



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

GLOBAL STUDY ON
**SMUGGLING
OF MIGRANTS**

2018

AFRICA

UNODC
Research



CHAPTER II REGIONAL OVERVIEWS

PATTERNS AND TRENDS OF MIGRANT SMUGGLING IN AFRICA

Migrant smuggling has been documented along at least five major and several smaller routes in Africa. The first three major routes originate from the same subregion, namely the Horn of Africa. Movements within that subregion are mainly irregular as there are limited options for regular movement.¹ Smugglers facilitate many of these irregular movements. The northward route connects the Horn of Africa via land to North Africa. Upon arrival in North Africa, some of the migrants smuggled along this route continue to Europe along the Central Mediterranean route. The eastward route connects the Horn of Africa to Yemen, crossing the Red Sea or the Arabian Sea. Many of these migrants are then smuggled north to Saudi Arabia or further afield. The southward route heads primarily overland to Southern Africa.

There are also sizable migrant smuggling routes from West and Central Africa to South Africa and neighbouring countries, and from West Africa to North Africa. While many of the latter migrants move seasonally or stay in North Africa, some also join the Central Mediterranean route to Europe. There are also some smaller, though still substantial flows of migrant smuggling in Africa. For example, migrants are smuggled by sea from Madagascar and the Comoros to the French island of Mayotte, in the Indian Ocean. Moreover, migrant smuggling by air – for example, from South Asia via various African airports to Europe, Australia or the United States of America – has also been documented.

In the last few years, smuggling from the Horn of Africa towards Southern Africa appears to have declined somewhat. Smuggling along the eastward route to Yemen is at a high level, though trends started to decline in late 2016. Flows from the Horn of Africa towards North Africa were particularly large in 2015 but have been declining since then.

The available information for many of these flows is scattered and anecdotal, and there is very little specific migrant smuggling data. Smugglers seem to operate at most borders along the overland African routes. Migrants and refugees resort to their services for a number of reasons, including border restrictions, misinformation about available legal migration pathways, and the hardships of the journey. Migrant smuggling organizations operating in

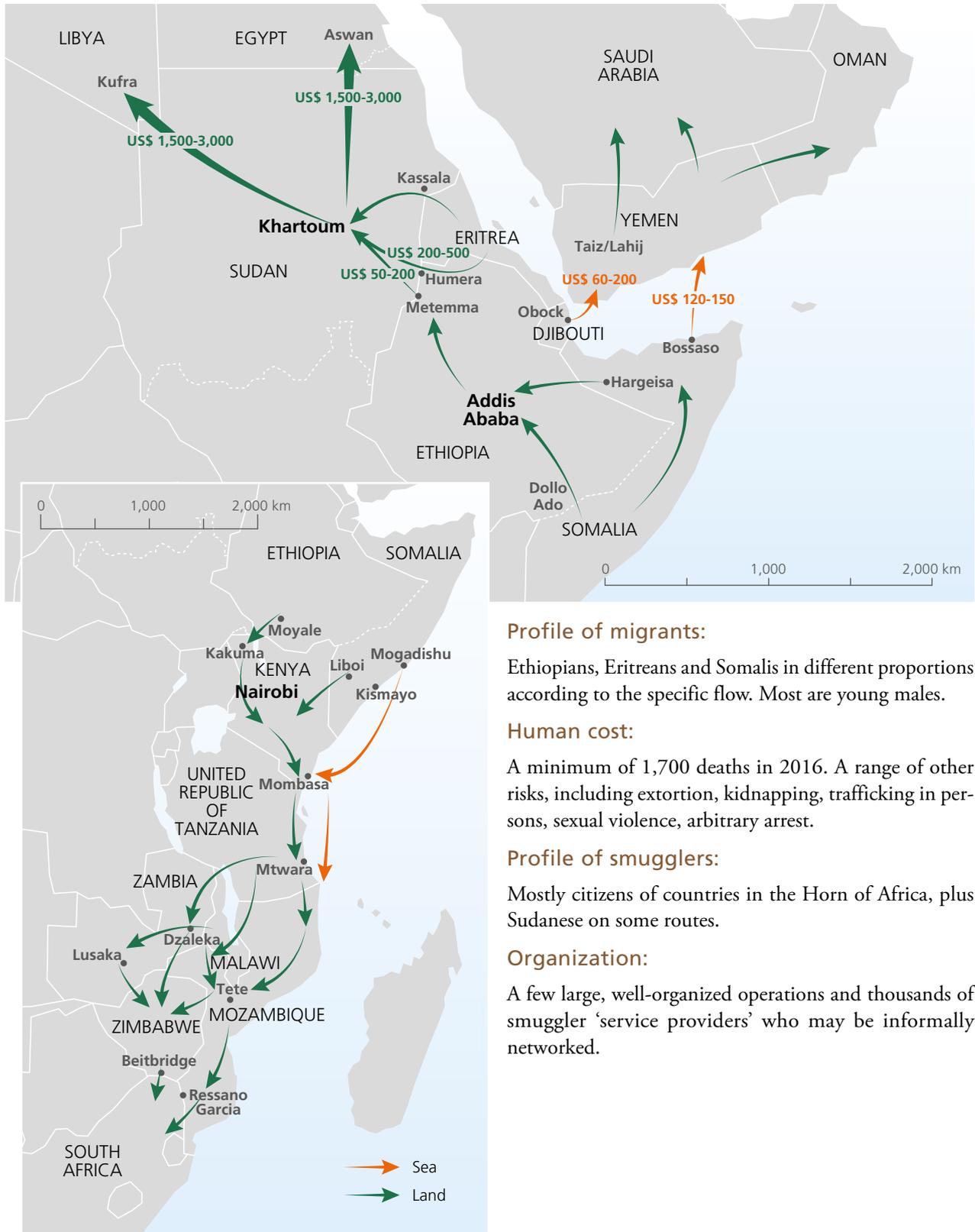
Africa range from highly structured networks with several contact points along the route to local smugglers living in border areas.

The year 2015 saw a large outflow of migrants and refugees along the northward route from the Horn of Africa to North Africa. The numbers of citizens of countries in the Horn of Africa arriving in Europe on the Central Mediterranean route decreased in 2016. Arrivals in Egypt, however, appear to be high, with the trend in the number of asylum seekers from the Horn of Africa increasing.

With regard to the eastward route, arrivals in Yemen were record high in 2016, with some 117,000 arrivals.² The high level appears to be continuing into 2017. Uniquely, this route also has a significant flow moving in the opposite direction, from Yemen into the Horn of Africa.

The magnitude of migrant smuggling along the migration routes heading to Southern Africa is even more difficult to estimate. Migrants and refugees are certainly smuggled from the Horn of Africa and other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa to South Africa. The number of newly arrived asylum seekers in South Africa has declined sharply since 2010, but not all migrants apply for asylum, and some migrants and refugees may not be smuggled. A recent estimate of the number of irregular arrivals from the Horn of Africa in South Africa is 13,400-14,050 persons per year, most of whom are smuggled at least for some parts of the journey.³

THE HORN OF AFRICA



Profile of migrants:

Ethiopians, Eritreans and Somalis in different proportions according to the specific flow. Most are young males.

Human cost:

A minimum of 1,700 deaths in 2016. A range of other risks, including extortion, kidnapping, trafficking in persons, sexual violence, arbitrary arrest.

Profile of smugglers:

Mostly citizens of countries in the Horn of Africa, plus Sudanese on some routes.

Organization:

A few large, well-organized operations and thousands of smuggler 'service providers' who may be informally networked.

The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.

The northward route: from the Horn of Africa to North Africa

The main smuggling hubs, departure and arrival points

The northward route departs from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, passes through Khartoum, Sudan and arrives in Libya or Egypt. Most migrants from the Horn of Africa choose the land route via Addis Ababa to Khartoum, but some also travel via Nairobi and South Sudan.⁴ Large cities along this route play the role of major smuggling hubs. The area around Metemma, on the border between Ethiopia and Sudan, is a hub where many migrants make arrangements for travel to Khartoum, or even all the way to Italy.⁵ Once they have arrived in North Africa, many migrants and refugees continue their journeys along the Central Mediterranean route.

The magnitude of migrant smuggling along the northward route

The number of migrants who were smuggled from the Horn of Africa to North Africa (and then to Europe) was large in 2015, but decreased in 2016. Frontex reported that more than 50,000 migrants and refugees from the Horn of Africa were smuggled to Europe via the Central Mediterranean route in 2015. This decreased to less than 30,000 in 2016.⁶

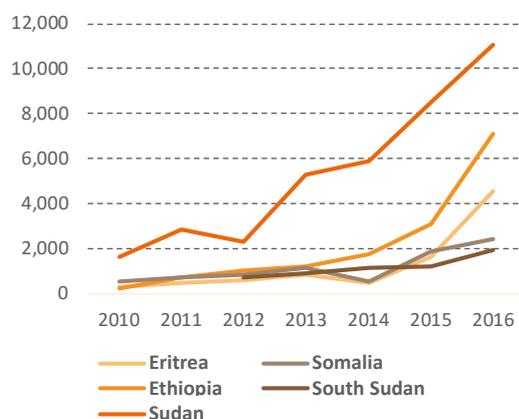
Looking more specifically at the countries concerned, the available information is scattered and in some cases dated. Much of the information is published by UNHCR, which may focus on specific populations such as refugees and asylum seekers. This means that the estimates represent the minimum size of migrant smuggling flows.

