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## NOTE

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From: Presidency  
To: Working Party on External Aspects of Asylum and Migration (EMWP)  
Subject: Horn of Africa – Migratory situation  
- Presidency discussion paper

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## Introduction

The East and Horn of Africa<sup>1</sup> (EHOA) - a region of origin, transit and destination - is characterized by dynamic and complex migration flows. The EHOA is currently home to 13 million forcibly displaced persons, including 9.2 million internally displaced (IDPs) and 3.8 million refugees and asylum seekers<sup>2</sup>. Political instability, climate change (droughts, floods, food insecurity) and economic disparities - exacerbated by the socioeconomic impact of the Russian war against Ukraine – form the main reasons for irregular migration and forced displacement within and from the region.

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<sup>1</sup> The East and Horn of Africa region includes Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

<sup>2</sup> As of March 2023. IDPs: IDMC (2021). [Global Internal Displacement Database](#); IDP Working Group (2023). [Somalia Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023 \(February 2023\)](#); IOM (2022). [Burundi – Internal Displacement Dashboard \(October 2022\)](#); IOM (2022). [Djibouti – Mobility Tracking assessment – ROUND 1 – September 2022](#); IOM (2022). [Ethiopia – National Displacement Report 14 \(August - September 2022\)](#); IOM (2023). [South Sudan – Mobility Tracking Round 13 Initial Data Release](#). Refugees: UNHCR (2022). [Refugee Data Finder](#).

To address these challenges, the EU is providing substantial support to the region, as listed in **Annex 1**.

Out of the three main migratory routes from the EHoA (the Eastern, Southern and Northern Route) **the Northern route, towards North Africa and Europe is the less travelled** from the region.

Despite this being the case, Eurostat data on first-instance asylum applications in the EU+ show that more than 150,000 first-time asylum applications were lodged by EHoA nationals in the past four years. While the number of annual first-time applications was significantly lower in 2020 and 2021 than in pre-COVID-19 years (26,060 and 35,855, respectively), total first-time applications in 2022 (48,435) exceeded pre-pandemic applications (41,790 in 2019) and were 35% higher than in 2021, **suggesting that the number of EHoA seeking asylum in the European Union is increasing.**

Germany received the largest number of first-time asylum applications from EHoA nationals in 2022 (10,545), followed by France (7,805) and Belgium (6,025). It is primarily the number of **Somali, Ethiopian and Burundian** applicants that has steadily risen over the past years, with 16,650 Somalis applying for asylum for the first time in 2022, 22% more than applied in 2019 before the pandemic. Ethiopian first-time applications in 2022 (3,375) were 31% higher than in 2019, while Burundian first-time applications increased by 656% from 2021 (970) to 2022 (7,330), likely due to the political agreement on visa free travel between Burundi and Serbia. Eritreans also accounted for a large share of first-time applications lodged by EHoA citizen in the EU in 2022 (12,705) and were 11% higher than in 2021 (11,465).

According to Frontex, the number of irregular border crossings of migrants from the EHoA region also increased in 2022 compared to 2021 (11 978 compared to 9 294, +29%). The top three nationalities of migrants crossing into the EU from the wider region in 2022 were Somali, Eritrean and Burundian, similarly to 2021, except for Burundian nationals who mainly went through the Western Balkans due to the visa-free arrangement mentioned above and replaced the Sudanese as third main nationality. Somali migrants mainly used the Eastern Mediterranean route, whilst Eritreans used the Central Mediterranean route. There are not high numbers of victims of trafficking from the HoA registered in the EU. However, the risk of falling into the hands of traffickers is high given that many people in this area are displaced due to conflicts.

**Annex 2** provides a brief overview of **the current situation in the states of HoA**.

The IOM background paper prepared for EMWP (**Annex 3**), suggests that the current migration and mobility trends in the EHoA indicate that the region will remain affected by significant mobility flows in the years to come **with irregular migration predicted to rise across the various routes**.

At the same time as the region faces these numerous challenges, it remains a region of geostrategic importance through its proximity to the Red Sea, Sahel, Central Africa, the Gulf countries as well as for linking the north-eastern-southern states of Africa. In the last couple of years regional cooperation has been put higher on the agenda. One such example is the Horn of Africa Initiative (HoAI), which was created by the countries' Ministries of Finance in 2019. The main objective for HoAI is to bring the nations closer together and deepen regional cooperation through economic and political integration. Through its secretariat and team of experts in Nairobi, it aims to address common challenges such as natural disasters, climate change and insecurity. Another example of regional cooperation is promoted through the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), focusing on free movement of both peoples and goods across the continent, as well as IGADs Protocols on Free Movement of Persons and Free Movement of Transhumance adopted in 2021. Also, the EU financed Khartoum Process facilitates the dialogue on the migration routes from the Horn of Africa to Europe, primarily focused on trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants through initiatives of enhanced migration management. Furthermore, founded in 2012 and established in 2014, the AU-Horn of Africa Initiative on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling (AU HoAI) serves as a forum for participating countries from the Horn of Africa region to debate issues, exchange information, share experiences and improve cooperation on migration management in the Horn of Africa and address the challenges of trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants, as well as irregular migration.

**It is an opportune moment to provide an overview and initiate a discussion on the current migration dynamics in EHoA**, including on the main migratory routes and the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement. The Presidency also wishes to hear from Member States **how the EU could deepen dialogue with African partner countries and ensure a comprehensive approach to migration in the EHoA region**.

