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EU Emergency Trust
Fund for Africa

Migration Between the Horn of Africa and Yemen (Executive Summary)

A Study of Puntland, Djibouti and Yemen



Submitted by staff of the Research and Evidence Facility
For the EU Trust Fund for Africa (Horn of Africa Window)

24 July 2017

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With Funding Provided by:



The EU Emergency Trust Fund for the Horn of Africa
Development Cooperation DG
Brussels

This report was prepared and written by Caitlin Sturridge, Oliver Bakewell and Laura Hammond. The fieldwork was carried out by local researchers, Farrah Hussein, Hanad Mohamed, Idyle Abdourahman and Wameedh Shakir. Special thanks also to Vincent Chordi and Lavender Mboya for their help, and to the key informants and interviewees who contributed their insights from Puntland, Djibouti, Yemen, Kenya, Ethiopia and elsewhere. Finally, we would also like to thank Virginie de Ruyt and Fulgencio Garrido-Ruiz from the European Union Trust Fund, together with the EU Delegations who supported this project.

The views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and do not indicate a position or opinion on the part of the European Union or the EU Trust Fund for Africa.

Suggested Citation: Research and Evidence Facility (REF). 'Migration between the Horn of Africa and Yemen: A Study of Puntland, Djibouti and Yemen,' London and Nairobi: EU Trust Fund for Africa (Horn of Africa Window) Research and Evidence Facility.
www.soas.ac.uk/hornresearch-ref

Executive Summary

This report on migration¹ between the Horn of Africa and Yemen was produced by the Research and Evidence Facility (REF) at the request of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF). The project involved primary and secondary data collection in Puntland, Djibouti and Yemen between January and June 2017. The objective of the research is to better understand what is driving the growth in migration from the Horn of Africa to Yemen, and the extent to which smuggling and trafficking networks are involved in facilitating these movements. It also explores the impact of these movements on the lives of migrants, the local communities and wider society. Finally, it examines the existing policy and programme responses to this migration in order to identify potential gaps and opportunities for future policy and programming.

The year on year increase in migration between the Horn of Africa and Yemen has slowed in the past twelve months. Migration between the Horn of Africa and Yemen has been taking place for many years and involves a range of migrants, including so-called economic migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, victims of trafficking and unaccompanied migrant children from Ethiopia, Somalia and Yemen and, to a lesser extent, from other countries in the region. In this sense, this migration can be described as mixed, both in terms of who is migrating, but also in terms of their motivations and drivers. Journeys between the Horn of Africa and Yemen have traditionally been made across two sea routes whose relative popularity has ebbed and flowed over time: the Red Sea via Djibouti and the Arabian Sea via Puntland. UNHCR and partners estimate that over 800,000 people have made the crossing to Yemen between January 2006 and December 2016, and data collected over the last ten years shows an upward trajectory in migration along this route, with record numbers arriving in 2016. More recently, however, there is a common perception that the number of Ethiopians migrating to Yemen in the last year has reduced; a claim which is broadly substantiated by available data. Travelling in the opposite direction, UNHCR estimates that just under 96,000 people have left Yemen for the Horn of Africa since the start of the conflict in 2015, with most of these movements occurring during the first five months of fighting in Yemen.

The demographics and routes taken show significant changes. Young men primarily from Ethiopia, but also Somalia, represent the majority of those making the crossing to Yemen. However, a sizeable and growing number of female migrants are also on the move, estimated to be between 20-30%, and attracted by the considerable demand for domestic workers in the Gulf states. While some migrants stay in Yemen, the majority are hoping to make it to Saudi Arabia. A growing minority of mainly Somali migrants are choosing to migrate to Europe via Yemen. This research tracked the emergence of a new route from the Horn of Africa to Yemen, back through Sudan and onward to Egypt and Libya. For those who successfully reach Europe, this amounts to three dangerous sea crossings in their attempts to reach their destination. Movements in the opposite direction, towards the Horn of Africa, are mainly comprised of Yemeni and Somali migrants, for the most part towards Djibouti and Somalia. Among this group, the male-female and adult-child balance is more evenly split, and arrivals