For the Eritrea-Sudan crossing, a minimum of 1,350 people per month crossed the border near Kassala from Eritrea to Sudan and registered with UNHCR in 2015.⁷ This border crossing is generally facilitated by smugglers, although a few also attempt the passage on their own.⁸

It is difficult to assess the dimension of the smuggling flow from Eritrea to Ethiopia.⁹ Virtually all Eritreans migrating irregularly to Ethiopia reportedly do so with the assistance of smugglers.¹⁰ Flows of Eritreans, or persons claiming to be Eritreans, might have decreased, as suggested by the substantially declining trend for such arrivals in Italy in 2016 and 2017.¹¹

In 2013, UNHCR estimated that between 18,000 and 36,000 Ethiopian migrants and refugees crossed into Sudan through Metemma.¹² Many Ethiopians legally cross the border into Sudan with a temporary visa and engage

FIG. 23: Number of newly registered asylum seekers in Egypt from countries in the broader Horn of Africa region, 2010-2016



Source: UNHCR.

migrant smugglers only in Khartoum to facilitate the onward journey.¹³

In Egypt, the total number of refugees, asylum seekers and returned refugees has remained largely constant at some 250,000-260,000 over the 2013-2016 period.¹⁴ Most are refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic. But UNHCR statistics suggest an increased flow of citizens of countries in the broader Horn of Africa region, particularly Sudan, in recent years. Although there are no data about migrant smuggling to Egypt, the available information about travel arrangements across the Sahara suggest that almost all asylum seekers from those countries have their entire journey or part of it facilitated by smugglers.¹⁵

Libya was an important destination and transit country for smuggled migrants from the Horn of Africa, but recently, this flow has drastically diminished. Before the deterioration of the security situation in Kufra district in Libya in 2012, the Kufra governor estimated the flows from Sudan into the district at 10,000-12,000 people per month, whereas in 2013, a significant reduction of the flow was recorded and only 300-1,000 migrants were estimated to enter Libya from Sudan per month.¹⁶ Although many of these arrivals may not apply for asylum, data on asylum applications in Libya also reflect the decreasing flow from countries in the Horn of Africa into Libya. The number of new asylum seekers in Libya from these countries peaked in 2013 at almost 4,000, mainly Eritreans (or people claiming to be Eritreans) and Somalis. These applications then decreased sharply, and in 2016, the only significant figures were some 430 new asylum applications by Sudanese citizens.¹⁷

The profile of the smuggled migrants

The mixed migration flow^a departing from the Horn of Africa and heading northward mainly involves Ethiopians, Eritreans and Somalis. Along the way, people from Sudan and South Sudan also join the flow. Once they arrive in North Africa, many apply for international protection. Excluding Syrians – who mainly travel along other routes – Sudanese, Eritreans, Ethiopians and Somalis appear to be among the main citizenships of asylum seekers registered with UNHCR in Egypt and Libya.¹⁸

The vast majority of migrants moving from the Horn of Africa are males between the ages of 20 and 35.¹⁹ At the same time, several sources attest to a growing presence of unaccompanied minors, especially Eritrean and Ethiopian.²⁰

Some Palestinians are also smuggled to Egypt; many of them through underground tunnels. Once in Egypt, they join the flow heading to Europe along the Central Mediterranean route.²¹

The smugglers' profile and organization

Migrant smugglers operating along this route seem to include a few highly organized groups, having the capacity to manage sophisticated transnational smuggling operations, and thousands of low-level and community actors providing smuggling services locally.²² Some of the high-level smuggling networks from the Horn of Africa seem to have increased their influence along the smuggling route in recent years.²³

In the eastern part of Sudan, migrant smuggling is dominated by the Rashaida, a group of Bedouin camel pastoralists, although other local groups also appear to have become increasingly active in the business in the past few years.²⁴ In North Africa, recent research has indicated that smuggling has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few well-organized criminal networks with substantial logistical and financial capacities.²⁵

The smugglers' modus operandi and travel arrangements

Eritreans smuggled to Sudan cross the border clandestinely on foot or in a pick-up truck.²⁶ There is evidence of smugglers providing false Ethiopian passports to Eritreans and Somalis.²⁷ In late 2016, smuggling fees for the route between Asmara and Sudan or Ethiopia ranged between US\$3,000 and 5,000; almost as much as for the rest of the journey to Europe.²⁸

••

a Understood to be complex population movements including refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants and other migrants.

Ethiopians can generally obtain a one-month visa upon arrival to Sudan, and therefore do not need smugglers to enter the country.²⁹ However, Eritreans and Somalis do need visas and may therefore engage the services of smugglers. When facilitated by smugglers, the journey from Ethiopia to Sudan takes between three and six days.³⁰ As of late 2016 the smuggling fee for the journey from Ethiopia to Khartoum via Metemma in north-western Ethiopia ranged between US\$50 and 200, whereas the journey via Humera, a border town further north, cost between US\$200 and 500, depending on the final destination.³¹

Once in Sudan, most migrants continue to Khartoum. They are taken to Khartoum by bus, preferably at night, wearing traditional Sudanese clothes in order not to be detected. The trip from Kassala in far eastern Sudan to Khartoum reportedly costs between US\$100 and 300.³²

Sudanese smugglers operating in Khartoum or in Omdurman, just across the river from Khartoum, typically smuggle migrants towards Libya. Close to the border, they are handed over to other smugglers who drive them across the border. In 2016, the price for the journey from Khartoum to Libya or Egypt ranged between US\$1,500 and 3,000.³³

Some migrants also head from Khartoum to Aswan, Egypt.³⁴ Use of counterfeit Sudanese passports reportedly occurs as it is easier for Sudanese citizens to enter Egypt. From Aswan, migrants contact smugglers in order to be transported to a 'safe house' (temporary accommodation managed by smugglers) near Alexandria, from where they can board boats towards Italy.³⁵ According to Frontex, in 2017, the migrant smuggling flow from the Horn of Africa to Europe via Egypt virtually stopped.³⁶

Along this route, there are numerous checkpoints and smugglers frequently offer bribes in order to pass through.³⁷

The human cost

Smugglers make migrants travel between the Horn of Africa and North Africa in dangerous circumstances. There have been several cases of migrants falling off the vehicles they are travelling in, resulting in deaths or severe injuries. Some migrants also die from starvation or dehydration. Passages offered by smugglers are never entirely safe; sometimes the vehicle breaks down, runs out of fuel or the driver gets lost.³⁸ According to the IOM Missing Migrant Project, in 2016, 230 migrants lost their lives or went missing moving across the Horn of Africa (this includes all routes affecting the Horn of Africa) and 1,279 in North Africa.³⁹

Exploitation and coercion of migrants, sometimes resulting in trafficking in persons, is also widely documented along the northward route. Trafficking for sexual exploitation is commonly reported.⁴⁰ Migrants are at risk of kidnapping for ransom; particularly in the remote areas along this route.⁴¹ Some research has found that such kidnapping is particularly prevalent in North Africa; often with Somali victims.⁴²

In Libya, migrants may be subject to arbitrary arrest and detention at the hands of the authorities under Government control as well as militia groups.⁴³ The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has described the conditions for detained irregular migrants as 'horrific,' with detainees held in unsanitary conditions without sufficient food and drink, and often having to endure torture, exploitation and extortion, among other violations. Many women migrants have reportedly been raped and suffered other sexual violence by smugglers and guards.⁴⁴

The eastward route: from the Horn of Africa to the Arabian Peninsula

The main smuggling hubs, departure and arrival points

Located within relative proximity to Somalia and Ethiopia, Yemen is a pathway to the affluent countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council.⁴⁵ Obock in Djibouti and Bossaso in the Puntland area of Somalia are key coastal departure points for the sea crossing to Yemen. Until 2013, Djibouti was the major transit country, but this changed in 2014, when the route across the Arabian sea departing from Bossaso became the most widely used among migrants from the Horn of Africa heading to Yemen.⁴⁶ For migrants head-

ing north through Somalia, the capital Mogadishu, as well as the large towns of Beledweyne and Galkayo are important centers. For Ethiopians, the border towns just across the border into Somalia and en route to Bossaso, serve as hubs where smugglers with connections to smuggling networks can be readily found.⁴⁷