## **Questions for discussion**

Considering the above and the information contained in Annexes 1-3, Member States are invited to consider the following questions:

1. *Do you share the analysis on the current situation in the East and Horn of Africa from a migration perspective? Are there other developments that would require increased EU attention?*
2. *What should be the short and long-term priorities of migration-related EU actions in the East and Horn of Africa region?*
3. *Could the objectives of the EU's external dimension of migration in the EhoA be reinforced by better linkage to the work of the Khartoum Process? If so, how?*

**EU Actions in the Horn of Africa**

To address the diverse challenges confronting the Horn of Africa (HoA) region, the European Union (EU) has provided substantial assistance through various crucial frameworks and initiatives. These encompass the 2011 EU Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa, the Horn of Africa Regional Action Plan 2015-2020, the Council Conclusions on the Horn of Africa as a geo-strategic priority for the EU, dated 10 May 2021, and the Khartoum Process, launched in 2015. The Khartoum Process, which engages 30 European and 11 African nations, concentrates on combating human trafficking and migrant smuggling. Its scope has broadened to include oversight of the Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP) implementation, and as of 2023, it remains committed to updating the JVAP. Presently, Germany holds the chairmanship of the Khartoum Process. Furthermore, aiming to curb human trafficking and people smuggling, a Regional Operational Centre (ROCK) has been established in the Horn of Africa to enhance regional capacity for tracking and sharing information on irregular migration and criminal networks. By fostering cooperation among Khartoum Process countries and streamlining national and regional legal frameworks, ROCK supports joint investigations and informed decision-making on migration management.

The primary instrument for EU support in the EHoA region, which includes countries such as Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, has been the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF). By 2022, the EUTF had allocated approximately EUR 1.8 billion for the HoA region, covering 94 different programs, some of them still ongoing or about to end. This funding has facilitated regional initiatives under the Khartoum Process, such as the Better Migration Management (BMM) project, Regional Development and Protection Programmes (RDPP), and the Stemming Irregular Migration in Northern and Central Ethiopia (SINCE) project.

In 2022 several actions were approved under the regional multiannual indicative programme for Sub-Saharan Africa (NDICI-Global Europe). These include:

- Better Migration Management (BMM) in the Horn of Africa – phase III (EUR 40 million);
- Migration and Mobility Dialogue Support programme – MMD III (EUR 22 million): including support to the Khartoum Process.
- Migrant Protection, Return and Reintegration Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa (EUR 180 million).
- Flexible Mechanism for Migration and Forced Displacement (EUR 200 million for 2022-2024, out of which EUR 90 million for Central & East Africa);
- Intra-African Mobility Scheme V (EU contribution of EUR 28 million): to improve skills and competences of students, trainees and staff through learning mobility opportunities across the African continent.

In 2021 the regional programme (NDICI-Global Europe) on Durable Solutions for displaced populations in Africa was adopted, and it also includes actions addressing forced displacement in countries from the Horn of Africa.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) serves as a critical instrument for regional cooperation in the HoA and is a central partner for the EU in supporting regional programs. The EU has launched projects to strengthen IGAD's capacity, promote resilience in the HoA, and facilitate the establishment of a free movement regime between IGAD members. A new action in support of IGAD and of the implementation of the protocols on Free Movement of Persons and of Transhumance, to be funded under the NDICI-Global Europe, will be adopted in 2023.

Additionally, the EU has initiated the Horn of Africa Initiative in collaboration with the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and the governments of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya to enhance cooperation and economic integration in the region.

The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), led by the UNHCR, is strongly supported by the IGAD, the World Bank, and the EU. This initiative aims to help refugee populations become self-sufficient while supporting host communities. Through the EUTF, the EU has continued to invest in the implementation of the CRRF in countries like Ethiopia and Uganda.

Countries in the HoA region also receive country-specific support from the EU and its Member States. For instance, South Sudan is working with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to finalize a migration policy, funded by the EU, Germany, and Japan. Various other initiatives have been funded by the EU to support health, socio-economic development, and peacebuilding efforts in the region.

The EU is dedicated to promoting stability and peace in the HoA region, with three common security and defense policy (CSDP) missions operating in the area, all focused on building lasting stability in Somalia and the region. Moreover, the EU has supported the African Union's peacekeeping mission, AMISOM, through the African Peace Facility since 2007.

Lastly, the EU has provided substantial humanitarian aid to the HoA region. To address the dramatic economic and food security situation in the region, the EU has made political and financial commitments in support of the affected populations. In April 2022, the EU and its Member States pledged EUR 633 million to help address the food security crisis in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. In June 2022, the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen announced an additional EUR 600 million financial support to help partner countries in Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific cope with the food emergency and step-up production. Of this amount, EUR 84 million were allocated to the Horn of Africa.

**The current situation in the states of HoA**

**Sudan** is an important actor on the Horn of Africa whose geopolitical position affects the stability in the whole region. Through this position, it is a link not only between the northern states of Africa and the Horn of Africa, but also to the Sahel, as well as the Gulf states through its long coastline in the Red Sea. It is rich in natural resources, but the population is among the poorest in the world with the majority living in extreme poverty. Sudan faces deep political and economic challenges including violence and tensions within its borders and there are huge humanitarian needs. Sudan is heavily affected by insecurities from the region that produces spill over effects. Sudan currently hosts 1,1 million refugees, the majority from South Sudan, as well as over 3 million IDPs. There is a lot at stake in Sudan, the democratic transition period that started in the autumn 2019 was put on hold after the military coup on 25 October 2021. However, even if on 5 December 2022 over 40 political actors as well as the military leaders signed a Political Framework Agreement to facilitate a new democratic transition period many challenges remain before a transition government can be appointed. The ongoing political process, facilitated by UNITAMS, the AU and IGAD, entered the second and final phase in January 2023 where the signatories discuss five issues to achieve transitional reforms that can pave way to a general election. Depending on the outcome of the political framework, new alliances may be forged, and groups may find interest in alternative solutions. An external influence that raises the alarm is the presence of the Wagner group, which is allegedly funnelling resources to regime forces in exchange for access to the country's gold mining industry.