¹ Throughout this report, 'migration' is used to refer to all kinds of movement, including voluntary migration, displacement, and mixed migration. The report does not aim to take a position on whether people on the move are economic migrants, refugees, or another category of persons.

from Yemen were 52% male and 48% female, with 46% under 18 years (UNHCR, 2016). Data on child migrants is limited, though key informants describe growing numbers of children travelling along these routes, and indicate that unaccompanied migrant children could make up as much as 20-30% of migrant flows towards Yemen.

As in many contexts, the drivers of migration and displacement are multiple, overlapping and change over time. Socioeconomic, political and security factors were key reasons behind decisions to migrate, although state policy, cultures of migration, family and social networks, and the growth in the smuggling industry also play a role. Many of these drivers are linked to a general deterioration of conditions, associated with conflict in Yemen, political unrest in Ethiopia, and drought in the region. Although, it is worth noting that, while these developments significantly impact movement choices and patterns, those affected by conflict, insecurity and drought may be more likely to migrate internally, or to neighbouring countries than to attempt sea crossings to and from Yemen, and beyond. This is likely related to the fact that these groups lack the ability to finance sea crossings or long-distance movements.

Despite the difficulties of the journey, most people do not regret leaving. Movements between the Horn of Africa and Yemen are dangerous, with many living in deplorable conditions and experiencing extreme suffering and abuse. However, in spite of this, migrants demonstrate significant resilience and determination to move, and most do not regret their decision to migrate; calling into question the effectiveness of campaigns that seek to deter movements by raising awareness of the risks, dangers and difficulties. Furthermore, migrants and local communities suffer many of the same hardships.

Communities in transit and destination areas carry much of the cost of supporting migrants and refugees. This report is also concerned with migration's impact on local communities and wider society. Poverty, unemployment, vulnerability and drought affect both groups, and the influx of large numbers of migrants can put further pressure on already overstretched social services, natural resources and livelihoods. In general, however, community respondents voice mixed feelings towards migrants and recognised both the challenges and opportunities associated with migration.

A range of programme and policy gaps and opportunities are identified. A range of governmental, non-governmental and civil society organisations are involved in responses to migration. However, given the sheer scope and scale of migration, efforts have generally been undermined by poor coordination, limited funding and capacity, inconsistencies in policy and practice, and difficulties of accessing remote and sometimes dangerous migration locations. In this context, five main gaps and opportunities for programme and policy emerged from stakeholder consultations: (i) greater protection and assistance to all migrants, regardless of their status; (ii) adoption of a more holistic approach to smuggling and trafficking; (iii) expansion of regular opportunities for regular migration; (iv) better support to local communities affected by migration; and (v) improvements in data collection and monitoring.