In Yemen, most migrants – having departed from Bossaso – arrive in the governorate of Hadramout, in the eastern part of the country. Many also arrive in the neighbouring Shabwa governorate. Those departing from Obock arrive in either Taiz or Lahji governorates in Yemen's south-west.⁴⁸

The magnitude of migrant smuggling along the eastward route

In 2016, 117,107 migrants and refugees arrived in Yemen along the eastward route departing from the Horn of Africa, the highest number recorded since monitoring started in 2006.⁴⁹ The increase is believed to stem from a combination of factors, including the weakening of Yemen's central government and border control mechanisms and the political instability in some origin countries.⁵⁰ The high level of arrivals seems to have continued in 2017, with reports that some 55,000 migrants left the Horn of Africa for Yemen between January and early August.⁵¹

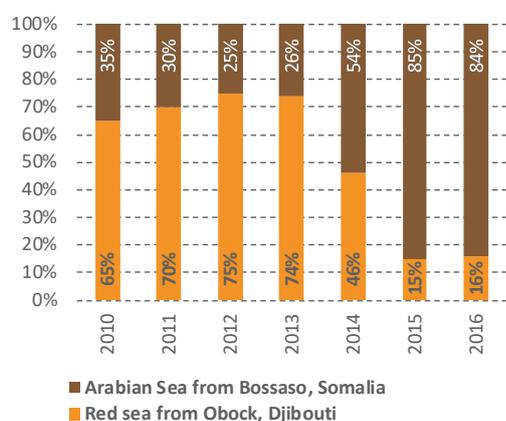
As for most sea crossings, virtually all migrants and refugees crossing the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea on their way to the Arabian Peninsula have their journey facilitated by smugglers. One recent study found that the scale and scope of smuggling along this route has increased since 2015. The overland travel through Somalia used to be undertaken by migrants independently, but this has changed, and migrants use smuggling services also for this part of their journey.⁵² Travel from the arrival points along Yemen's shores to Saudi Arabia often involves smuggling as well.⁵³

Uniquely, there is also a considerable reverse flow between these countries. There were reportedly more than 114,000 arrivals in Yemen from the Horn of Africa, and nearly 87,000 arrivals in the opposite direction over the March 2015 – April 2016 period, perhaps due to the escalation of conflict in Yemen.⁵⁴ Most arrived in Djibouti and Somalia. In Djibouti, more than half of the approximately 35,000 arrivals were citizens of Yemen, and most of the rest, from Djibouti. Of the 32,000 arrivals in Somalia, nearly all were Somalis.⁵⁵

The profile of the smuggled migrants

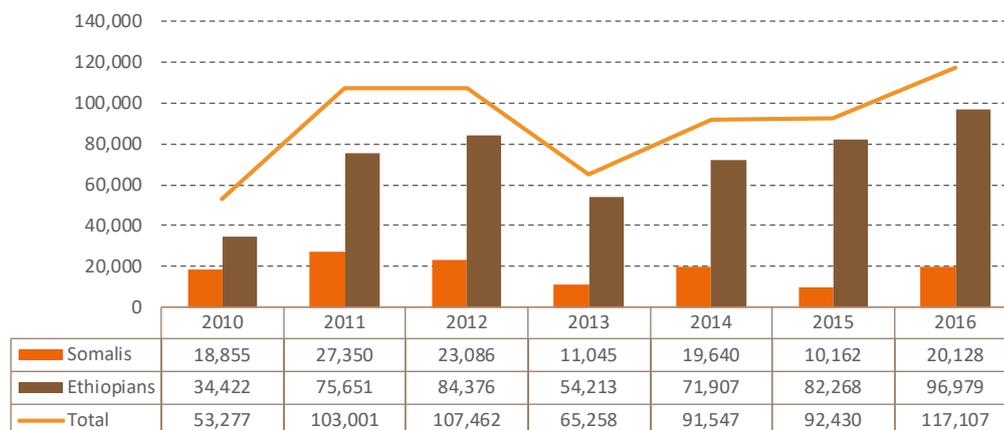
The migration flow from the Horn of Africa to Yemen is composed of Ethiopians and Somalis. Since 2009, Ethio-

FIG. 24: Shares of recorded migrant arrivals by sea in Yemen, by route, 2010-2016



Source: RMMS.

FIG. 25: Number of arrivals from the Horn of Africa to Yemen, 2010-2016



Source: RMMS and UNHCR.

pians have been the main group travelling along this route and their presence has increased over the years. In 2016, Ethiopians constituted 83 per cent of arrivals from the Horn of Africa to Yemen, and Somalis 17 per cent.⁵⁶

Most of the people moving towards Yemen are men; often young, single and with little education. Recent research has estimated the share of female migrants at some 20-30 per cent of the total.⁵⁷ While most of the Ethiopian migrants come from poor families with very limited access to disposable income, among Somalis, the picture is more mixed, with some poor migrants but also some that are better off.⁵⁸

In Saudi Arabia, a sizeable number of undocumented migrants are Yemeni. In Oman, however, the number of Yemeni arrivals is much lower.

The smugglers' profile and organization

Smugglers operating along this route generally share the same citizenship (and often ethnicity) of their clients, but Somali smugglers are the only ones who can provide a safe overland passage to the port city of Bossaso. At Bossaso port, most of the boatmen are Somali.⁵⁹ Migrant smuggling is also the main economic activity for the communities living around the key departure points, with locals escorting Ethiopian and Somali migrants as they cross from one country into the other.⁶⁰

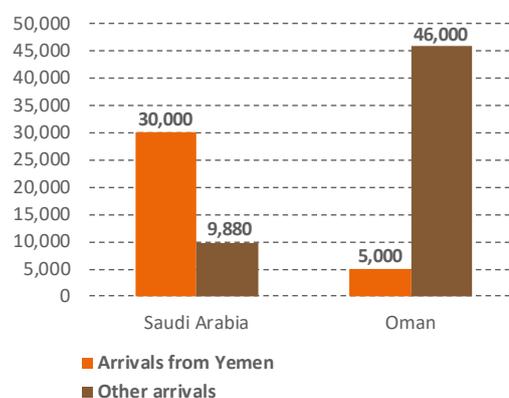
In different areas along this route, some members of the local authorities, including embassy personnel, border guards and police, seem to be complicit in irregular migration and migrant smuggling and may accept bribes to facilitate the movement of people across borders, according to research carried out a few years back.⁶¹ Some villagers in the coastal area along the Red Sea also appear to

be involved in migrant smuggling, sometimes in collusion with the army.⁶²

The smugglers' modus operandi and travel arrangements

For Ethiopians – many of the migrants along this route – the first link in the smuggling process are often smugglers who reside in their neighbourhood. These smugglers – referred to as 'brokers' - often play crucial roles in creating aspirations and generating demand for their services through deception and manipulation.⁶³ Research conducted in southern Ethiopia in 2008 found a strong correlation between the desire to migrate and the presence of smugglers in an area. In communities without smuggler 'brokers', people generally had little aspiration to migrate, as opposed to the situation in areas where 'brokers' were present.⁶⁴

FIG. 26: Number of undocumented migrant arrivals from Yemen in Saudi Arabia and Oman and other arrivals, 2016



Source: UNHCR.

Most Ethiopians undertake much of their travel by foot,⁶⁵ but those who can afford smuggling services are transported from the border areas to Obock in containers and trucks. A wide network of small-scale smugglers organize transport from different parts of Ethiopia to the country's borders, including the Ethiopia-Djibouti border.⁶⁶ Somalis heading to Djibouti are more likely to travel by vehicle.⁶⁷ Some head to Ali Addeh refugee camp, where migrant smugglers reportedly operate.⁶⁸

With regard to the Bossaso route, Somalis who arrive there are generally directed to one of the several teashops where smugglers can be found to arrange for their onward trip to Yemen.⁶⁹ The boatmen often have connections with Yemeni smugglers who operate along the coast. The boats' crews usually call the members of the smuggling network in Yemen some time before arrival so that the smugglers arrive on time to receive them.⁷⁰

There is a perception among migrants that the Arabian Sea crossing from Bossaso is cheaper than the journey from Obock across the Red Sea. However, according to interviews with migrants and smugglers carried out in early 2017^b, the average prices for the two journeys are similar, at US\$892 for a journey from Ethiopia to Saudi Arabia via Bossaso, and \$855 for the same journey via Obock. The price for only the sea journey from Bossaso appears to be quite stable, ranging from \$120-150. The price for only the sea journey from Obock, however, is far more flexible, ranging from \$60-200, with the actual price paid dependant upon the migrants' perceived economic resources. For both routes, the most expensive leg of the journey by far is that from Yemen to Saudi Arabia, at an average price of \$500-550.⁷¹

Once in Yemen, most Somalis apply for asylum, as they are recognized as refugees on a prima facie basis by the Yemeni government.⁷² Most of the Ethiopian migrants, however, quickly head northwards, away from the coast. Some want to settle in Saudi Arabia, others head to other Gulf states, or even further afield.