**South Sudan** gained its independence in 2011 and only two years later a civil war broke out lasting until 2015, when the first peace agreement was signed. In 2018 a revitalised peace agreement was signed, the R-ARCSS. Since then, the developments in South Sudan have spiralled downwards and the timeline presented in the R-ARCSS has not been followed. The implementation of the roadmap that is supposed to guide the fulfilling of the R-ARCSS has gotten off to a slow start. Elections are due in December 2024. The lack of political will, climate change leading to increased food insecurity, extreme poverty, violence, and conflicts makes the population extremely precarious – especially for women and children. Roughly 80% out of the population of 12 million is dependent on humanitarian aid and two thirds will probably face acute food insecurity going forward. The democratic space is decreasing and both corruption and human rights violations are extensive. 2023 had a rough start containing an increase in local disputes and violence, oftentimes with an ethnic characteristic. More people have been killed and human smuggling has increased.

**Ethiopia** and its 120 million people, a land locked country on the Horn of Africa, is a regional powerhouse whose stability is crucial for the whole region. The last couple of years have been characterized by the conflict in the northern part of the country, which erupted in 2020 between the Tigray Defence Forces (TDF) and the Ethiopian federal army (ENDF). The conflict has resulted in a huge humanitarian crisis, including violations on human rights, international humanitarian law and international refugee law. In November 2022, the Ethiopian government, and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) signed an agreement of permanent ceasefire, the so-called Pretoria agreement. The implementation of the agreement is ongoing and includes disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), and the signatories seem to have the political will to continue the process forward. Humanitarian assistance and access to vital services has started to make its way into Tigray, and Eritrean troops have started to withdraw. At the same time, other conflicts are escalating throughout the country and the regional drought and climate change affects peoples’ livelihoods. Ethiopia hosts over 800 000 refugees and over 4 million IDPs. Due to the current instability in Somaliland, many Somalis have taken refuge in the Somali region of Ethiopia. Although extensive economic reforms were presented by the prime minister Abiy Ahmed along his appointment in 2018, the economic situation in Ethiopia is hampered by the conflict in the north. The escalating conflict in the Oromia region risks affecting the economic situation in the country substantially. At the same time, with increasing regional cooperation and external investments Ethiopia is standing in front of a potential transition that may have effects throughout the region.

Since 2018, **Eritrea** started to open from its relatively isolated position on the world stage. The most important developments include the peace treaty signed with Ethiopia in July 2018- and the lifting of sanctions from the UN Security Council in November of the same year. More recently, the closer relationship with Kenya, that unfolded during the beginning of 2023, as well as Eritrea's wish to revitalize its participation in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) should also be noted. However, there is no independent judiciary, lack of civil rights and the government has restricted freedom of expression, opinion, and faith. Furthermore, the Eritrean Defence Forces (EDF) have committed widespread abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law in the conflict in northern Ethiopia, including in camps hosting Eritrean refugees. The lack of civil rights and forced conscription continues to drive Eritreans into exile, the Tigray region in Ethiopia has for decades been a main destination. The international community repeatedly called on Eritrea to withdraw its troops in Tigray during the conflict, which ended with a permanent ceasefire in November 2022.

**Djibouti** has a small population of roughly 1,1 million people with the majority concentrated in urban areas, especially the capital Djibouti. It has a young population, with roughly 50% being 25 years old or below. Djibouti is a predominantly desert covered country, lacking natural resources and agricultural land. The main income is derived from harbour activities, freight trains and pipelines primarily directed towards Ethiopia. Since Djibouti is strategically located where the Gulf of Aden meets the Red Sea, the country derives economic activity from the presence of military bases from numerous international actors, including USA, UK, France, Japan, Italy, and China. In February 2023 president Guelleh's party alliance, the Union for the Presidential Majority (UMP), secured 58 out of 65 mandates in the National Assembly.

**Somalia** has had overlapping and continued political, security and humanitarian crises for a long time. The ongoing conflict with al-Shabaab has posed many challenges for the country's development, primarily in the central and southern regions. At the same time, international support has contributed to important advancements in recent years and Somalia is currently in a phase that may come to shape the country going forward. On 15 May 2022, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was elected president. He seeks unity and economic reforms across Somalia, where the current offensive against Al-Shabaab, supported by the regional and the international community, could be an important steppingstone for Somalia's development. The population suffers from conflict and a lack of socio-economic opportunities. Apart from security and political challenges, Somalia faces many humanitarian crises because of climate change and recurring droughts. The capacity for recovery is low due to decades of conflict and instability. Women, children, and displaced persons are particularly vulnerable. Migration processes both nationally, regionally, and internationally are part of Somalia's history. Today, the diaspora sends back economic remittances that make up a large part of Somalia's GDP; roughly 40-50% of the population receives recurrent remittances. There are currently 3 million IDPs in Somalia and roughly 670 000 Somali refugees in neighbouring countries. It is estimated that around 8,3 million people will face food insecurity during 2023, out of which 700 000 will be in a state of malnutrition and starvation. The ongoing conflict in Las Anod in the autonomous state of Somaliland has given rise to large migration flows into neighbouring Ethiopia and triggered the question of regional belonging with areas and affiliations being contested among different federal states and actors.

