



PLATFORM FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON  
UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS



# A TEACHER'S GUIDE

## How to use **UNDOCUMENTARY** in the Classroom

# INTRODUCTION

**Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)** is a network of organisations and individuals working to uphold undocumented migrants' rights. PICUM's members provide essential support to undocumented migrants, such as health care, shelter or legal assistance, and work to change the laws and practices which violate undocumented migrants' rights. From its office in Brussels, PICUM coordinates information exchange among its members, produces reports and awareness raising material, and provides regular recommendations and expertise to policymakers and institutions within the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union.

Across Europe, national governments have attempted to control migration by limiting access to essential rights and services for those who have become undocumented. This approach goes against state obligations to uphold the dignity and rights of all on its territory. Furthermore, it fails to address the main causes of irregularity; namely, that the majority of undocumented migrants in Europe lost their status through restrictive, inflexible and administratively cumbersome procedures.

**“UNDOCUMENTARY”** ([www.undocumentary.org](http://www.undocumentary.org)) is a web documentary launched by PICUM in 2012 to showcase the daily realities faced by undocumented migrants living in Europe. PICUM travelled to Almeria, Spain; Nicosia, Cyprus; Milan, Italy; Paris, France; Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Brussels, Belgium and Gothenburg, Sweden to gather the stories of those on the frontline, including undocumented migrants, migrants' rights defenders, professionals and public authorities.

Through a wide range of multimedia tools – video, photographic, text and info graphic – it offers the viewer a comprehensive understanding of each of the five thematic parts in English, French and Spanish: *Criminalisation, Access to Health Care, Fair Working Conditions, Access to Justice for Undocumented Women, and Access to Education and Housing for Undocumented Children.*

*This guide was produced by Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) with input from Romala Dobie, March 2014. All images are PICUM's property or published under a Creative Commons Licence.*

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

**UNDOCUMENTARY** is a tool for educating students about the daily lives of undocumented migrants as well as related issues such as human rights, migration, social studies, civic education, current affairs etc.

Focusing on the chapter “CHILDREN”, this guide provides an example as to how UNDOCUMENTARY may be used in the classroom. It includes an introduction to the issue of irregular migration, detailed background information on the main characters, exercises and activities for various age groups with different learning objectives, and a range of additional materials and resources.

For easy reference, the learning exercises and activities are divided according to four levels. Teachers are encouraged to use the suggested exercises and activities from various levels as guidelines and adapt them to their students’ individual needs, cultural contexts, and learning objectives or use them as a basis for other exercises.

1. WHO ARE UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS? .....	3
2. CHAPTER PROFILES .....	4-6
3. ACTIVITIES AND EXERCISES 8-12 YEARS .....	7-9
4. ACTIVITIES AND EXERCISES 13-17 YEARS .....	10-11
5. UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND ADULT LEARNING .....	12-13
6. STUDENTS OF ENGLISH, SPANISH OR FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE .....	14

# WHO ARE UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS?

## ➤ Why do migrants become undocumented?

Most undocumented migrants in Europe arrive with a valid permit for work, residence or study, but experience difficulties in renewing this permit or complying with the increasingly tight requirements it placed upon them. Being undocumented is often the result of incoherent and restrictive migration policies over which migrants themselves have little or no control.

Irregularity is a process fuelled by exploitation, redundancy, misinformation and administrative delays. The condition of being undocumented usually amounts to an administrative infringement (i.e. the lack of the required documentation to reside or work on the territory of the State) and not to a criminal offence. Therefore, while some EU member states have criminalised undocumented migrants, it is not correct to refer to undocumented migrants as ‘illegal’.

## ➤ How many undocumented migrants are in Europe?

Due to the unfixed nature of migration status and the fact that many undocumented migrants are unknown to the authorities, figures that do exist in Europe rely on estimates.