The crossing from Yemen into Saudi Arabia is extremely difficult due to the 1,800-kilometre border fence.⁷³ Some migrants try to cross into Saudi Arabia on their own, others with the help of smugglers. The smugglers may take migrants all the way to a destination in Saudi Arabia or leave them at the border. In the first case, migrants cross

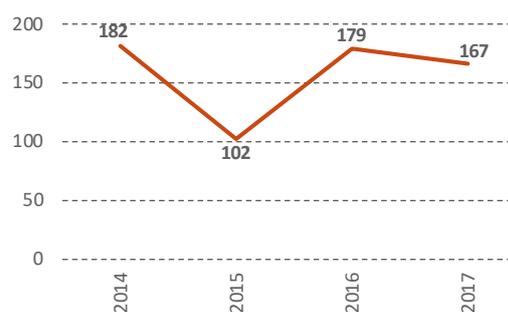
^b The researchers interviewed 60 migrants in Puntland, Somalia, 60 in Djibouti and 41 in Yemen as well as 4 smugglers/traffickers in Puntland, Somalia, 4 in Djibouti and 1 in Yemen. Additionally, the interviewed more than 100 'key informants' from communities as well as local and state authorities, international organizations and NGOs.

the border by car with the smugglers, with the migrant women wearing clothes typically worn by Saudi women (abaya and niqab) to pass as locals.⁷⁴

The human cost

As for any maritime route, drowning is a constant risk for migrants smuggled across the Red Sea or the Arabian Sea. Some also die of exposure to the elements, dehydration or suffocation, if stowed below deck.⁷⁵ In August 2017, up to 50 smuggled migrants were deliberately drowned by smugglers off the coast of Yemen, reportedly because the smugglers saw possible coast guard officials and feared apprehension.⁷⁶ While the number of casualties – dramatically high in 2007, with some 1,400 fatalities⁷⁷ – has considerably decreased, the year-on-year trend has fluctuated. There are reasons to believe that deaths may go unreported along this route.⁷⁸

FIG. 27: Number of migrant deaths in the Horn of Africa, 2014-2017



Source: IOM Missing Migrants Project.

However, the sea voyage is not the only risky part of this route. Migrants smuggled across the Horn of Africa are crowded in container-trucks, sometimes resulting in cases of death by suffocation, dehydration or starvation.⁷⁹ During their land journey to the embarkation point, migrants may face robbery, extortion, physical and sexual assault at the hands of criminal gangs and smugglers. Upon arrival in Yemen, smuggled migrants may be kidnapped or abducted by organized criminal groups.⁸⁰

The southward route: from the Horn of Africa to Southern Africa

The main smuggling hubs, departure and arrival points

The most widely used route for irregular and smuggled migrants from the Horn of Africa travelling towards South Africa is via Kenya-the United Republic of Tanzania-Zambia-Zimbabwe and then into South Africa.⁸¹ Almost all

of the migrants – regardless of route – use smugglers for at least some part of their journey.⁸² Most migrants smuggled along the southward route intend to reach South Africa. However, the increased labour opportunities – particularly in the mining, manufacturing and agricultural sectors – in other parts of Southern Africa, including Zambia, Botswana, Malawi and Mozambique, might be leading to enhanced flows towards these countries.⁸³

Some neighborhoods in major towns along this route are home to many smugglers, and it is possible to procure fraudulent documents there.⁸⁴ Smugglers make use of refugee camps, including Dadaab and Kakuma in Kenya, Dzaleka transit camp in Malawi, and Tongogara camp and Nyamapanda reception centre in Zimbabwe to make contacts with migrants.⁸⁵

The magnitude of migrant smuggling along the southward route

According to recent estimates, 13,400-14,050 migrants from the Horn of Africa – primarily Ethiopia and Somalia – irregularly enter South Africa every year.⁸⁶ This represents a decline from the 2008/2009 estimate of 17,000-20,000.⁸⁷ Considering that some migrants stop on the way and never reach South Africa, the number of those leaving the Horn of Africa and travelling southward is probably higher. Moreover, the multitude of routes and absence of any specific crossing points where numbers can be recorded makes magnitude estimates particularly difficult.⁸⁸

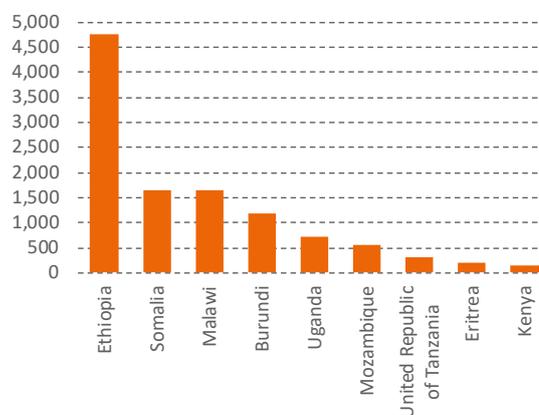
Data on asylum applications may be useful in estimating the number of smuggled migrants and refugees. Irregular migrants, most of whom are smuggled at least for part of their journey along this route, generally apply for asylum upon arrival in South Africa as that is the only way to enter the country and receive permission to stay. According to UNHCR statistics, the number of newly registered asylum seekers in South Africa decreased from some 180,000 in 2010 to some 35,000 in 2016.⁸⁹

The profile of the smuggled migrants

The vast majority (80 per cent) of the migrants smuggled along this route are Ethiopians, and the rest are mainly Somalis.⁹⁰ Some citizens of South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries, especially in the Great Lakes region, also join the flow, usually in Kenya or the United Republic of Tanzania.⁹¹ The flow includes a significant number of refugees who move from their first country of asylum. This is often the case for Somali refugees.⁹²

Asylum statistics also show that Ethiopia has consistently

FIG. 28: Number of new applications for asylum in South Africa by citizens of countries in the Horn of Africa and Eastern Africa, 2016



Source: UNHCR.

been the main country of citizenship among asylum seekers from the Horn of Africa in South Africa over the past few years, followed by Somalia. The number of Eritrean asylum seekers remains very limited, which confirms that Eritreans prefer the northward and eastward routes. In Eastern Africa, Malawi is the main country of origin of asylum-seekers in South Africa.

In addition to the African asylum seekers, some Asians also apply for asylum in South Africa. In 2016, according to UNHCR data, most were from Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. It is not known to what extent these journeys were facilitated by smugglers.

Most migrants smuggled to South Africa from the Horn of Africa are young men, between the ages of 18 and 35. The share of females might be higher among Somalis than Ethiopians.⁹³ In 2014, IOM noted that the number of unaccompanied children in mixed migration flows from the Horn of Africa appeared to be increasing.⁹⁴

The smugglers' profile and organization

Smuggling along this route tends to be informally organized in relatively loose networks involving many opportunistic individual smugglers, such as agents and drivers, who interact with each other in a flexible manner.⁹⁵ The chief smugglers rely on 'smuggling managers' to move people from one location to another. 'Smuggling managers' are flexible and may work with a number of smugglers carrying out specific tasks such as guiding, transporting or accommodating migrants.⁹⁶ There appear to be no large, multinational smuggling organizations operating along the entire route, although in some countries, organized criminals may be getting involved.⁹⁷

The 'typical' smuggler on this route is an 18 to 40-year-old man. However, some women have also taken part in smuggling rings. Somali smugglers usually work with fellow clansmen throughout the network.⁹⁸ Smugglers may live in or visit home villages in Ethiopia and Somalia and/or destination areas and take charge of a specific group of migrants. They make all the arrangements with their associates along the route, and assist with various local issues that need a hands-on approach, such as paying bribes and arranging guides for the migrants.⁹⁹

Smugglers operating along this route may call themselves "travel agents" and do not necessarily perceive their activities to be illegal. Sometimes they even see themselves as providers of humanitarian services, helping people in need to flee and reach a safer place.¹⁰⁰

The smugglers' modus operandi and travel arrangements

Most smuggled migrants along this route travel by bus, truck and/or car, usually combined with stretches of walking. In a survey of nearly 400 migrants who had travelled along this route, bus was the most frequently reported means of transport; reported by 40 per cent of the respondents. Airplane travel was reported by 10 per cent, while 1 per cent stated that they had travelled by boat.¹⁰¹

Some have their journey facilitated by smugglers from the very beginning. There are smugglers in Ethiopia, for example, who specifically operate the southern route into Kenya.¹⁰² Others make it to Nairobi alone, and search for a smuggler there to take them southward to South Africa or another country. From Kenya, migrants are smuggled to the United Republic of Tanzania, and from there, some proceed to Zambia, with the rest continuing either to Malawi or Mozambique.

Zimbabwe is the last transit country before South Africa. The vast majority of irregular and smuggled migrants enter South Africa via the Beitbridge border post. A few also cross into South Africa from Mozambique through the border town of Ressano Garcia.