**MIGRATION IN, TO AND FROM EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA REGION (EHOA)**

**Summary**

- The current migration and mobility trends indicate that the **Eastern and Horn of Africa (EHOA)** region will remain affected by significant mobility flows in the years to come.
- **Political instability is expected to continue to impact the regional humanitarian situation.** Conflict dynamics and violence are still prevalent in parts of Ethiopia, South Sudan and Somalia, which will likely trigger more displacement and hamper the capacity to achieve sustainable return and reintegration. These trends will also further delay socioeconomic development measures that are key to addressing the drivers of migration.
- **Climate shocks are also expected to increase, ranging from prolonged drought sequences to severe flooding and associated waterlogging.** The region has continuously reported dramatic figures of people affected by extreme climate events who are at risk of famine and in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. The protection environment for migrants will continue to deteriorate due to the growing criminalization of irregular migration, discrimination and xenophobia which will likely result in increased violence and abuse of migrants' rights. In addition, the severity of the shocks will heighten the vulnerability of populations and exhaust their coping mechanisms, thereby increasing migrants' risk of exploitation. The shifting global agenda and competing humanitarian crises can limit the resources available to meet these needs.
- **Economic disparities, unemployment and lack of opportunities further compounded by the socioeconomic impact of the Ukraine conflict will remain a key driver of mobility. Irregular migration is therefore predicted to rise across the various corridors.**

## Introduction

**Across Africa, most migration takes place *within* the continent; this is particularly true for sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>3</sup> Migration in Africa is largely regular and comparatively little migration from the continent is via irregular channels towards Europe or the Gulf countries.<sup>4</sup>** The mobility landscape of the East and Horn of Africa (EHOA) region — which includes Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania — is complex in nature. The latest estimates indicated that there were 6.2 million international migrants (or immigrants) in the region, representing around a quarter (24%) of all the international migrants living on the African continent.<sup>5</sup>

**Regular and irregular labour migration is a key feature of this landscape, although forced migration due to widespread conflict and violence, political persecution, human rights violations, climatic events and harsh environmental conditions plays a central role in triggering mobility decisions.** In recent years, the EHOA migratory landscape has increasingly become more humanitarian in nature. Regional mobility has increasingly been characterized by forced migration due to widespread conflict and violence, political persecution, human rights violations, climatic events and harsh environmental conditions. As a result, this region hosts a very large population of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and why refugees and asylum seekers make up around 61 per cent of all migrants in this region, compared to other types of migration.

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<sup>3</sup> De Haas et al. (2020). *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. Sixth edition. Red Globe Press, London, United Kingdom.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> DESA (2020). [International Migrant Stock](#).

**Overall, the EHoA is currently home to 13 million forcibly displaced persons, including 9.2 million IDPs and 3.8 million refugees and asylum seekers.**<sup>6</sup> IDPs are mostly concentrated in Somalia (3.9 million), Ethiopia (2.7 million, excluding the Tigray region<sup>7</sup>) and South Sudan (2.3 million). IDPs in these three countries account for 96 per cent of the regional IDP population. Meanwhile, refugees and asylum seekers are primarily hosted in Uganda (1.6 million), Ethiopia (824,000) and Kenya (540,000). Refugees and asylum seekers from South Sudan (2.4 million) constitute the third largest share of refugees and asylum seekers globally, after the Syrian Arab Republic (3 million) and Afghanistan (7 million).

**The EHoA is also home to an estimated 3.6 million migrant workers.**<sup>8</sup> Most of the EHoA migrant labour force resides in Uganda (27%), followed by Ethiopia (21%), Kenya (14%), South Sudan (13%), Rwanda (9%) and the United Republic of Tanzania (8%). Labour migration is prompted by multiple socioeconomic factors, such as wide income inequalities, poverty and unemployment as well as the presence and attractiveness of economic hubs that create employment opportunities and fuel rural–urban mobility.

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<sup>6</sup> As of March 2023. IDPs: IDMC (2021). [Global Internal Displacement Database](#); IDP Working Group (2023). [Somalia Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023 \(February 2023\)](#); IOM (2022). [Burundi – Internal Displacement Dashboard \(October 2022\)](#); IOM (2022). [Djibouti – Mobility Tracking assessment – ROUND 1 – September 2022](#); IOM (2022). [Ethiopia — National Displacement Report 14 \(August - September 2022\)](#); IOM (2023). [South Sudan — Mobility Tracking Round 13 Initial Data Release](#). Refugees: UNHCR (2022). [Refugee Data Finder](#).

<sup>7</sup> Due to operational constraints, the Tigray region was not accessible during several months in 2022. A new round of assessment conducted at the end of last year was able to cover this area and a revised IDP figure is currently with the government for endorsement.

<sup>8</sup> STATAFRIC (2019). Migration database.

## The Impact of Drought in the Horn of Africa

- **The Horn of Africa (HoA) has been experiencing the most severe drought in over 40 years, impacting an estimated 36 million people.**<sup>9</sup> The deteriorating humanitarian environment in countries of origin has pushed more people to migrate<sup>10</sup> as well as strained populations' resilience and displacement-related vulnerabilities. Of the 36.6 million people affected by the drought in the region, 24.1 million are in Ethiopia and 7.8 million are in Somalia, the two main countries from which people migrate in this region. **The drought has displaced over half a million in Ethiopia, while another 1.85 million IDPs are living in drought-affected areas. In Somalia, over 1.5 million people have been displaced by drought since 2021, while 3 million IDPs are living in drought affected areas.**<sup>11</sup> New migration dynamics relating to the drought have also been observed, whereby elderly women who had never migrated and large families have now become migrants.<sup>12</sup> These movements tend to remain within the Horn of Africa, although they are often cross-border, and it is less likely that these migrants will engage in long term, inter-regional migration along the migratory corridors as further highlighted below.

