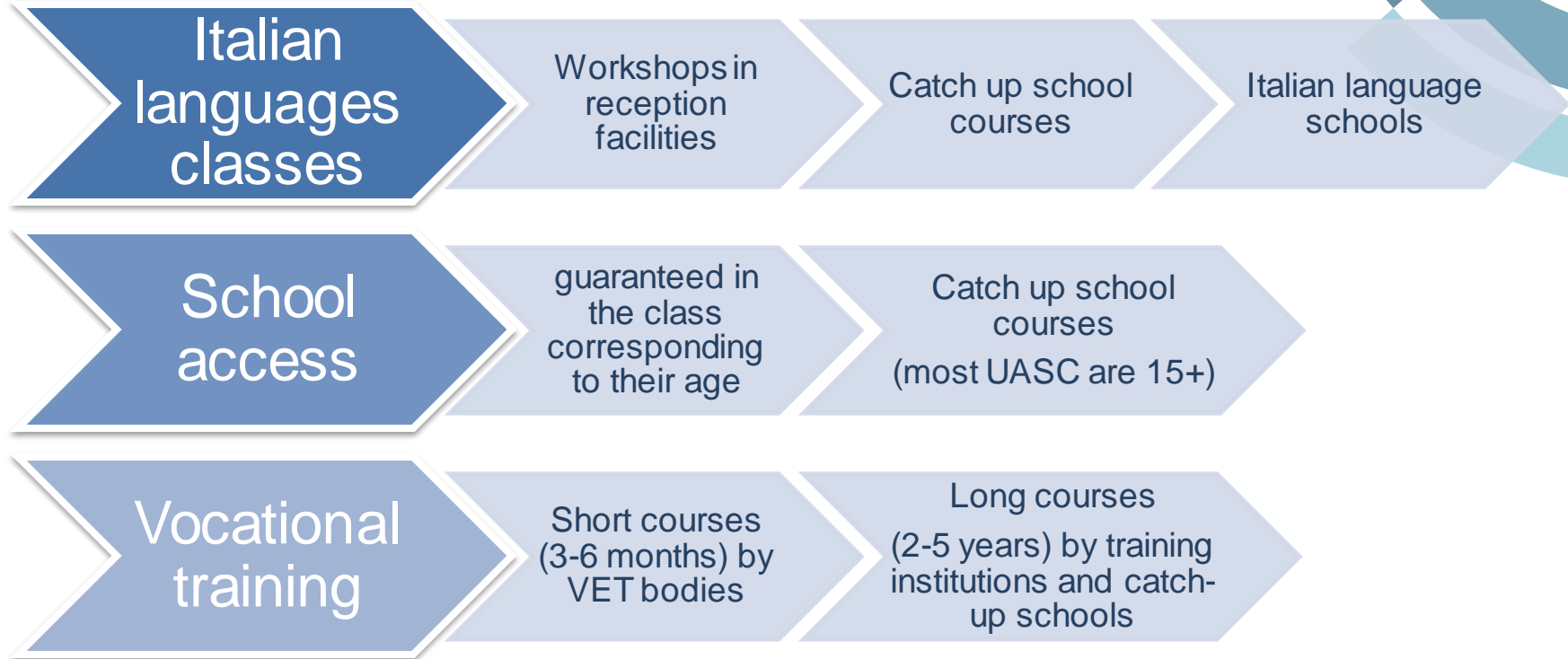
**Sarah Martelli**



## FACTORS FACILITATING UASC TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

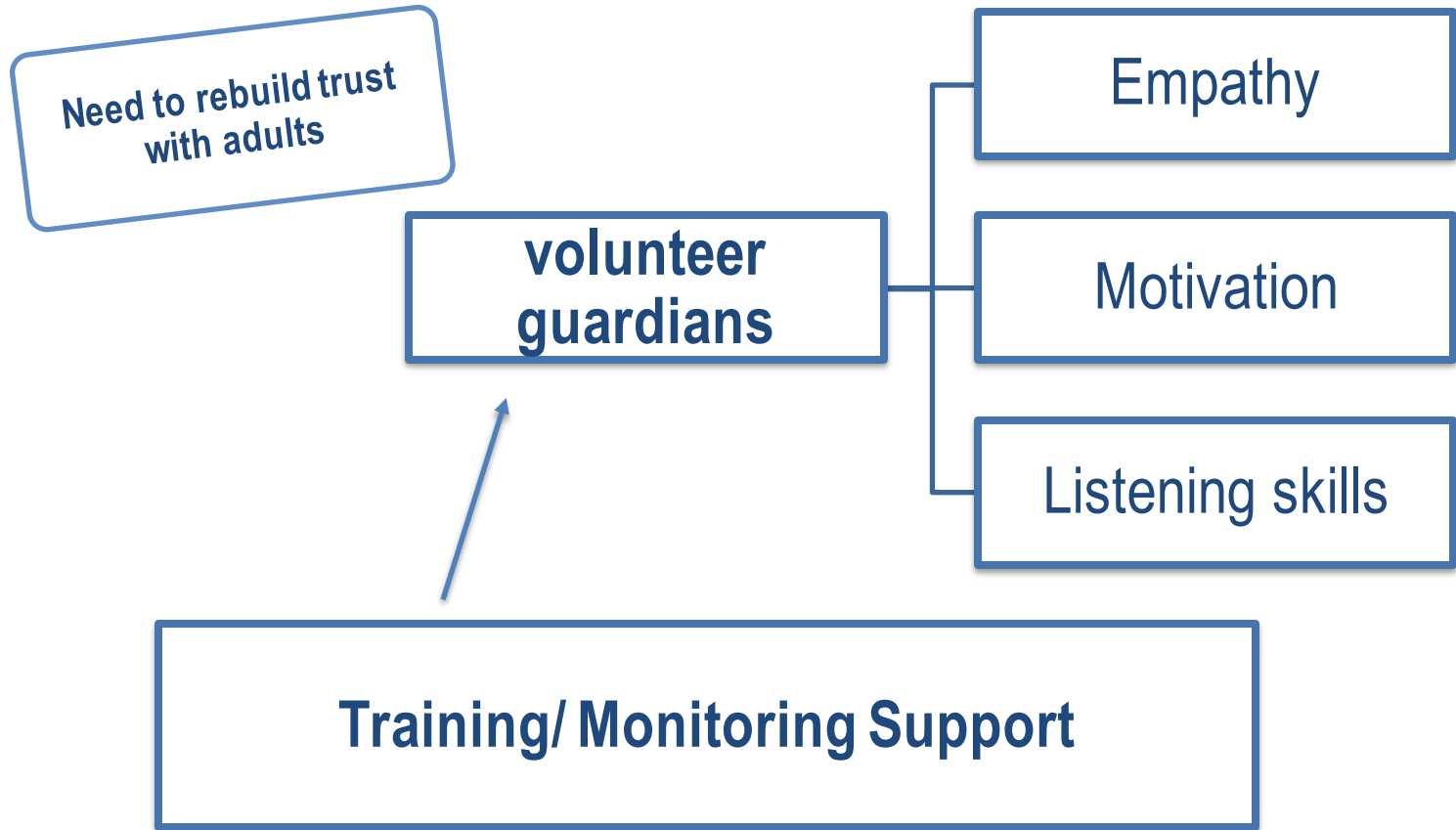
- **Legislation:** with the Law 47/2017, Italy has an advanced legal framework on the recognition of UASC's rights and their protection;
- **Reception:** the possibility of social inclusion and of overcoming past traumas and problems is closely linked to the reception experience, which can potentially play a positive role, but it is strongly influenced by the local context;
- **Relations:** formal and informal relationships, both with adults and peers, represent an important support for UASC and former UASC. In particular, the role of educators in the reception facility and of volunteer guardians is acknowledged by UASC as crucial;
- **Education:** school and vocational training are acknowledged by UASC and former UASC as fundamental;
- **Home:** importance of transitory solutions emerges, such as family-related hosting or of supervised semi-independent living in the achievement of independent living