The average duration of the journey from the Horn of Africa to South Africa is 48 days or just under 7 weeks.¹⁰³ The price for this journey seems to have increased. While in 2009, reported payments ranged between US\$1,000 and 3,000,¹⁰⁴ in 2015-2016, the average price was US\$3,372.¹⁰⁵ Based on these smuggling fees, as well as their estimate of 13,400 – 14,050 smuggled migrants per year, RMMS estimated that the illicit migrant smuggling economy on this route is worth at least US\$47 million per annum.¹⁰⁶

The human cost

There is no systematic data on deaths and disappearances along the southward route, but interviews with migrants and government officials show that casualties are not uncommon.¹⁰⁷ During the long journey from the Horn of Africa to South Africa smugglers rarely take into consideration the basic survival needs of their clients, such as food, water and shelter.¹⁰⁸ Some passages may also be more dangerous than others; for example, the crossing of Lake Malawi, where in June 2012 a boat carrying 49 migrants sank, causing the death of all passengers.¹⁰⁹

Smuggled migrants are also exposed to violence and different types of crime along this route. For instance, smugglers rarely engaged in extortion of migrants' family and friends in 2008-2009. This practice is now more commonly reported, often while the smugglers detain the migrant.¹¹⁰ Forced to travel on small paths away from main roads to avoid detection, migrants smuggled into Kenya can be easily attacked and robbed by gangs.¹¹¹ Similarly, in the border area between South Africa and Zimbabwe migrants are routinely subjected to mistreatment, muggings and rape by criminal gangs.¹¹²

In many countries along the route, many migrants are detained and held in prisons or detention centres for prolonged periods. According to research from 2015, 68 per cent of migrants on this route said that either they themselves or someone in their group had been detained or imprisoned by the police during their journey.¹¹³

Other migrant smuggling routes in, through or affecting the Horn of Africa

There are reports that a new route has emerged between the Horn of Africa and Europe. Young people from Somalia are undertaking this journey via Yemen. Their route takes them from Bossaso across the Arabian Sea to the south coast of Yemen, from where they travel to the Yemeni western coast and cross the Red Sea to Sudan. From Sudan they travel overland into Libya, where they join the Central Mediterranean route to Europe. Some Ethiopians may also be using this route. The magnitude of this route is uncertain, but estimates in the range of a few hundred per month have been reported.¹¹⁴

Air or sea travel among migrants from the Horn of Africa who intend to reach South Africa may be increasing. Recent research showed that some Somalis were bypassing Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania on the way to South Africa in 2015, with most travelling by air or sea to Mozambique, whereas in previous years, nearly all passed through Kenya and Tanzania.¹¹⁵

Some migrants also use countries in Southern Africa as transit points for flying to Europe, the United States of America or Australia.¹¹⁶ From South Africa, migrants might leave on direct flights to Europe or North America or use more convoluted routes, for example passing through Latin America, where immigration laws may be less restrictive.¹¹⁷ A technique often used by smugglers operating on transoceanic air routes from South Africa involves the fabrication of false conferences or international workshops with official letterheads and appropriate documentation to enable numerous 'delegates' to fly in and then immediately slip underground. In 2009, it was reported that some educational institutions cooperated with smugglers by offering fictitious 'scholarships' or special study positions in destination countries.¹¹⁸

FROM CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA INTO SOUTH AFRICA

Profile of migrants:

Mainly Zimbabweans; in recent years, also many citizens of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Human cost:

From Zimbabwe to South Africa, the major risk is crossing the Limpopo river, where migrants regularly drown or are killed by hippos. Also risks of robbery, violence and extortion.

Profile of smugglers:

Mostly men from South Africa or Zimbabwe. Sometimes also fellow migrants, and for longer-distance routes, such as from South Asia, also smugglers from those countries.

Organization:

From Zimbabwe to South Africa, both 'professional' and 'amateur' smugglers operate.

CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

South Africa not only attracts migrants and refugees from the Horn of Africa, but is also a major destination of mixed migration flows from Central and Southern Africa. Neighbouring countries - particularly Zimbabwe - are significant countries of origin for migrants and refugees. South Africa has long offered refuge to people fleeing violence in the Great Lakes region, as well as work opportunities to economic migrants from Central and West Africa.¹¹⁹

Although South Africa is the main destination of mixed migration flows from Central and Southern Africa heading south, it appears that countries such as Malawi,

Mozambique, Botswana and Zambia are increasingly being viewed as alternative destinations.¹²⁰ However, the limited literature about migrant smuggling in the region focuses almost exclusively on flows directed to South Africa, and there is hardly any information available on other irregular migration and migrant smuggling routes. This gap is reflected in the present chapter, which will mainly focus on smuggling of migrants to South Africa through the Zimbabwean border.

The main smuggling hubs, departure and arrival points

The towns of Beitbridge and Musina, on the Zimbabwean and South African side of the border respectively, are used to cross into South Africa via Zimbabwe. These towns also serve as temporary bases for onward travel.¹²¹ From Zimbabwe, migrants and refugees enter South Africa either by passing through Beitbridge border post, or by crossing the border elsewhere to avoid detection. Migrant smuggling is documented along both routes.¹²²

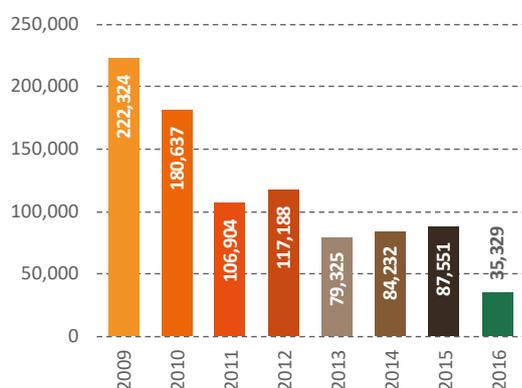
Migrants could regularly enter South Africa through Beitbridge border post by submitting an application for asylum at the border. But few choose this option, and the number of migrants and refugees who enter South Africa away from the official crossing is very high. One possible explanation is that the presence of security officials at the border post acts as a deterrent, especially for people escaping political persecution. Another is that migrants simply do not know that they could enter South Africa from the official border post by expressing their wish to apply for asylum, and smugglers may prefer not to inform them about this option.¹²³

The magnitude of migrant smuggling in Central and Southern Africa

The scant available literature only provides occasional estimates of the smuggling flow into South Africa through the Zimbabwean border. According to a survey conducted by the Forced Migration Studies Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand in 2007-2008, for instance, the vast majority (76 per cent) of those who entered South Africa through a land border did so through the Zimbabwe-South Africa border, and 22 per cent of those relied on smugglers.¹²⁴

Data on asylum applications may provide a rough indication of the size and composition of this flow. According to UNHCR data, in 2016, more than 35,000 people applied for asylum in South Africa, which is a considerable decrease from the peak year of 2009, when more than 200,000 asylum applications were lodged.

FIG. 29: Trend in the number of new applications for asylum in South Africa, 2009-2016



Source: UNHCR.

The profile of the smuggled migrants

Out of the more than 35,000 applications for asylum registered in South Africa in 2016, Zimbabwe (7,964) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (5,293) were the two most frequent origin countries. Zimbabwean nationals comprise nearly all asylum seekers from Southern Africa. Citizens of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have constituted the biggest group of asylum seekers from Central Africa over the past few years.

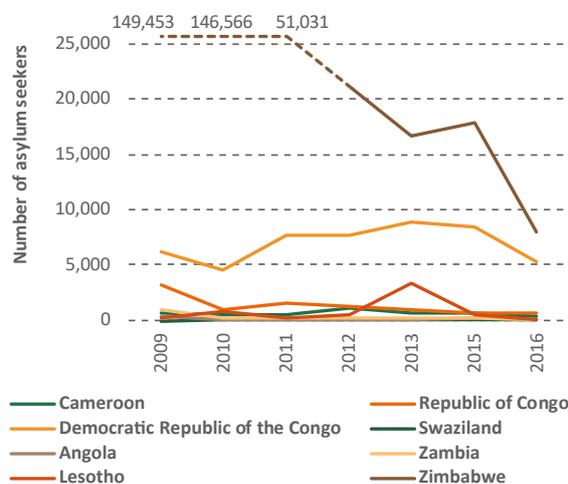
There is scant information regarding the age and gender of smuggled migrants in this region. Migrant populations from the Democratic Republic of the Congo tend to comprise more women, children and elderly people - often travelling in family units - than migrant groups from the Horn of Africa. There is also evidence suggesting that unaccompanied minors are undertaking this journey.¹²⁵