In 2009, research from the European Commission-funded “Clandestino” project produced minimum and maximum estimates of the size of the irregular migrant population for 2008. This aggregate estimate for the 27 EU member states ranged from 1.9 to 3.8 million undocumented migrants. The research results demonstrated that irregular entry is the least frequent path of entry into the EU, and that consistent and evidence-based migration policy could reduce patterns of irregularity in Europe.

## ➤ Undocumented and not ‘illegal’

Defining an individual or group as ‘illegal’ is incorrect from a juridical point of view, as neither could an individual be considered by nature as ‘illegal’ (as actions or objects could be), nor have the individuals necessarily committed a criminal offence. The term ‘illegal migrant’ overlooks the various causes of irregularity, namely, that many undocumented migrants entered the country of destination regularly and lost their status due to events beyond their control, and that the criminalisation of irregular entry and/or stay is not a legitimate, effective or proportionate response. Such terminology fosters discrimination and marginalization towards all migrants.

The terms ‘undocumented’ and ‘irregular’ have already been adopted by a multitude of actors, including the United Nations, European Union institutions, as well as numerous non-governmental organisations, local authorities, professionals, and undocumented migrants themselves.

More detailed background and thematic information is available on PICUM’s website: [www.picum.org](http://www.picum.org)

**LEYLA** is from Azerbaijan and lives with her two children in Amsterdam, the Netherlands



“My daughter is now six, and in the past year alone we moved three times, in the first five years of her life we moved five times.”

“I have to be careful because if the police find me, they can just deport me.”

“It’s not fair on the children. They should have a better life. I can give it to them... if only I was given the chance.”

### BACKGROUND

Leyla came to the Netherlands on a student visa. She married a Dutch man and they had two children together. Because her husband did not earn enough money to show he could provide for the family, the Dutch authorities refused to grant Leyla permission to stay in the Netherlands. Despite the fact that Leyla had two masters’ degrees, and could have got a good job if she had been given permission to work, the policies governing family reunification in the Netherlands require that the Dutch citizen is the main wage earner.

So while her husband and two children had Dutch passports, Leyla was not allowed to stay in the Netherlands. Desperate not to be returned to Azerbaijan and separated from her children, Leyla made an application for asylum. When this application for asylum was refused by the Dutch authorities, she became undocumented. As an undocumented migrant, she was automatically cut-off from receiving state benefits or support. She and her two young children had to leave their government shelter and live on the streets. During this difficult time, Leyla’s husband left her. She is now the only family that her children have.

### LIVING AS AN UNDOCUMENTED MOTHER

Because she is undocumented, Leyla is not allowed to work, or receive state benefits or housing support. This makes it very difficult for her to find housing which is suitable and affordable.

While the Dutch authorities refuse to provide her with support on grounds of her migration status, Child Protection Services have an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of her two Dutch children. Because of this, they tried to convince her to give up her children to state custody on grounds that she was unable to adequately provide for them. Leyla lives in constant fear of being separated from her children and detected by authorities and being deported.

In the film, Leyla is interviewed in one of the two rooms she rents informally from a friend. Many other friends have lent her their keys, to use their houses while they are at work or when they go on holidays.

**GAYANA** is from Armenia and lives with her parents and brothers in Amsterdam, the Netherlands



### BACKGROUND

Gayana came to the Netherlands as a child with her family from Armenia. Within seven years of living in the Netherlands, Gayana’s family had to move houses five times. Gayana suffered from this as she had no real place that she could call her home and saw her parents getting depressed about the situation.

The family was featured in a video of a campaign of Defence for Children International in cooperation with other civil society organisations entitled ‘Geen Kind Op Straat’ (‘No Child in the Street’). The campaign raised awareness of homelessness among children and of the violation of the right to housing.

PICUM met Gayana years later at the same bus station where the video was taped.

### BECOMING AN ACTIVIST FOR UNDOCUMENTED CHILDRENS’ RIGHTS

At the age of 16, Gayana joined the organisation Defence for Children International convinced that she wants to support awareness raising activities and help children experiencing homelessness and poverty in the Netherlands.