Key findings from the Research

Trends in Migrant Routes and Profiles

- 1. There is a perception on the part of key informants and local communities that there has been a reduction in migration to Yemen in the last year.** In spite of the reported year-on-year increase in migration from the Horn of Africa to Yemen, respondents in Puntland, Djibouti and Yemen indicated that they believed there had been a drop in the numbers of Ethiopian migrants passing along both the Arabian Sea and Red Sea routes in the past 12 months. A number of factors may be behind such a reduction. These include: restrictions on movements of Ethiopians under the ongoing State of Emergency in Ethiopia; drought and its erosion of resilience, livelihoods and opportunities for migration; an increase in the costs of the journey as smugglers extend their geographic reach and borders become harder to cross; worsening conditions of conflict, insecurity, hardship and abuse in Yemen (although, contrastingly, this can also serve as a pull factor for migrants who believe this will enable them to transit Yemen undetected); and tighter border controls by transit and destination countries. The perception that migrant numbers have fallen across the Arabian Sea (Puntland) route is supported by data collected by UNHCR and partners, which shows a noticeable decline in arrivals to Yemen across the Arabian Sea since June 2016. In contrast, data shows that arrivals across the Red Sea have remained fairly consistent and even show signs of a moderate increase between November 2016 and March 2017. Although, it should be noted that constrained access, brought about by conflict and insecurity in Yemen, is affecting the accuracy of data collected on migrant numbers. Nevertheless, the popularity of these two routes has ebbed and flowed over time and, while the Arabian Sea remains significantly more popular (attracting around 74% of migrants so far in 2017), this albeit modest shift could signal a resurgence in popularity for the Red Sea route, and this trend should be monitored over the coming months for greater clarity.
- 2. New routes to Europe are being used.** While most migrants hoping to reach Europe continue to use the so-called 'western route' (through Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya and/or Egypt) a growing minority of mainly Somali migrants are choosing to migrate to Europe via Yemen. This takes them across multiple sea crossings from Puntland to Yemen then back across the Red Sea to Sudan and overland to Libya or Egypt, and on to Europe. This route is relatively new (first cited in 2015), and appears to be growing in popularity with young Somali men from relatively affluent backgrounds. There are reports that small numbers of Ethiopians are also embarking on this route. It is not yet clear why people are migrating to Europe along this route, rather than the cheaper and more popular alternative through Ethiopia and Sudan. The smuggling networks, support structures, and information and knowledge that facilitate movements along this route have strengthened, making it easier to move along this route than before. Tempting 'leave now-pay later' schemes are also being offered to would-be migrants by smugglers operating in Puntland to encourage them to migrate to Europe through Yemen. Furthermore, the strengthening of border controls in Sudan and Ethiopia (particularly in the wake of the State of Emergency) has made it more difficult and dangerous for migrants to transit through these countries.

3. **Migration to Yemen is gendered but the numbers of women using sea routes are increasing.** Men, typically characterised by respondents as young, single and with limited education, make up the majority of people moving towards Yemen. However, a sizeable and growing number of female migrants are also on the move, estimated by key informants to be between 20-30%, and attracted by the considerable demand for domestic workers in the Gulf states. Crackdowns by both the Ethiopian and Saudi authorities have limited legal opportunities for labour migration, pushing many women to engage in irregular and less visible movements, suggesting that the actual numbers of female migrants may be larger than assumed, as many move ‘under the radar’. While male migrants continue to outnumber their female counterparts, the gap is therefore likely to be narrowing. Travelling in the opposite direction, from Yemen to the Horn of Africa, the male-female and adult-child balance appears to be fairly evenly split. Arrivals from Yemen were 52% male, 48% female and 46% are under 18 years (UNHCR, 2016). When taken together, women and children make up 71% of arrivals.
4. **The socioeconomic status of different groups of migrants varies.** Evidence suggests that Somali migrants travelling through Yemen may be more diverse in terms of their socioeconomic and educational background than their Ethiopian counterparts. Ethiopian migrants travelling to Yemen are typically described as having limited education and low economic status, especially those of Oromo origin who tend to come from poorer families. Low economic status and extremely limited disposable income explains why nearly all Ethiopian migrants complained of the high living costs in Djibouti and Bossaso, and a large number said they had had to borrow money in order to pay for medications, food and rent. In other cases, they went without medical attention, food and other provisions, slept in open areas and often resorted to begging due to a lack of money. The research found that while some Somali migrants come from poor families, others are better off. This is supported by the growing number of Somalis choosing to migrate to Europe; a journey that can cost up to US\$ 10,000, and which is considerably more than the cost of travelling to the Gulf States. The assumption that Somalis may be better off than Ethiopian migrants is also supported by differences in their means of travel through Djibouti. Most Ethiopians make much of the journey on foot, whereas Somali migrants are more likely to travel by vehicle, perhaps due to greater financial assets and/or better access to smuggling networks. Furthermore, traffickers have been known to particularly target Somali migrants, whose families they perceive to be more affluent, and therefore more likely to pay ransoms for release.