The smugglers' profile and organization

Research from 2008-2009 showed that smuggling organizations operating along the routes to South Africa often include a tight and trust-based core around which loose and flexible relations develop. Professional smugglers constitute the core of the smuggling networks. They are usually men from South Africa or Zimbabwe who have been living in the border area for several years. Professional smugglers hire employees to deal directly with clients, sometimes contract services of amateurs, buy cars to transport migrants and refugees and arrange for permits for their clients.¹²⁶

Amateur smugglers are generally Zimbabwean and some are themselves undocumented.¹²⁷ These smugglers usually provide transportation from Beitbridge to Musina. Some also offer transportation to Johannesburg through ad hoc

FIG. 30: Number of asylum seekers in South Africa from the main countries of origin in Central and Southern Africa, 2009-2016



Source: UNHCR

arrangements with transport operators. Depending on the service offered, prices vary between US\$10 and 50 per person. Amateurs appear to be more likely to use coercive means such as threats of violence than 'professional' smugglers.¹²⁸

The smugglers' modus operandi and travel arrangements

Lack of information about South Africa's asylum and immigration policies, as well as rumours spread by smugglers, encourage migrants and refugees to resort to the services of smugglers and pay to start the asylum procedure.¹²⁹ Asylum seekers could legally enter South Africa and file an application for asylum at the border, but few people know about this option. More than two thirds of the asylum seekers interviewed at refugee reception offices in South Africa in 2008-2009 were unaware of this procedure when they left their countries of origin.¹³⁰

As far as Zimbabwean migrants are concerned, legal pathways to South Africa may in principle be available, but they may not be accessible because of the costs associated with the need to travel to large cities to obtain documentation. Many Zimbabwean migrants enter South Africa irregularly; often with the help of smugglers.¹³¹

It appears that most Congolese migrants and refugees do not use smugglers, or if they do, they use them only to be smuggled from Zimbabwe into South Africa. Congolese generally travel on foot on their own, and frequently use commercial transportation such as buses and minibuses. They transit through a combination of the countries of Burundi, Mozambique, Rwanda, the United Republic of

Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe on their way to South Africa.¹³²

Undocumented migrants may also travel with so-called *malayitsha*, taxi drivers operating in Beitbridge. Migrants travelling with *malayitsha* generally enter South Africa through the bush. *Malayitsha* employ individuals called *impisi* (“hyena”) who help migrants to cross the Limpopo river and walk through the bush. Migrants also have to pass three lines of barbed wire and cross the fence either through pre-made cuts or using keys at the various points where there are gates.¹³³

Most of the respondents interviewed by IOM in 2007-2008 paid either up to US\$20 or more than US\$60 for the smuggling services. Few respondents paid mid-range fees.¹³⁴ More recent price information is not available.

The human cost

There is no specific data about casualties along this route. According to the IOM Missing Migrant Project, 136 migrants and refugees lost their lives along the migration routes crossing Sub-Saharan Africa between January and July of 2017, whereas in all of 2016, 92 people died.¹³⁵ Not all of those deaths occurred along the South Africa-Zimbabwe route.

The crossing of the Limpopo river, which separates Zimbabwe and South Africa, can be dangerous. While crossing the river, migrants occasionally drown or are killed by hippos and crocodiles. Migrants smuggled across Limpopo river are also at risk of being ambushed by criminal groups known as *guma guma* (or amagama-guma), well-known for their methods of extortion. These groups also engage in migrant smuggling.¹³⁶

Other migrant smuggling routes in Central and Southern Africa

There is a considerable migrant smuggling flow directed towards Mayotte, an insular department and region of France located in the Indian Ocean between Mozambique and Madagascar. The key departure point is the islands of Comoros, and to a lesser extent Madagascar. Enjoying much higher standards of living and public services than the other islands of the archipelago, Mayotte attracts thousands of migrants every year, making migrant smuggling a very profitable business.

Depending on the time of year, landings happen either on the tiny island of Mtsamboro in the north, or further south on the main island. In 2010, 342 vessels were intercepted carrying a total of 7,089 migrants, for which 523 smugglers were arrested. Irregular migrants to Mayotte

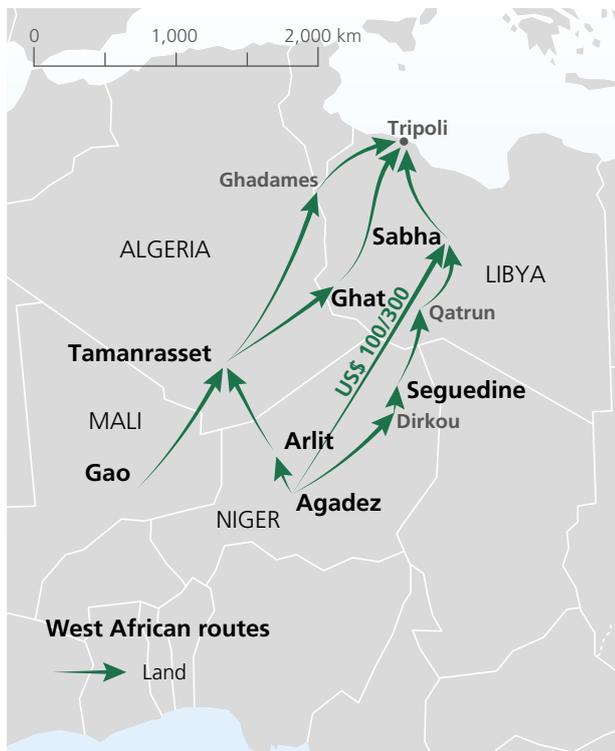
come from Comoros, but also from Madagascar, the United Republic of Tanzania and as far away as Iraq.¹³⁷

The travel from Comoros to Mayotte is arranged and facilitated by local smugglers; generally fishermen, who board their clients on tiny fishing boats, known as *kwassa kwassa*. The smuggling routes heading to Mayotte are well-known for being risky. Several incidents involving multiple fatalities have been reported in recent years.¹³⁸

The authorities of Madagascar report smuggling of migrants out of the country. This smuggling activity is directed mainly to the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, as well as to other countries in the Middle East. This smuggling flow makes use of the Comoros, Seychelles or Mauritius as transits to the final destinations.¹³⁹

Some South Asians also seek to migrate to South Africa. In 2013, IOM reported a change in the demographics of mixed migration flows passing through Mozambique, with a new trend of South Asians travelling in trucks from the United Republic of Tanzania.¹⁴⁰ South African police sources have also reported that well-established criminal networks are smuggling migrants into the country from South Asia. Often migrants from these countries are sponsored by members of their community already resident in South Africa and are compelled to work to pay off their debt.¹⁴¹ UNHCR data on new asylum applications shows that 2015 was a peak year, with more than 15,000 applications from South Asian citizens. In 2016, however, these numbers dropped to less than half of those figures.

FROM WEST AFRICA TO NORTH AFRICA



The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.

Intraregional flows make up the vast majority of the migration flows in West Africa, and according to the European Commission, migration to Europe constitutes a small portion of the migration phenomenon in this region.¹⁴² Most West African states^c belong to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In principle, the ECOWAS region is an area of free movement. According to the 1979 Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment, ECOWAS nationals should be able to move freely within the region with a valid travel document and an international health certificate.^d

The free movement of persons within the ECOWAS region is sometimes rather difficult. Domestic laws in some Member States still contravene the 1979 Protocol. Moreover, limited access to ECOWAS travel documents, lack of information among citizens and risks at border crossing points may affect the implementation of the free

Profile of migrants:

Mostly young men from most West African countries, with proportions of citizenships depending on the geographic area.

Human cost:

At a minimum, nearly 500 deaths per year in the Sahara desert in Niger and Algeria only. The number is likely to be far higher. Significant risk of kidnapping for ransom and trafficking in persons.

Profile of smugglers:

Once in Mali or Niger, where the irregular travel often starts, local, nomadic ethnic groups, including Tuareg and Toubou, are often involved.