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<sup>9</sup> IOM (2022). [Horn of Africa Drought 2022: Human Mobility Snapshot \(January – December 2022\)](#).

<sup>10</sup> Quantifying drought-induced population mobility is challenging because of how environmental drivers, especially in slow-onset disasters, are difficult to isolate from the economic, health or conflict impacts that may occur simultaneously, often as a result of deteriorating environmental conditions. Moreover, mobility dynamics may change over longer spans of time.

<sup>11</sup> IOM (2022). [Horn of Africa Drought 2022: Human Mobility Snapshot \(January – December 2022\)](#).

<sup>12</sup> IOM (2022). [Migrating Along the Eastern Route – Trends and Needs within the Migration Context in Southern Djibouti](#).

Data collected by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) in Bossaso (Puntland) and Hargeisa (Somaliland) on the impact of drought on migration along the Eastern Route towards the Arabian Peninsula highlight the devastating effects of drought in Ethiopia, the main country of origin of inter-regional migration from the Horn of Africa.<sup>13</sup> Respondents reporting drought-related factors all came from locations in Ethiopia that were either projected to reach Acute Food Insecurity Level 4 (Emergency or higher) or Level 5 (Famine) by the Famine Early Warning System by October 2022, mostly in the regions of Oromia, Amhara, SNNP and Somali.<sup>14</sup> The majority of the drought affected respondents had departed Ethiopia either in 2022 or 2021, indicating that most had left their areas of origin following four to five consecutive failed rainy seasons. Drought mostly impacted respondents and their households in Ethiopia through loss of income (80%), crop failure (66%), loss of livestock (65%), food scarcity (53%), crop disease (45%), high food prices (44%) and livestock disease (40%). An examination of which impacts of drought triggered the decision to migrate revealed that loss of crops (72%) and loss of livestock (65%), followed by the increase in food prices (52%) were the main triggers of migration.<sup>15</sup> **Migration is a common and accepted livelihood strategy for many communities in Ethiopia, which are often highly dependent on agriculture, meaning that adverse climate events such as droughts and floods have severe impact on livelihoods in those areas.**

The importance of developing an integrated approach to climate change induced mobility across the region, as well as contributing to addressing the important topic of human mobility in the context of climate change was acknowledged through the signing of the “**Kampala Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment and Climate Change (MECC)**”.<sup>16</sup> This first, regional, high-level Declaration on the topic of MECC demonstrates the urgency and whole of government prioritisation that leaders in the region and on the African continent place on this topic.

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<sup>13</sup> MMC & IOM (2023). [The impact of the drought on migration from Ethiopia to Somalia: Migration triggers & household decision-making.](#)

<sup>14</sup> FEWS (2022). [September 2022 Key Message Update.](#)

<sup>15</sup> MMC & IOM (2023). [The impact of the drought on migration from Ethiopia to Somalia: Migration triggers & household decision-making.](#)

<sup>16</sup> Signed in Kampala, Uganda, by 15 States with two Head of States His Excellencies Museveni, President of Uganda and Salva Kiir, President of South Sudan officiating over the signing ceremony and communicating their endorsement for the [Kampala Declaration.](#)



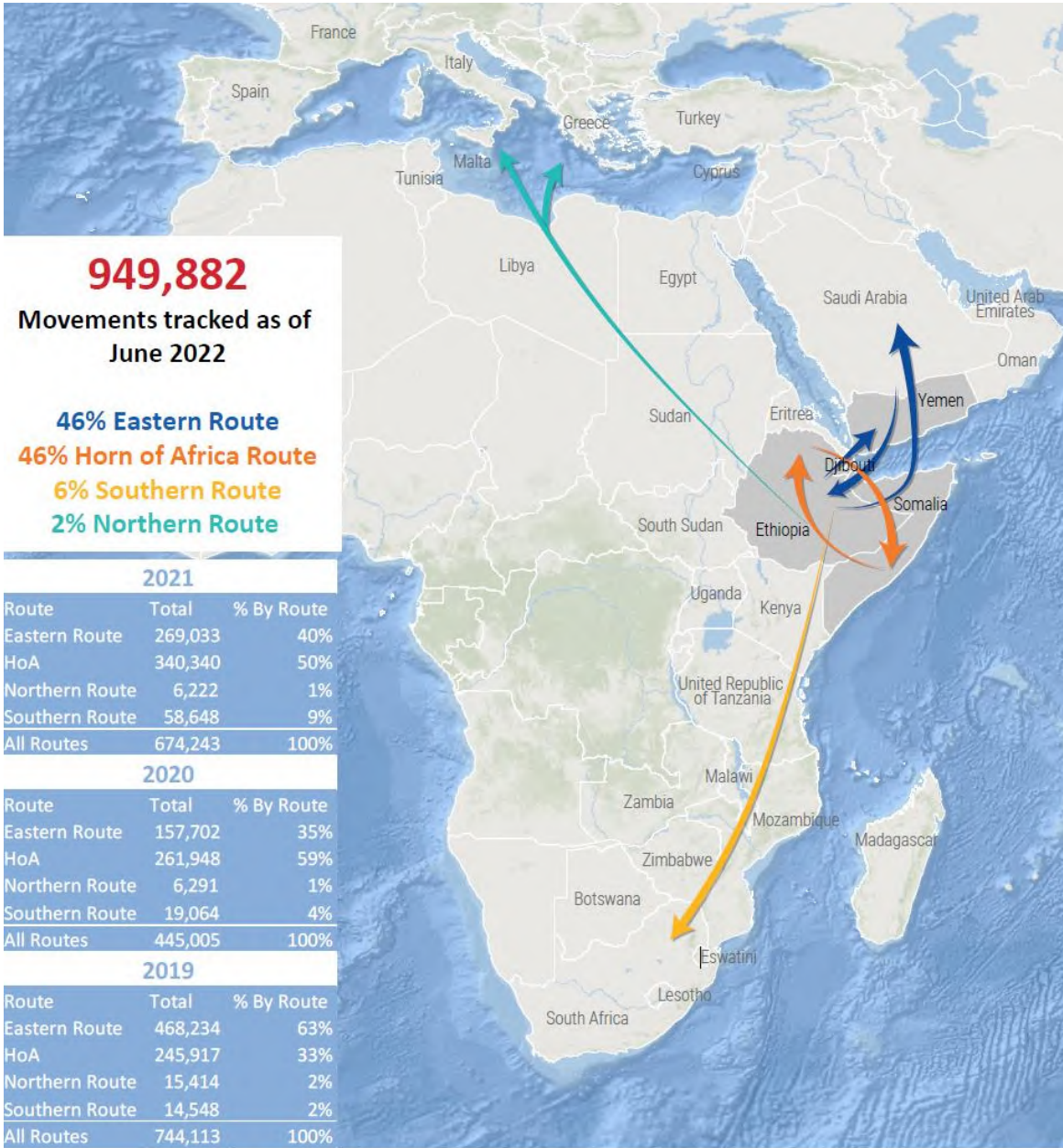
## Migration Routes from the Horn of Africa