Factors that Drive and Shape Migration

5. **The drivers of migration are varied; most people are motivated to move by a mix of factors.** Economic issues, characterised by a lack of employment and livelihood opportunities, were the main reasons cited by both Ethiopian and Somali migrants for their decision to move towards Yemen, and on to Saudi Arabia and Europe. A shortage of employment or livelihood opportunities, low salaries and land scarcity (amongst

Ethiopians especially) were the main contributing factors to economic uncertainty. Amongst Ethiopian respondents, there was also the perception that the best jobs are reserved for particular groups of people or elites, and that these opportunities are not available to young people from rural backgrounds or marginalized groups such as the Oromo. In addition to economic factors, Ethiopian Oromos expressed fear of political persecution by the Government of Ethiopia as a factor behind their decision to move. Many migrants also voiced aspirational or abstract objectives, such as the search for a 'better life', which may, ultimately, be difficult to quantify and fulfil. For migrants moving from Yemen to the Horn of Africa, insecurity brought about by conflict and fighting was the main reason for moving, and all interviewees identified war, conflict and insecurity as the principle driver for moving. However, the relationship between insecurity and migration is complicated by insecurity in multiple places of origin, transit and destination, meaning that migrants cannot necessarily exchange a place of insecurity for one of security through movement alone. What's more, while insecurity may be a push factor for migrants looking to flee insecure contexts, it can also be a pull factor for irregular migrants looking to pass through the country undetected (see next paragraph for more details).

6. **Conflict in Yemen has had a significant impact on the movement choices and patterns of different groups of people.** Two million are internally displaced in Yemen and over 180,000 have fled the country. Logically, places of conflict are often characterised by increased out-migration and reduced in-migration as people look for greater safety and security elsewhere. However, for a number of reasons (including lack of financial resources and a tolerance of hardship and risk) this has not occurred to the levels expected, leading to large flows of people travelling in both directions, depending on their circumstances, hopes and expectations. What is more, many Ethiopian and Somali migrants have been encouraged by the breakdown of state institutions in Yemen and subsequent lack of policy and control. They believe (or are led to believe by smugglers) that this vacuum provides an opportunity to enter, travel through and exit the country unnoticed. Smuggling and trafficking networks have also taken advantage of Yemen's deteriorating situation to establish profitable transnational networks that operate with relative impunity in the country.
7. **Political unrest in Ethiopia influenced migration patterns.** Unrest in Ethiopia following violent clashes between protestors and the state in 2016 was described by many respondents (both migrants and key informants) as a significant underlying factor behind the migration choices and patterns of many Ethiopian nationals. However, while some interviewees made the link between unrest and increased out-migration, others said they thought that Ethiopia's current State of Emergency had contributed to falling rates of out-migration. Available data would appear to support the latter hypothesis, with the number of Ethiopian arrivals in Yemen declining, from a high of 12,106 in June 2016 to 4,747 in March 2017. While the proportion of Oromos moving to and through Yemen may have increased over the last two years, the absolute numbers of Ethiopians on these routes in the wake of political unrest has decreased.² This could be as a result of restrictions on movements under the State of

² The proportion of Oromos registered in Yemen has risen significantly from 64% in 2014 to 95% in 2016 (RMMS, 2016)

Emergency, or due to policies and events in the wider region that are encouraging Ethiopians to either stay put or use alternative routes.