# Education and training pathways

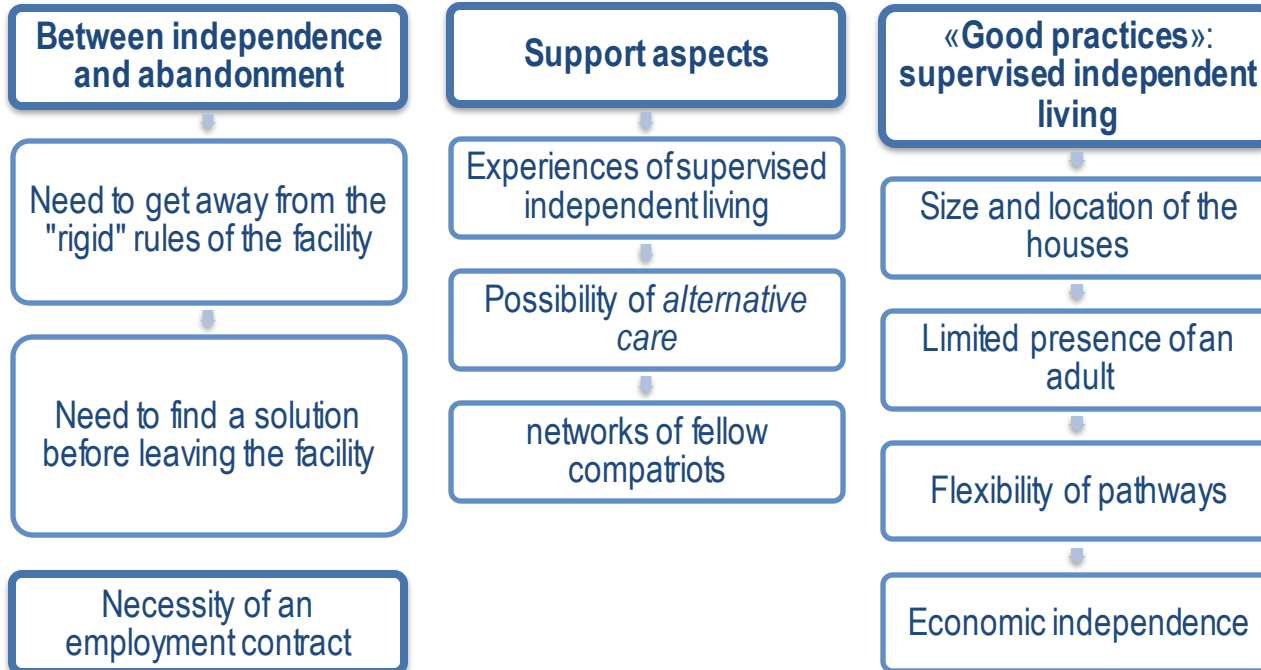




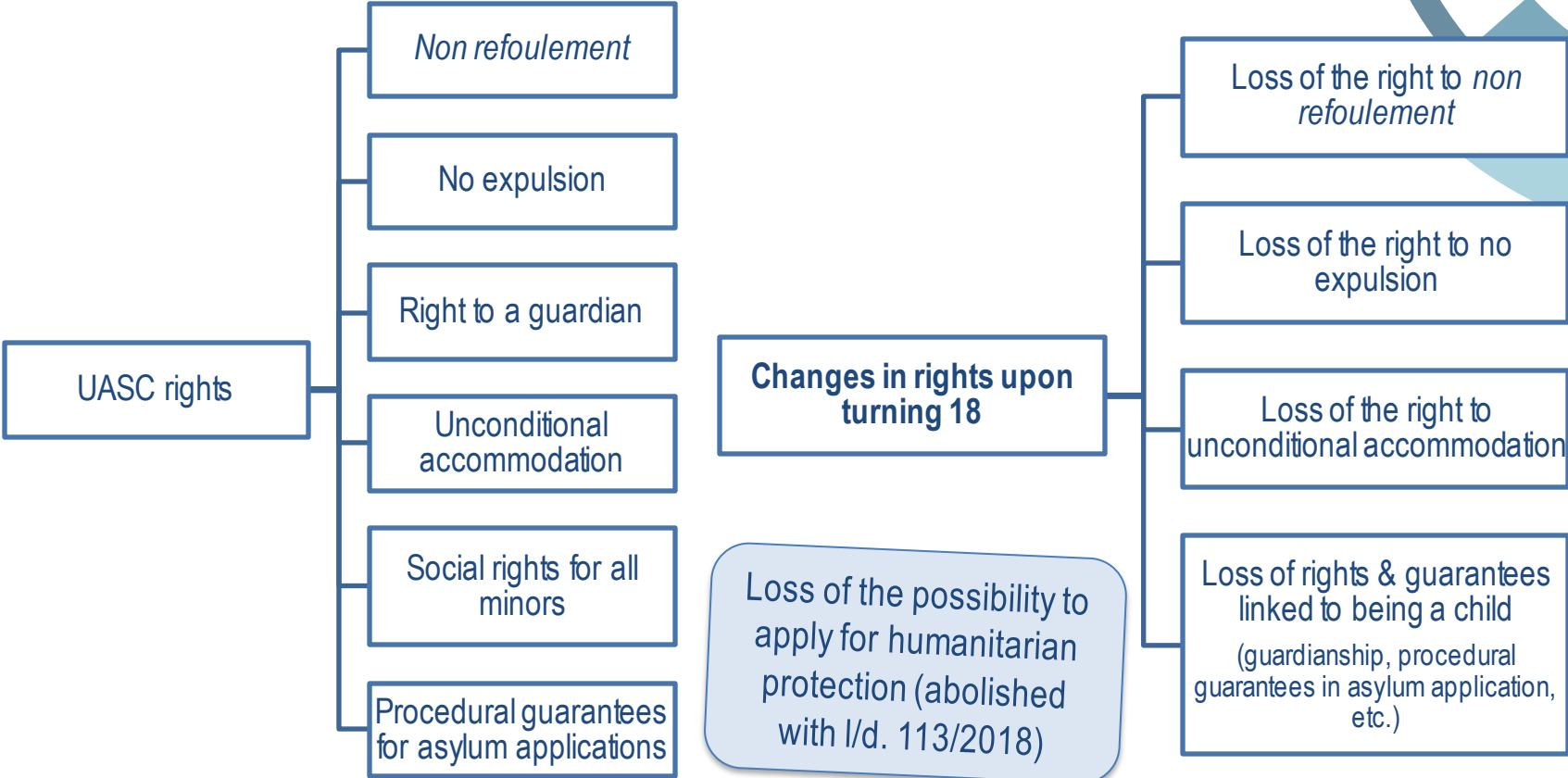
# The role of volunteer guardians



# Housing independence



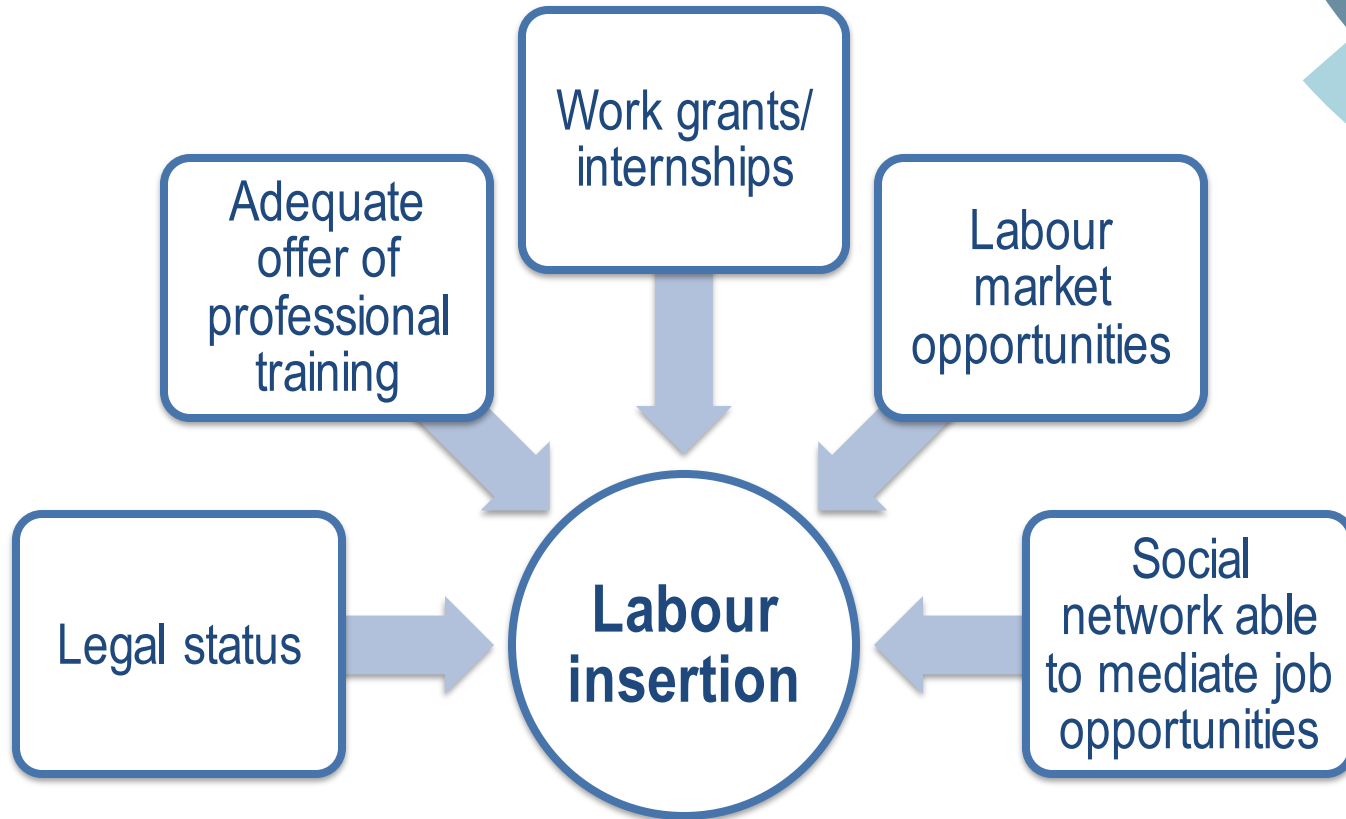
# Changes in entitlements when turning 18



# FACTORS HINDERING UASC TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

- **Legislation:** the slow and complex procedures to get documents (and additional bureaucratic bottlenecks);
- **Time-frame:** the very short time most UASC have because of their age at arrival (16–17 years old), very limited to equip themselves with the necessary tools for autonomy and inclusion;
- **Access to information:** some limitations with respect to information and guidance provide to UASC on the opportunities and on the potential pathways (normative framework, training, and labor insertion);
- **Work:** the difficulty in getting a regular work contract affects every other aspect of the transition (residence permits, access to housing, etc.);