Inter-regional migration from the EHoA is categorized along three main routes: the Eastern Route towards the Arabian Peninsula and in particular the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Southern Route towards the southern part of the continent and in particular the Republic of South Africa, and the Northern Route towards North Africa and Europe. Important flows also take place within the region, which are classified as the Horn of Africa Route. The past years saw a drastic reduction in overall movements along all three corridors during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by a gradual increase in movements towards pre-pandemic levels in 2021 (482,233 in 2020; 674,243 in 2021).<sup>17</sup> **Movements picked up significantly across all three migratory corridors in 2022 (949,882 movements<sup>18</sup>) and exceeded pre-pandemic levels (744,097 in 2019) by 28 per cent, marking the end of the impact of COVID-19-related restrictions on mobility in the region.**

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<sup>17</sup> IOM. (2022). [A Region on the Move 2021](#).

<sup>18</sup> Flow monitoring activities in Somalia were suspended between March and mid-October 2022. To address this gap, the Regional Data Hub built a predictive model to estimate the missing data (Auto Regressive Integrated Moving Average – ARIMA). However, only the number of movements was estimated and the data was not broken down by flow monitoring indicator.



## Eastern Route

Of the three inter-regional migratory routes running from the Horn of Africa, the **Eastern Route hosts the largest number of migrants each year**. Migration along this corridor originated along historical trade routes, with the surge in irregular labour migration and increased consolidation of broker networks beginning in the late 1990s. Over the last two decades, both regular and irregular labour migration along the Eastern Corridor has increased in response to several push factors including famine, climatic shocks, overpopulation, land scarcity and extreme poverty, with modern-day migration along this corridor occurring in the context of strong and well-established networks between origin communities in Ethiopia and the diaspora abroad. **Nowadays, it is one of the world's busiest maritime migration routes.**<sup>19</sup>

After flows along the Eastern Route severely reduced due to the impact of COVID-19 and related movement restrictions in countries along the route in 2020 (resulting in around 158,000 annual movements in 2020 compared to 468,000 in 2019)<sup>20</sup>, movements along this route picked up significantly in 2022, increasing by 64 per cent compared to 2021 (from 269,000 to 441,000 migrant movements). **Arrivals to Yemen from the Horn of Africa almost tripled (+164%) between 2021 and 2022 (from 27,700 to 73,000)**. Although these movements are only around half of the numbers tracked in the pre-COVID-19 period (160,000 estimated arrivals in 2018 and 138,000 in 2019), arrivals picked up considerably in the last quarter of 2022 and are expected to continue at a high pace in 2023. **Of the migrants tracked by IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix arriving in Yemen, 92 per cent were Ethiopians and 8 per cent were Somalis, while around 76 per cent were males and 24 per cent females.**<sup>21</sup> Migration to the GCC countries is a highly gendered phenomenon, with women accounting for most documented movements and men – typically young, single and with low levels of education – for the majority of undocumented flows along the Eastern Route.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> IOM. (2022). [A Region on the Move 2021](#).

<sup>20</sup> IOM. (2021). [A Region on the Move 2020](#).

<sup>21</sup> IOM. (2023). [2022 Migration Movements Between the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula](#).

<sup>22</sup> IOM. (2020). [Gendered Patterns of Women and Girls' Migration Along the Eastern Corridor: Case Study Report I](#).

A significant increase in the number of females and unaccompanied migrant children (UMCs) was observed along this route in 2022, when the number of UMCs and female migrants doubled compared to 2021. The number of UMCs doubled from 7,300 in 2021 to 14,900 in 2022 and these unaccompanied children represented 38 per cent of all children tracked in 2022 (39,700). Similarly, the number of female migrants travelling along the Eastern Route also doubled (from 53,200 to 106,700).<sup>23</sup> **The increasing number of vulnerable migrants, including women and children migrating along this corridor is related to the lack of livelihood opportunities and income sources in origin countries, as well as incidents of localized violence in some parts of the region.** These push factors were further compounded by the ongoing drought.