8. **Drought and potential famine in the region does not appear to have contributed to migration along the routes in question.** The drought and severe food shortage affecting the Horn of Africa region has been described by analysts and commentators as a major driver of migration and displacement. Some migrants interviewed as part of this research cited drought as a reason for moving to Yemen; one Somali was planning to travel to Saudi Arabia to help his family after they lost their animals and crops to drought. Overall, however, few migrants linked their movement specifically to drought. This suggests that while the drought may be one of a number of reasons for migrating to Yemen and beyond, it is not necessarily the main driver. This is substantiated by the available data which shows an overall downward trend in movements to and from Yemen in recent months. Drought does not, therefore, appear to be linked to a significant increase in migration between the Horn of Africa and Yemen. This may be because drought-affected communities often lack the resources and ability to engage in long-distance migration, or any movement at all. Indeed, while people may not be moving in large numbers to and from Yemen, this does not mean that drought is not driving migration elsewhere. Those who are able to move are more likely to migrate to nearby urban areas, internally within their own country, or to neighbouring countries than to attempt to cross the sea to Yemen and beyond. Those experiencing extremely depleted resilience and resources no longer have the funds to pay for their journey, and stay put or move shorter distances rather than leaving the region.
9. **A 'culture of migration' fuels the flow of people out of the region.** Common traditions or cultures of migration have emerged, which shape migrants' decisions and choices about when, where and how to move. These traditions or cultures of migration become established and strengthened over time by the formation of determined routes, recognised agents and diasporic groups in destination countries. When asked why they had decided to migrate, respondents indicated that friends and family members had migrated before them, and that this had encouraged them to follow, often along the same routes and using the same brokers and agents. Migrants who successfully reached their intended destination seem to be particularly influential in these decisions; giving would-be migrants advice, encouragement and even financial support in order to make the journey. As social capital grows and gains momentum, this helps to perpetuate the ongoing popularity of different routes over time. For example, a large number of migrants already take the Arabian Sea route, which encourages others to follow in the same footsteps. Information about the route becomes more widely available and shared, ensuring that the route is better known and trusted.
10. **Families can be motivations for migration but they can also help discourage young people from leaving.** The desire to help families is a factor behind many decisions to migrate: to diversify household incomes, improve wellbeing, and fund educational opportunities for family members. However, families can also act as an obstacle to migration, and actively work to deter members from moving. In general, families

expressed mixed feelings towards the migration of their children, in spite of the potential for remittances and improved employment and educational prospects. Respondents in Puntland were particularly concerned by the increase in young Somalis undertaking journeys to Europe, with one interviewee stating, “the kids you used to see in the neighbourhood have all gone. It is like the city [Bossaso] has no young kids anymore.” What is more, while families play a central role in many cases of migration (providing information, support and loans), there is growing evidence that migrants are choosing to migrate independently and without the approval of family members. The ‘leave now, pay later’ scheme increasingly adopted by smugglers to entice would-be migrants negates the need to involve family members in the decision to migrate, whilst also implicating them later on in the associated costs. Of the Somali migrants interviewed in Puntland, none had informed their families of their intention to travel to Europe, but were expecting them to pay the costs of the journey once they received a call from the smugglers demanding payment. In this scenario, the family may find itself subsequently involved in paying for a journey it never agreed to or even knew was occurring, with significant consequences for the economic security of the wider household. Families reported having to sell assets or use savings in order to pay for their release. The controversial ‘leave now, pay later’ arrangement is most common amongst Somalis, and may explain why Somali families in Puntland and Somaliland had particularly negative perceptions of migration.

- 11. Decisions about which route to take, where they are possible, depend on a range of factors including cost and ease of access.** Respondents frequently cited the lack of law enforcement and ease of passage through Somaliland and Puntland as a reason behind the route’s popularity with migrants and smugglers alike. They also suggested that local law enforcement officials there were more open to bribes, and that detention and deportations were therefore less common than in Djibouti, where the authorities and police are perceived to be much more vigilant and less corruptible. The presence of ‘good’ or trustworthy smugglers along particular routes may also increase their popularity among migrants, who believe that this will facilitate access and improve their chances of reaching their intended destination. Respondents who chose the Arabian Sea route widely believed that smugglers in Somalia were more trustworthy than those operating in Djibouti and Yemen. While danger and risk were certainly taken into account, migrants’ resilience and determination to reach their intended destination ‘at any cost’ meant that, while they might make some adjustment to their journey, these factors were generally not enough to deter them from continuing along their chosen route. Journey time was least likely to influence decisions about routes, so long as extended journey times did not have a cost implication. Overall, however, migrants’ ability to decide on the route may be limited, and respondents in Puntland consistently stated that smugglers, not migrants, decide the final route. What is more, as smugglers’ scope of geographic control expands to both maritime and overland sections of the journey, the decision-making space available to migrants is likely to shrink further in favour of the smugglers.