Organization:

Different smugglers in major hubs operate at different border crossings in a flexible and opportunistic manner. In Libya, it appears that much smuggling activity is well organized.

movement area.¹⁴³ Travel documents may be expensive or difficult to obtain, and some border crossings are still subject to informal 'taxes' by border officials. As a result, a large number of the border crossings are undertaken irregularly, simply by avoiding the official border crossing points.¹⁴⁴

The level of irregularity involved in the travel seems to increase the further north migrants go. In northern Niger and in northern Mali, there are no commercial bus services, and the desert terrain is inhospitable. This means that migrants have to rely on local assistance for mobility. Libya, which is a destination for many West African migrants, as well as a transit point for those intending to join the Central Mediterranean route to Europe, is not an ECOWAS member and does not have bilateral visa-free agreements with any countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, most migrants going to Libya use a smuggler.¹⁴⁵

Although most ECOWAS citizens without travel documents simply avoid official border posts, some make the journey with the assistance of smugglers. Non-ECOWAS citizens also rely on the help of smugglers to move within the region.¹⁴⁶ Migrant smuggling is also widely docu-

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c Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo.

d The full text of the Protocol is available at: <http://documentation.ecowas.int/>.

mented along the routes connecting Niger and Mali to Libya, Algeria and Morocco. Even those who cross the ECOWAS region in a regular manner often continue their journey north irregularly and with the assistance of smugglers. Given the irregular nature and hardship of the journey across the Sahara, it can be assumed that all migrants and refugees using this route rely on the services of smugglers.¹⁴⁷

The main smuggling hubs, departure and arrival points

Regardless of where in West Africa they start their journey, most migrants and refugees heading north pass through Mali and/or Niger. Travel from West Africa to the cities of Agadez, Niger and Gao, Mali is generally of a licit nature and often undertaken by commercial bus travel.¹⁴⁸

Mali is a transit country for migrants heading to Niger or Algeria, and more recently, to Mauritania and from there, to Morocco. Gao, in north-east Mali, is an important city for migrants smuggled to Algeria and migrants continuing to Niger. From Gao, migrants are smuggled north across the Algerian border and to Tamanrasset.¹⁴⁹ Migrants and refugees passing through Algeria continue either to Libya or – to a lesser extent – to Morocco.¹⁵⁰

Niger is a key transit point for migrants and refugees from all over West Africa travelling to North Africa en route to Europe. Agadez is the main city in Niger, where migrants can find smugglers to continue their journey to Libya or Algeria.¹⁵¹ Recent field research by UNODC has indicated that smuggling routes are diversifying and that some routes now bypass Agadez.¹⁵²

From Agadez, there are two main routes heading north. The more commonly used smuggling route, to Libya, passes through north-eastern Niger en route to Sabha. This transit point in west-central Libya is about halfway between the border with Niger and the Mediterranean coast. The journey across the Sahara desert is generally facilitated by smugglers.¹⁵³ The route to Algeria passes through Arlit en route to Tamanrasset in Algeria. Malians tend to take this route because they do not need a visa to enter Algeria, but due to the hardship of the journey they still rely on smugglers.¹⁵⁴

The Algerian authorities report that there are four major routes crossing their country from south to north. Two routes depart from the borders with Mali, crossing the border in one of several small villages, departing from Nedjma, Oued Akafoua or Tin Amezi to Tamanrasset and then north to Illizi, Ouargla and El Oued to the coast. Two other routes depart from the borders with Niger to

Samaka Louni Oued Sabine, or alternatively Azerzi, or Amsel to Tamanrasset.

Although most migrants transiting through Tamanrasset head to Libya, some move northward instead. Those who intend to apply for asylum in Algeria tend to travel to Algiers, whereas the others move directly to Oujda, in Morocco, from where they could be smuggled onwards along the Western Mediterranean route.¹⁵⁵ According to the Algerian authorities, the passage from Algeria to Morocco starts from different villages along the Algerian coasts; Mostaganem, Tlemecen and others. From there, migrants from sub-Saharan Africa cross into Morocco, often to continue towards Europe.

Morocco also plays a crucial role in countering migrant smuggling along the West African routes. According to the Moroccan national authorities, along this route, the smuggling of migrants is managed by transnational networks connected with other forms of criminal organizations active in the Sahel and the Sahara. The potential demand for smuggling activity along this route is estimated at about 200,000 migrants per year by the Moroccan authorities. The smuggling corridors into Morocco are mainly along the eastern border of the country, where the authorities report having detected intense smuggling activity since the early 2000s.¹⁵⁶

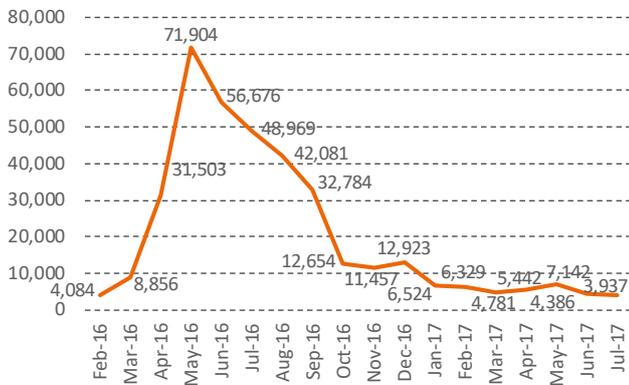
The magnitude of migrant smuggling in West Africa

Most migrants and refugees from West Africa travel to Niger or Mali on their own, although non-ECOWAS citizens may resort to smugglers to obtain ECOWAS passports to be able to move freely within the region.¹⁵⁷ There are no available data that refer specifically to migrant smuggling along this route, but several sources provide data and estimates about the irregular migration flow transiting Niger and Mali on the way to Algeria and Libya. Considering that many of the migrants and refugees travelling northward transit through Niger or Mali and rely on smugglers to continue to North Africa, this information provides an indication of the magnitude of migrant smuggling in the region.

Since the beginning of 2016, the International Organization for Migration has been collecting data on irregular migrants transiting through Niger in its two flow monitoring points, in Arlit, from Agadez on the way to Algeria, and Séguédine, from Agadez on the way to Libya. In 2016, more than 330,000 individuals transited through Niger.¹⁵⁸

Most migrants are smuggled towards Libya. In 2016, out of the total outgoing flow from Niger of nearly 334,000,

FIG. 31: Number of migrants in the outgoing flow from Niger per month, February 2016-July 2017

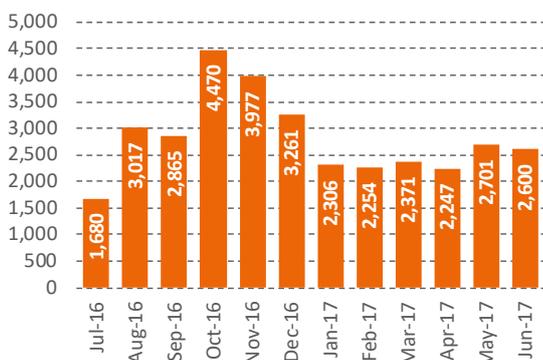


Source: IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) data.

some 89 per cent (298,000) were smuggled to Seguedine towards Libya, and the rest to Arlit, towards Algeria.¹⁵⁹ Data for the period January-July 2017 shows a significant reduction of the outbound flow, as well as a shift towards Arlit as a transit point. Of the approximately 38,500 migrants observed in these two monitoring points in the first seven months of 2017, more than 17,000 – 44 per cent – transited through Arlit.¹⁶⁰

In the summer of 2016, IOM started tracking the movement of outgoing migrant flows in Mali. Most of these migrants continue north to Algeria, although some move on to Burkina Faso, Mauritania and/or Niger. During the year from 30 June 2016 – 30 June 2017, an average of nearly 100 migrants per day passed the Mali monitoring points. Of these, 40 per cent said they intended to go to Europe.¹⁶¹

FIG. 32: Number of migrants in the outgoing flow from Mali, July 2016-June 2017



Source: IOM.

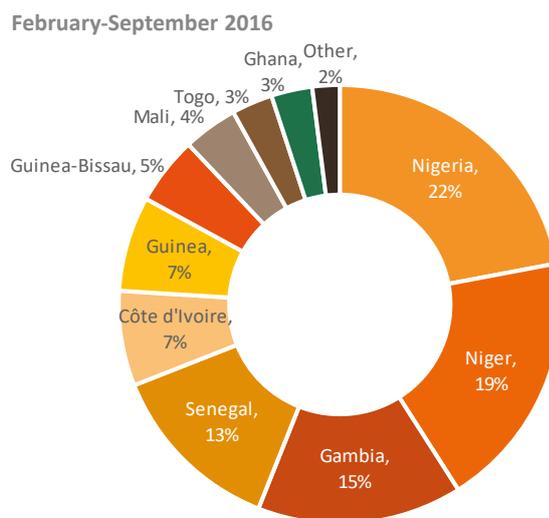
The profile of the smuggled migrants

Most of the migrants comprising the outbound flows from Niger are West Africans. The citizenship profiles of migrants changed in 2017 in parallel with a considerable reduction in outflows, particularly through Seguedine towards Libya. This is a result of the fragmentation of routes and migrants' bypassing of Seguedine to avoid security controls. Between January and July 2017, nearly all of the migrants recorded at the Seguedine monitoring point were Nigerien.¹⁶²

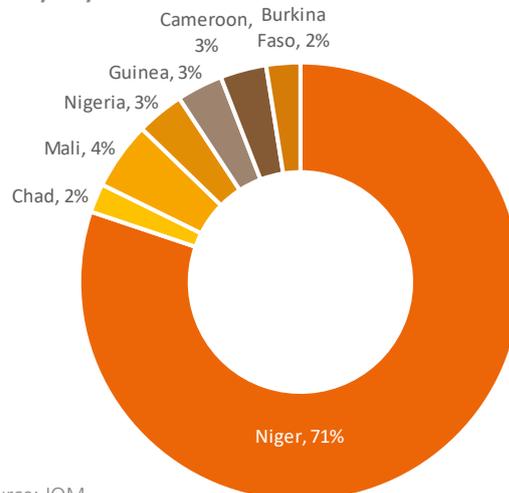
The citizenship profiles of outgoing flows from Mali differ from those observed in Niger. The most frequently registered citizenship of migrants travelling through Mali is Guinea, followed by Mali, Senegal and Gambia.