**Overall, while still predominantly economic in nature, migration along the Eastern Corridor therefore became increasingly mixed in 2022.** This is also reflected in IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix data on the drivers of migration that show that although economic reasons remain the primary driver (90% in 2022), the share of migrants reporting economic reasons reduced compared to 2021 (96%), while the share of movements due to conflict, violence or persecution (7% in 2022; 2% in 2021) and drought related movements (3% in 2022; <1% in 2021) increased. Migration drivers are complex and it is often not one single factor that triggers the final decision to migrate. Climate-related factors, and in particular drought, have an adverse impact on livelihoods, particularly in areas that rely heavily on agriculture which is the case for the majority of areas of high emigration in Ethiopia.

The Eastern Route is also characterized by bidirectional flows, with migrants moving back towards the Horn from Yemen and Saudi Arabia. As a transit country for migrants headed to Saudi Arabia, most migrants who reach Yemen intend to travel onward to Saudi Arabia, although movement restrictions and active conflict in parts of the country have resulted in many migrants becoming stranded during transit and deciding to go back to the Horn. **As of December 2022, 43,000 migrants were stranded in Yemen.**<sup>24</sup> In 2022, IOM tracked 7,440 spontaneous returns from Yemen to Djibouti (5,901) and Somalia (1,539), representing a 43% decrease compared to 2021, when 13,125 spontaneous returns were tracked from Yemen to Djibouti and Somalia.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> IOM. (2023). [2022 Migration Movements Between the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.](#)

<sup>24</sup> IOM. (2023). [Migration Along the Eastern Corridor – December 2022.](#)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.; IOM. (2022). [A Region on the Move 2021.](#)

**Large return migration flows from Saudi Arabia began in 2016, when the Government of Saudi Arabia tightened its immigration policies.** Forced returns from the country began in 2017 and IOM has electronically registered over 518,000 Ethiopians upon arrival in Addis Ababa between May 2017 and December 2022. In 2022, IOM registered over 93,500 forced returnees to Ethiopia alone, an 18% increase compared to 2021 despite forced returns being suspended for four months during the year. Of the Ethiopian migrants returned from Saudi Arabia in 2022, 64 per cent intended to return to the conflict-affected regions of Amhara (42%), Tigray (20%) and Afar (2%).<sup>26</sup> However, due to the Tigray conflict, many returnees found themselves stranded in shelters in Addis Ababa unable to return home and reunify with their families. **Forced returns from Saudi Arabia also took place to Yemen (65,700) and Somalia (15,000) in 2022.**

### **Southern route**

Since the beginning of the 1990s, a growing number of Horn of Africa migrants have been observed moving towards the southern part of the continent and in particular South Africa. Although the migration of Ethiopians to South Africa began in the 1990s, it gained momentum in the 2000s when large numbers of Ethiopians began migrating to South Africa. **Unlike the Eastern Route, where migration occurs from several different Ethiopian regions, migration to South Africa is mainly concentrated amongst individuals from the Hadiya and Kembata zones of SNNP region.** These zones have experienced environmental degradation including soil erosion and decreasing soil fertility, while rapid population growth has put a lot of pressure on available land. Few job opportunities exist in these areas outside of agriculture and this combination of factors has led to high youth unemployment or underemployment in low-wage jobs, even amongst university graduates.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> IOM. (2023). [Return of Ethiopian Migrants from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia](#).

<sup>27</sup> IOM. (2023). *Forthcoming*. Southern Dream Migration - Exploring Migration Dynamics from Origin to Destination along the Southern Route from the Horn of Africa.

According to IOM Flow Monitoring data, the Southern Route made up 6 per cent of all movements tracked in the East and Horn of Africa (58,204 movements) in 2022, although most movements (76%) were intraregional, headed towards Kenya, while 21 per cent were intended towards South Africa. **Most movements tracked towards South Africa were recorded at the Moyale flow monitoring point, where almost 20,000 movements were tracked in 2021 and 2022 (10,243 movements in 2021 and 9,752 in 2022).** Moyale is a town along the Ethiopian–Kenyan border and a major transit and logistics hub for migrants headed south. Migrants tracked at this point and headed to South Africa were overwhelmingly Ethiopian men SNNP region, with only 1 per cent of migrants being female and 5 per cent were boys. **Movements along this corridor are likely significantly higher than the approximately 10,000 annual movements registered by IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix at Moyale FMP in the past two years, due to limited data capacity along the route and the clandestine nature of the movements.**

**Due to the number of countries migrants travel through to reach South Africa, many of which have strict laws regulating irregular entry into their territories, migration along the Southern Route is more covert and expensive compared to migration along the Eastern Route.** Overland journeys are highly dangerous as migrants are exposed to a multitude of risks including physical hardship and exhaustion, as well as lack of basic needs and services. Migrants along this route are also exposed to various forms of violence, exploitation and abuse by a multitude of different actors they encounter en route. Intensified border controls and the proliferation of routes designed to circumvent checkpoints and detection by authorities, such as the maritime route between Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, have led to unsafe smuggling practices such as transporting migrants in airless fuel tankers and shipping containers, travelling long distances in unroadworthy and overloaded vehicles without stopping, oftentimes at night, circumventing checkpoints on foot across rough terrain and spending nights outside in forests, national parks and other areas with dangerous wildlife.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

**Migrants intercepted while migrating in an irregular manner along the Southern Route are often detained in transit countries such as Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Mozambique where they are often treated under criminal law as illegal aliens.** While the exact number of migrants in detention along the Southern Route is difficult to ascertain, IOM has continuously conducted verification visits to different detention facilities throughout the United Republic of Tanzania where migrants are held. Between 2019 and 2022, IOM counted 4,054 migrants during such visits. In 2022 alone, IOM verified the presence of around 780 Ethiopians in detention centres in six regions of the United Republic of Tanzania, including 17 minors. However, it was estimated that the actual number of Ethiopian migrants in detention was around 5,000, as not all prisons holding Ethiopian migrants were visited (2022).