Smuggling Activities

- 12. There has been an expansion of smuggling activities particularly over land routes.** A combination of growing migrant numbers, substantial profits, and an operating environment of relative impunity has led to an increase in the scale and scope of smuggling activities in recent years in Puntland, Djibouti and Yemen. Respondents claim that smugglers and their brokers are well known and easy to find, and yet live without interference from the authorities. Indeed, the research team was provided with the names and contact numbers of Puntland smugglers by a government official. The increase in scope and scale of smuggling activities is most clearly highlighted by the expansion of smugglers' geographic reach to include both maritime and overland sections. While maritime routes have, for some time, been made with the assistance of networks, the overland sections through Somalia were typically made independently. Since 2015, smugglers have extended their reach and control over the overland sections through a network of operatives positioned in Somaliland and Puntland, thereby encouraging or coercing migrants to utilise their services much earlier in their journey. This expansion in geographic control has further reduced migrants' ability to choose the routes and conditions of their journey, increased the possibilities for exploitation and abuse, and increased the potential profits available to the smugglers.
- 13. Organised crime groups are carrying out 'smuggling with aggravated circumstances'.** This is defined as practices that endanger the life or safety of the people being moved, as well as inhumane or degrading treatment. This report highlights numerous examples of abuse, torture, degradation, risk of life and death of migrants at the hands of smugglers. In these scenarios, the migrant-smuggler relationship is no longer based on the definition of a consensual transnational transaction, but one that crosses the line between smuggling and trafficking. Sources, including smugglers themselves, describe a deliberate shift in smuggling from facilitating movement to the buying and selling of human beings. In this context, migrants are increasingly coerced or forced into using smugglers' services, and report being picked up or "captured" by smugglers who oblige them to pay for their services, or risk facing detention or abuse. It is worth noting that many migrants don't necessarily want to use smugglers to facilitate their journey, as it can be more expensive and leave migrants with less control. Smugglers' ability to coerce migrants into using their services is linked to the relative impunity under which they operate and the irregular status of migrants. In this unequal balance of powers, smugglers are able to extort large fees to cover the costs of transport, food and protection, and migrants may struggle to negotiate on prices or appeal for help from the authorities.
- 14. Smuggling activities and networks are facilitated by state collusion.** Numerous interviews highlighted the involvement of government officials from Somalia, Djibouti, Yemen and Saudi Arabia in these networks. These include officials from the police, military and intelligence services, as well as border guards, coast guards and customs authorities. Allegations against state actors range from turning a blind eye to irregular migration in exchange for bribes, to active involvement in facilitating smuggling and trafficking, and even participation in trafficking, abuse and torture of victims. In

Puntland, for example, migrant respondents reported widespread collusion between police and security officers and the smuggling networks, particularly in migration 'hotspots'. Respondents from the Ministry of Security and the police themselves also confirmed these allegations to the research team. Interviews further indicated that the boats used to transport migrants from Bossaso are owned by government officials, suggesting that collusion is also taking place amongst the higher ranks.