Defence for Children’s campaign succeeded in stopping the eviction of undocumented children from reception centers and their work resulted in a decision of the European Committee on Social Rights which concluded in October 2009 that the Dutch policy of refusing shelter to undocumented children violates the European Social Charter and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

“In seven years, we changed houses five times which was not nice for me because I wanted to have one place which I can call my home.”

“I am thinking of becoming a lawyer to help people who are in situations like I was because I know what it feels like.”



## AISHA is an undocumented girl living in Paris, France



“I am very afraid because I hear that there are students at my school who are undocumented and deported. I am afraid of being controlled in the street or on the train. The fear is always inside.”

### BACKGROUND

Aisha is an undocumented student living in Paris, France. Aisha goes to school but lives with the constant fear of being deported and separated from family and friends.

In France, children below the age of 18 are not required to have papers. However, if their families are undocumented, they can still be deported.

The network Réseau Educations sans Frontières (RESF) ran a campaign to regularise undocumented students. They offered undocumented youth to accompany them during the regularisation procedure and helped to address local authorities.

### LIVING IN FEAR OF BEING DEPORTED

Through her high school, Aisha heard about RESF and their work. RESF helped Aisha to apply for regularisation to be able to stay in France.

However, Aisha continues to live in fear of being detected on her way to school.

# ACTIVITIES AND EXERCISES: 8-12 YEARS

Before watching the UNDOCUMENTARY with younger students, it is recommended to introduce the concepts of documents, migration and what it means to be undocumented to the students.

## 1) What does it mean to have a document/ID?

- On a map of the world students put a pin indicating where their parents were born.
- Ask your students to say where they were born.
- Show them a copy of a passport and ask them if they had to show their passports before.
- Introduce the word document. A passport is a document.
- Make a list of other documents which they know and might have used (for example: a library card, a membership card for a local pool or sports club etc.).
- Brainstorm how these documents and IDs ensure access to services or recreational activities and write all the ideas on a flip chart or white board.



7

## 2) What is migration and why do people migrate?

- Would you like to live in another country and why?
- Would you like to go to school in another country?
- Would you like to work in another country when you are older?
- Why do other people come to our country? (Searching for a better life, for work, for education for their children or escaping from violence, poverty and war).
- Write the answers on a blackboard or flip chart.
- On the map of the world pin pictures of birds which migrate to the country in which the students are living. Say where they come from and explain it.





### 3) What is undocumented status and why do children and their families become undocumented?

- After the students have understood that documents and IDs provide access to services but also the right to stay in a country, explain that most documents have an expiry date showing it on the picture of a visa.
- Ask the students what would happen if their library card, or other membership cards and IDs they mentioned in the previous exercise, expired and would not be renewed. Could they still go to the library or the pool?
- Explain that this is what happens to the mother with her visa in the documentary you will watch together now and that authorities do not always prolong documents. Therefore, the family faces many difficulties in their daily life with things that seem normal to us such as living in a nice and safe home and going to school.



After these concepts are understood by the students, you can screen the part on children of the UNDOCUMENTARY and they will be able to better understand the context in which the young mother lives with her two children.

8

### 4) Acknowledging the difference in the lives of the students to the life of an undocumented child

For children 10 years and younger: create a sheet with simple drawings or pictures showing a classroom at school, a birthday, vacation and a family home. Ask them what they do for their birthdays, vacation etc. and then ask them if they think if the children in the UNDOCUMENTARY can equally go to school, go on holidays, have a nice home etc.

For children 10 years and older: draft a simple time chart leaving space for them to write what they do around the school year:

- How much time do you spend in school every day?
- Why is it good to get an education?
- Do you have your own room or do you share?
- How many hours a day do you spend in your room?
- Do your parents work during the day?
- What are your hobbies outside of school?
- Where do you spend your holidays?
- What do you like to do with your friends?