- **Discrimination:** forms of discrimination and racism in accessing the job and housing markets represent an additional obstacle in autonomy and social inclusion pathways and affect the personal well-being of UASC and former UASC;
- **Trauma:** traumatic or particularly complex experiences in the country of origin or during the journey are difficult to overcome, making social inclusion more difficult;
- **Violence:** the dynamics of violence, including gender-based violence, experienced in particular by girls even when they are not victims of trafficking, have a strong impact on their transition to adulthood.

# Employment paths



# Vulnerabilities and risks

## Trauma & psychological distress

Traumas experienced before departure or during the journey

Need for early identification of the symptoms by the reception system

## Violence, torture and sexual exploitation

Violence & torture during the journey (Libya & western Balkans)

Trafficking, violence & sexual exploitation

Risk of psychological distress or depression after arrival in Italy

## Exploitation & exclusion

Factors that increase the risk:

- Experienced violence
- Need to earn

Possible scenarios

- «odd jobs»
- Labour exploitation
- Illegal activities

Possible support

- Formal & informal reception

## Risk of secondary movements

From the South of Italy to cities in the Centre & North:

- Lack of geographical distribution of UASC after landing in southern regions

Towards other EU countries:

- Problems with family reunification procedures under Dublin III  
Regulation: lengthy waiting times and poor knowledge of options with consequent risk of becoming «unaccounted for»

# Experience of discrimination

*«no one here has ever seen a black person study engineering»*

school

work

*«colleagues who have problems because they don't want us there »*

*«house rental is refused because of the colour of their skin»*

home

institutions

*«when they took me to the police station, they slapped me»*