- 15. Migrants make distinctions between “good and bad” smugglers.** While the actions of traffickers can in no way be justified, it should not be assumed that all those associated with smuggling are necessarily exploitative or abusive. While it is true that a great many smugglers carry out or threaten to carry out violent acts of abuse on migrants, others may offer much needed support and reportedly do not engage in abuse of their clients. For example, one female migrant who found herself stranded without money to pay for her journey and at risk of abuse and exploitation, said she was lent the money by a smuggler she had met on the Ethiopian-Somali border. Furthermore, for Yemeni refugees and Somali returnees, smugglers may ultimately offer a vital lifeline to those wanting to flee conflict and instability in Yemen. In this context, smugglers are not universally viewed in a negative light, in particular amongst migrants and local communities from where they operate. Migrants reported spending time looking for 'trustworthy' or 'good' smugglers, and also looked to share details and information of 'safe' smugglers within migrant networks. In Obock and certain neighbourhoods of Djibouti town, there is a common perception that smugglers are not organised criminals per se, but normal people responding to economic opportunities. Nevertheless, this perception can be problematic when shared by agents of the law, as it can make them more amenable to corruption and participation.

Experiences and Outcomes of Migration

- 16. Despite enormous and varied challenges, most migrants do not regret their decision to leave their country.** Challenges suffered by migrants typically include widespread protection risks and abuse, as well as general hardship, including a lack of access to food and water, basic services, shelter, livelihoods, insecurity and harsh climatic conditions. Yemen is a centre for much of this abuse, due to a reduction in in-country protection and assistance, and a general breakdown in law and order, which has allowed smugglers and traffickers to operate with impunity. In spite of this, most migrants do not regret their decision to migrate, and prefer to continue with their journey rather than return to their country of origin no matter what the consequences. This also highlights how movement can be an important means of protection for people in contexts of conflict, persecution and abuse, where they feel they have no choice but to leave their place of origin and move elsewhere. Fear of return can increase migrants' tolerance of abuse and hardship along their journey, as can the risk of economic destitution that they and their families could face if they are not successful in reaching their intended destination, as many will have sold assets and taken out loans in order to pay for the journey. Religion and the feeling that their fate is predetermined may also be factors behind migrants' tolerance of hardship and

abuse. A number of migrant respondents said they felt their migration decisions and consequences were out of their control and in the hands of God. To a certain degree, such sentiments remove migrants' agency, and make them more likely to accept their circumstances, even if the outcome is not positive.

17. Migrants are aware of, but are not dissuaded by, the risks and dangers of migration.

The known risks do not outweigh the potential benefits of migration. While awareness may encourage migrants to adjust or reconsider which route they take, it is not enough to deter them from migrating in the first place or continuing with their journey. Furthermore, as decisions often extend to family members, friends, fellow migrants, and smugglers and traffickers, an understanding of who is making the decisions around these questions is key to effectively formulating and targeting policies and programmes that seek to manage irregular migration. To mitigate against risk, it is common for migrants to take precautionary steps, such as arranging for family members to set aside money to pay ransoms, or women taking contraceptives to avoid pregnancy if raped. Young Somalis hoping to reach Europe from Puntland not only expressed awareness of the risk of kidnap, abuse and torture at the hands of smugglers once they reached Libya, they also knew that the threat of this could help to leverage payment from family members. Many of the Somalis interviewed were not planning to tell their families of their intention to leave and, lacking the funds to pay the smugglers themselves, felt sure that their relatives would feel compelled to pay the costs of the journey on their behalf, for fear that they might be subjected to torture and abuse if they did not.

18. Host communities expressed mixed feelings towards migrants. Transit communities, such as Obock and Bossaso, have been impacted by the influx of large numbers of migrants travelling to and from Yemen. Complaints about migrants commonly centred around poor sanitation, the spread of disease, competition over jobs, cultural differences and inter-ethnic clashes between migrants. Nevertheless, most respondents recognised that migration has both positive and negative impacts, highlighting also new economic opportunities associated with new businesses, markets and skills. This somewhat nuanced response can be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, migrants on their way to Yemen are in transit, and most will pass through in a matter of days or weeks (although refugees and returnees from Yemen are likely to stay for longer periods of time). Secondly, levels of interaction between migrants and communities may be limited by language barriers, camp residency, or the actions of smugglers who house them in specific neighbourhoods and place limits on their movements and interactions. Thirdly, different members or groups of the community are impacted both positively and negatively, and to greater and lesser extents, depending on a range of factors, including levels of interaction, socioeconomic status, and personal experience. Finally, community perceptions of migration may shift over time. A number of community respondents in Obock described how migration has economically benefitted their community in the past, but now the situation is no longer sustainable as services and resources are under too much pressure.