In the first few months of 2017 – as in previous years – the vast majority, some 96-97 per cent, of migrants on

FIG. 33: Shares of the main citizenships recorded in outgoing flows from Niger



January-July 2017



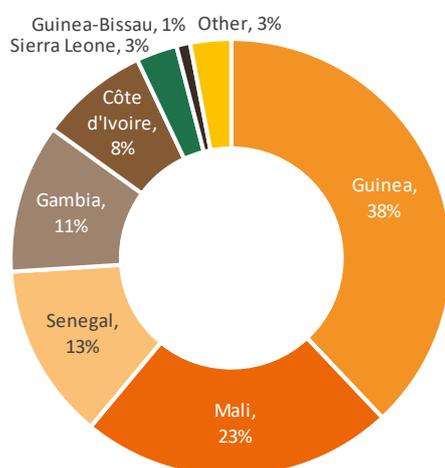
Source: IOM.

outbound routes from Niger and Mali were male.¹⁶³ Some of these shares are subject to considerable monthly fluctuations, however. In August 2016, for example, 20 per cent of the outgoing flows from Niger were comprised of women.¹⁶⁴ A small number of women travel from West Africa to Libya, generally making the journey to join their husbands who are already there. This has been observed among Malian and Nigerian women, in particular. Their husbands organized the journeys for them from afar, with a trusted chaperone or smuggler.¹⁶⁵

Although most of the migrants are adults, the flows also include some minors. Between February 2016 and May 2017, some 10,500 minors were recorded in the incoming and outgoing flows in Niger. Some of these minors were unaccompanied.¹⁶⁶ In Mali, minors comprised 7 per cent of the migrants observed at IOM monitoring points between July 2016 and June 2017. Some sources noted a perceived increase in the numbers of unaccompanied minors from West Africa transiting through Niger in 2013, with children reportedly sent to Libya by their families to make money to send home. The majority of these minors had little intention to move on to Europe.¹⁶⁷

Not all migrants travelling along the northward routes intend to settle in Libya, Morocco or Europe. Some, especially from Sahelian countries such as Mali, Niger and Chad, are seasonal migrants, moving to Libya every year just after the harvest and then returning home for the rainy season after months of work. The majority stay in rural and agricultural areas close to the border. Due to their relationships with local tribes that control the border, they can usually enter the country more easily than the typical irregular migrant.¹⁶⁸

FIG. 34: Shares of citizenships recorded in outgoing flows from Mali, July 2016-June 2017



Source: IOM.

The smugglers' profile and organization

For many migrants, the irregular part of their journey starts in Agadez, Niger, where migrant smuggling is a thriving and relatively well-organized activity. As soon as migrants get off the bus in Agadez, they are immediately approached by people offering them accommodation in the so-called 'ghettos' and onward transport to Libya.¹⁶⁹ These people, known as 'chasseurs', 'coxeurs' or 'rabatteurs' are recruiters working for 'ghetto bosses' who pay them a certain share of the profit per migrant. 'Ghetto bosses' are network leaders who own one or more ghetto compounds where migrants are housed, in addition to a number of vehicles. The travel arrangements and money transfers are made in the compounds.¹⁷⁰

Men from Tuareg, Toubou and Arab nomadic groups are often responsible for providing transportation. They have been operating in the Sahara desert for generations, and since the tribal links extend across country borders, they can readily move people across the desert.¹⁷¹ The Toubou have been reported to control the flows across Libya's southern border, while the Tuareg control the Algerian border region.¹⁷² Most migrants choose routes through Libya rather than Algeria due to tighter border controls and more frequent arrests at the Algerian border, plus the shorter travel time to Libya.¹⁷³

Frontex reported in 2016 that migrant smuggling networks in Libya are structured in strictly hierarchical criminal organizations.¹⁷⁴

The smugglers' modus operandi and travel arrangements

From Agadez, migrants heading to Libya continue to Dirkou, usually in pick-ups organized by smugglers. In Dirkou, they often have to wait a few days until they find a smuggler who can bring them further north, towards Libya.¹⁷⁵ Most migrants and refugees bypass the border post and travel through the desert to Libya with the mediation of smugglers. The further passage from Sabha to Tripoli is also facilitated by smugglers.¹⁷⁶

With regard to smuggling prices, in 2013, the journey from Agadez to Sabha was reported to cost between US\$100 and 300.¹⁷⁷ UNODC field research in October 2017 found that prices have increased significantly, to some US\$550-850, mainly due to increased security checks and smugglers' need to avoid law enforcement and military.¹⁷⁸

Some migrants also travel north from Agadez, to reach Algeria, usually in pick-up trucks. Most migrants cross the border clandestinely. Some then move on to the hub

of Tamanrasset, Algeria, with the help of another smuggler, where they may stay and work for some time until they have enough money to continue their journey.¹⁷⁹ From Tamanrasset to Libya all migrants resort to the services of smugglers; usually two or more for the whole route.¹⁸⁰

With regard to the route connecting Mali to Algeria, most migrants use smugglers. Surveyed migrants in Libya have also reported that detentions take place at this particular border, with release only upon the payment of a certain amount of money.¹⁸¹

Along this route, some smugglers also operate a 'black market' for false UNHCR documents identifying holders as refugees in Algeria, as well as for forged Malian passports which are used to enter Algeria since Malians do not need a visa.¹⁸² 'Rental' of a Malian passport costs €50 and a UNHCR document, €10. Once migrants are close to the Moroccan border, the networks will retrieve the documents so that they can be reused.¹⁸³

Payments of bribes at border crossings have been reported along this route.¹⁸⁴

The human cost

Data from the IOM Missing Migrants Project shows that there were more than 100 reported incidents in Libya or Niger for the year 2016, with 485 people reported missing (presumed dead). However, testimonies of migrants who have journeyed through the Sahara suggest that the actual number of fatalities is much higher.¹⁸⁵

The hardships and dangers of the overland journey across the Sahara desert are well-documented. Smuggled migrants and refugees are transported across the desert in overloaded trucks or pick-ups, often at high speed in order to minimise the risk of interception. Trucks and pick-ups may break down and migrants are frequently exposed to food and water shortages during the journey. Moreover, passengers who fall ill are reportedly abandoned by the smugglers in the desert in order not to infect the rest of the group.¹⁸⁶

The journey of smuggled migrants across the Sahara is made even more dangerous by the presence of armed groups operating along this route. Some of these have attacked the cars of smugglers with the intention of kidnapping migrants for ransom.¹⁸⁷

Migrant smuggling in West Africa is sometimes connected to human trafficking and the two crimes often occur along the same routes. Moreover, migrants smuggled within the region often run out of money to pay for the journey, and

this makes them vulnerable to trafficking for forced labour or sexual exploitation.¹⁸⁸

Other migrant smuggling routes

There are also several other routes that involve fewer migrants in, through or affecting West Africa. For example, migrant smuggling is documented between Chad and Libya; a route that might be increasingly used as routes divert away from Agadez and Niger.¹⁸⁹ Migrants and refugees usually travel from N'Djamena to Moussoro, and then onwards to Faya, by bus or by car. In Faya, they get in touch with smugglers transporting them into Qatrun, Libya and finally to Sabha. In 2013, the magnitude of this flow was estimated at 100-200 migrants per month.¹⁹⁰

The minor coastal route via Mauritania to Morocco is mainly used by Senegalese migrants as it is a much shorter alternative for them than crossing Mali, Niger and Algeria. Sometimes, people from Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire or Benin join as well. Migrant smuggling does not seem to be very prevalent along this route, though fake documents are reportedly used.¹⁹¹

There is also smuggling by air from West African countries. In 2014, the Africa-FRONTEX Intelligence Community identified new smuggling routes from West African airports to various EU destinations. Journeys were organized by smuggling networks that took care of all formalities, including travel documents, visas and flight tickets.¹⁹² Migrant smuggling by air is also documented in Nigeria. These are complex operations involving several smugglers. Some are specialized in rapidly providing fraudulent Nigerian and foreign passports, whereas others take care of the visa. Yet another smuggler provides the migrant with a flight ticket to a destination country.¹⁹³

ENDNOTES - AFRICA

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- 3 Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, *Smuggled south. An updated overview of mixed migration from the Horn of Africa to southern Africa with specific focus on protection risks, human smuggling and trafficking*, RMMS briefing paper 3, March 2017, p. 2.
- 4 Frontex, Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community Joint Report 2016, April 2017, p. 20.
- 5 Ibid., p. 21.
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