After that, go with them through their time charts and ask them how the life of an undocumented child might be different for each activity.

## 5) Understand why some children face poverty

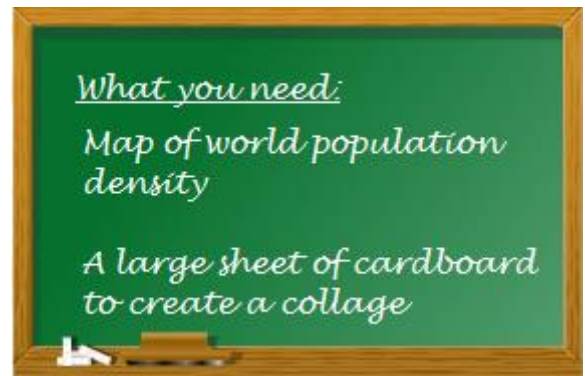
- Divide the students into small groups. Give each group either one of the case studies outlined in 'Chapter Profiles' or another exemplary case study of an undocumented child.
- Why is it that the parents of undocumented children cannot choose where their children live?
- Discuss and understand why undocumented children can often not attend school or go to a doctor when they are sick.
- If undocumented migrant children cannot go to school like other children how can they make friends? Explain the risks of social exclusion.
- What could the life of these children look like in the future if they cannot always go to school? Explain the children's risk of long term poverty.
- What could be done to ensure that undocumented children and their families do not suffer from poverty? Explain that these children and their families have the right to a safe home, to education and to health care.



# ACTIVITIES AND EXERCISES: 13 - 17 YEARS

## 1) Understanding the reasons why humans move

- Look at major historical migration waves to/from your country.
- Brainstorm why these people came and other reasons why people leave their country.
- Ask students to find pictures and brief articles on the internet to illustrate the above reasons for movement. Print and then paste these pictures onto a large sheet of cardboard. Make a collage “Why people migrate”.
- Ask students who or whose parents have migrated to share their experience.
- Divide the students into small groups to discuss if they would like to move to another country after secondary school and if so where. Ask them to create a list of reasons you would like to move there and state why they choose this location.
- Let them write a fictional piece imagining they are migrating to another country and explain what could be the downside of moving and what adjustments they would need to make to show that the students understand the problems migrants face.



## 2) Why do people become undocumented?

Before the exercise, access the ‘Clandestino’ project (<http://irregular-migration.net//>) and consult other figures and case studies of undocumented migration which are available in your region.

- In the documentary, Leyla says that she came with a student’s visa which expired. Ask the students to brainstorm other reasons why people can become undocumented.
- Explain the difficulties to provide figures on the number of undocumented migrants and ask the students to check the website of the ‘Clandestino’ project and write down why irregular entry is a less frequent path of entry into the EU.
- Discuss in small groups what politicians could do to avoid that so many migrants become undocumented. Let the students present their ideas to the class.

### 3) Understanding the barriers undocumented children and youth face in their daily lives

(This exercise takes two or more lessons)

- Ask the students what rights they think they have (basic rights such as education and health care but also rights in the classroom such as to be treated with respect, to be listened to, the right to ask questions etc.)
- Make a contract for the human rights the class defined (shelter, health care, education and training, family life, respect for each other etc.)
- Then go with the students through the text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and compare the rights to your human rights contract
- Discussion: Are these rights applicable to undocumented migrant children in your country? Can an undocumented child or a child of undocumented parents go to the doctor if he/she gets sick? Are undocumented children at school? Do they have to fear deportation or family separation like Leyla and her children?



### 4) What action can I take?

Take the example of the girl Gayana in the UNDOCUMENTARY who supports the 'Defence for Children' Campaign:

- Ask the students to research what organisations or groups in their regions help undocumented migrant children and their families.
- Define one of the basic rights undocumented migrants do not have in your country and ask the students to write a letter to your country's Minister for Migration asking for this right to become reality and reminding that your country has signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Speaking to friends and family: Leyla speaks in the documentary about how people approach her like an 'alien' because undocumented migrants are labelled 'illegal'. Explain to the students that no human being is 'illegal' and encourage them to speak up and share what they have learned when they hear friends and family referring to undocumented migrants as 'illegal'.
- Brainstorm what else students can do to help that the rights of undocumented children and their families become reality.

# UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND ADULT LEARNING

## 1) What is an 'undocumented migrant'?

- Before screening the UNDOCUMENTARY, brainstorm with the students what terms come to their mind when they think of 'undocumented migrants' and particularly, 'undocumented migrant children'. List all mentioned terms on a blackboard.

## 2) Questions and Answers

Access the 'Clandestino' project for review at:  
<http://irregular-migration.net//>.

- After the screening allow some time for questions and answers.
- Explain the difficulties to provide figures on the number of undocumented migrants and ask the students to check the website of the 'Clandestino' project and other sources.
- At the example of Leyla's story, discuss how lengthy administrative procedures and inconsistent migration policy lead to an irregular status.
- Brainstorm with the students fundamental rights which apply to all children, regardless of residence status.
- Ask the students to read the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and analyze which articles do not apply to undocumented children in practice and what the barriers are.



## 3) Why do immigration control measures such as detention, deportation and hence resulting family separation take preference over child rights?

- Ask the students to research recent news on undocumented migrant children and analyze where procedures described conflict with human rights frameworks.
- Outline at the example of Leyla's children how immigration control measures such as limited access to services, detention and deportation are given preference over basic child rights.
- Let the students research existing protection mechanisms for unaccompanied migrant children and compare them to the discussed conditions of the undocumented children living with a parent. Are they consistent? Where are differences?
- Ask the students to brainstorm in small groups how the situation of Leyla and her children would be dealt with if the children were treated first and foremost as children (Living in a safe home without fear of homelessness or family separation etc.).

#### 4) Go back to the terms you gathered at the beginning

- Ask the students to rethink the terms they came up with at the beginning of the class. What would they add after the discussion? Are there terms which actually perpetuate misconceptions?

#### 5) What action can I take?

- Are there any students groups at your university that deal with human rights? Do they address the issues undocumented migrants face?
- Invite a local migrant rights group or organisation as a guest-speaker at your university and mobilise other students to become active.
- Use your social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook to raise awareness of the situation of undocumented migrants and their rights.
- Find out if your university allows undocumented migrants to attend. Advocate for their right to education through student councils.



## STUDENTS OF ENGLISH, FRENCH OR SPANISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

UNDOCUMENTARY is available in English, French and Spanish and can therefore be used for language learners of these three languages.

### 1) Listening and speaking:

After screening the part on children to your language students, ask them to answer the following questions to make sure they understood the content and encourage other students to try to answer these questions in their own words.

- How did Leyla come to Amsterdam?
- Why did Leyla become undocumented?
- Why are thousands of children in the Netherlands at risk of homelessness?
- Why is Gayana advocating for children's rights in the Netherlands?
- How many times did Gayana move houses in her life and why?
- In France, children do not need papers until they are 18 years old. Can they still be deported?
- Did you follow reading the subtitles when Aisha spoke in French? What does she say?
- Why is Aisha always afraid?
- Why was Leyla homeless?
- Why does Leyla have to live in fear to be found by authorities?

In case that more than half of the questions remain unanswered, screen the part on children again and pause where answers to the questions are given to discuss.

### 2) Writing and Comprehension:

Ask the students to write about 0.5-1 page on how being wrongly labelled 'illegal' creates problems for Leyla in her daily life and reflect on what terminology in their native language is adequate or inadequate to refer to an undocumented migrant.

### 3) Reading:

Give the students short newspaper clips with coverage on undocumented migration. Give them some time to read the articles. Then discuss in the classroom how undocumented migrants are described in the article. Is the language discriminating or is it supportive of their rights?