19. Smuggling has generated huge profits, but the benefit to local economies is variable.

Smuggling in migrants represents a multi-million-dollar industry; the networks that operate the Red Sea and Arabian Sea maritime crossings together are estimated to earn at least US\$ 14.7 million per year.³ Nevertheless, those who benefit directly or indirectly from this industry represent a minority of the overall population, and it is not clear whether the wider economy stands to gain. Most community respondents in Puntland suggested that, in their experience, the presence of migrants had little impact on the local economy. It is true that migrants represent a potential market for local businesses, however the majority are poor with little disposable income, and the amount they spend in transit is likely to be minimal. Furthermore, in places like Bossaso, smugglers tend to keep migrants away from the local community by lodging them in separate housing units and providing their own food. Migrants' movements are often limited, and they are sometimes kept under armed guard, which reduces their potential to contribute to the economy. Some migrants boost the local economy by taking up employment or livelihood opportunities, or establishing their own businesses. The economic benefits of working migrants has not gone unnoticed by governments in the region, with the Government of Djibouti recently moving forward with new legislation to allow refugees to work in the country. However, their impact on the labour market is mixed, and perceptions varied depending on who was asked and how they were affected. Respondents from the private sector and a number of institutions recognised the potential benefits of migration to the labour market. They asserted that migrants bring new skills in farming, catering and construction, which can benefit local businesses and the economy. In contrast, community respondents tended to see migrants' contribution to labour markets as less positive, as it had a more direct impact on their own livelihoods and wellbeing, placed additional strain on already high levels of unemployment, and drove down local wages due to increased competition.

20. Migrants are not necessarily associated with insecurity. Given the securitisation of migration in popular rhetoric and discourse, it was surprising that communities in Puntland and Djibouti did not perceive migrants as more of a security threat. Most local respondents saw migrants as a relatively peaceful group that did not pose a threat to the community. Linkages between migrants and insecurity were more commonly made by government respondents, who were uneasy about a lack of control over who was coming and going. Government respondents were particularly concerned with the growing presence of criminal groups involved in smuggling and trafficking, and their links with an influx of weapons and connections with extremist groups. These groups are often armed and dangerous, and are known to control strategic areas of the towns and coastal areas. In these scenarios, insecurity has more to do with the criminal networks than migrants themselves.

³ This figure is a conservative estimate based on the number of migrants moving along these routes multiplied by typical costs of the sea crossings. Sea crossings represent only a small part of the total journey revenues and it is likely that many more migrants are taking these routes than suggested by official data, suggesting that actual revenue will be significantly higher when overland routes are also taken into consideration.

21. **Official mechanisms of assistance, protection and support provided by states, UN agencies and NGOs are extremely limited due to a lack of funding, capacity, political interest, challenges of security and access, and apprehension at the scope and scale of the issue.** In this context, grassroots support can play an important role in filling vital gaps. While pressures between communities and migrants exist, this research has identified a number of cases where local residents provide life changing support to migrants in danger or in distress. Members of the community give migrants food, clothes, medical assistance, and sometimes money. Some respondents also reported intervening when migrants were being harassed by the authorities, helping migrants with translations, and guiding them to particular places or offices where they could access support and assistance. Due to their irregular status, migrants may be wary of approaching official channels of support, for fear of being registered, arrested or deported, and may be more likely to seek assistance from informal community-based structures. What is more, they may be unaware of official mechanisms for support, or experience language or cultural barriers in accessing these. In this context, policy and programmes should seek to strengthen and build upon grassroots structures of support through funding and capacity building.