Once they arrive in South Africa, most Ethiopian and Somali migrants work in the informal sector as they often lack the residence status and necessary permits to work formally. Insecurity and precarity characterize the experience of these migrants, particularly for those working in townships where unemployment and crime rates are high. **Violence, extortion by gangs and officials and many other threats to their security are reportedly rampant, while migrants have limited access to state protection and legal recourse. Rising xenophobia has also led to migrants being scapegoated for a multitude of social and economic problems in the country.**<sup>29</sup>

### **Northern route**

**The Northern Route towards North Africa and Europe tends to be less travelled on than other migratory out of the region (2% of overall movements tracked by IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix in the EHoA in 2022), due to the high cost and risks associated with it. Nonetheless, movements tracked along this route almost tripled from 2021 (6,222) to 2022 (17,721).** As IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix operational coverage along the Northern Route is limited and movements are likely underestimated, triangulation with other sources of data in transit countries outside the region such as Libya and countries of arrival in Europe can provide further insight into movements along this route.

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<sup>29</sup> Human Rights Watch. (2020). [They have robbed my life.](#)

**Most migrants moving North from the HoA transit through the Sudan.** Data collected by IOM as part of an ongoing research study along the Northern Route suggest that **many Eritreans and Ethiopians living in the Sudan, as well as those who have arrived more recently, are contemplating migrating onward to other countries in Africa such as Rwanda, Uganda and South Sudan, as well as north towards Libya, Egypt and Europe due to the dire economic situation in the country.** Eritrean and Ethiopian migrants interviewed in Khartoum reported experiencing economic hardship due to the poor economic situation and inflation in the Sudan. They also reported regularly experiencing violence and extortion as well as regular round-ups by local authorities, impeding their ability to support themselves. Although, Eritreans and Ethiopians in the Sudan generally seem to be aware of the risks of migrating to Europe, research participants suggested that it is: *“better to try your luck at living a good quality life in Europe than to die in Sudan”*.

**Libya is another key country of transit of migrants headed towards Europe from the EHoA. Data on Libya’s migrant stock collected between September and October 2022 indicate a large presence of East and Horn of Africa migrants in Libya. The most common national groups from this region found in Libya were Sudanese (132,945), Eritreans (4,302), South Sudanese (3,374) and Somalis (1,825).**<sup>30</sup> Migrants often spend a significant amount of time in Libya before crossing the Mediterranean to Europe, as they may become stranded due to depletion of the financial resources they started their migration with, or may have planned to work along the route to be able to afford the stretch of migration involving the crossing of the Mediterranean.

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<sup>30</sup> IOM.(2022). [IOM Libya Migrant Report Round 44 \(September – October 2022\)](#).



**The presence and transit migration of EHoA migrants in and through Libya remains of concern as years of instability and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the country's economy continue to make migrants one of the most vulnerable populations in the country.**<sup>31</sup>

A study conducted by IOM and the WFP in Libya in 2021 found that the economic consequences of the pandemic strongly affected migrants in Libya, as one in five surveyed migrants interviewed could be considered as food insecure, while more than half were considered marginally food insecure.<sup>32</sup> Comparisons with 2020 and 2019 data showed that **migrants from East Africa tend to have the highest proportions of poor and borderline food consumption levels** compared to nationals of countries in other regions. This could be related to the lower levels of employment reported by migrants from the EHoA in Libya, as lack of a stable source of income directly affects food security.

**Looking north towards Europe, IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix data on arrivals by sea and land in the Mediterranean region can shed further light on EHoA nationals on the Northern Route who constituted 3 per cent of total arrivals by sea registered at disembarkation points in Italy, Greece, Spain and Cyprus in 2022 (5,476 migrants). Most of those arriving by sea to Europe were Eritreans (41%), Sudanese (31%), Somalis (18%) and Ethiopians (8%).**<sup>33</sup> **2022 saw an unprecedented number of EHoA migrants arriving in Europe along the Western Balkan route (16,087). The vast majority of these migrants were Burundians (15,037), followed by Somalis (747), Eritreans (117) and Sudanese (115).**<sup>34</sup> The spike in Burundians on the Western Balkan Route was largely triggered by a political agreement on visa-free travel for Burundians to Serbia that was introduced 2018. The government of Serbia announced that the visa free travel would end in October 2022 and it remains to be seen how this development will affect flows of Burundians along this route.

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<sup>31</sup> IOM. (2022). [A Region on the Move 2021](#).

<sup>32</sup> IOM & WFP. (2021). [Hunger and COVID-19 in Libya](#).

<sup>33</sup> Information on nationality is based on the nationality declared by migrants as reported by the national authorities. For Spain, the nationality breakdown refers to all arrivals by sea, including those to the Canary Islands via the Western African Atlantic route and is available from Frontex. See <https://migration.iom.int/europe/arrivals> for figures on arrivals to Europe.

<sup>34</sup> Figures are based on data collected in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Kosovo. References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

## Migrant Protection

**Migration along all three migratory routes is dangerous and involves high levels of protection risks characterized by violence, exploitation and abuse.** Since 2014, at least 527 migrants have lost their lives in the East and Horn of Africa. During the same period, an additional 462 people died while crossing the Gulf of Aden between the Horn of Africa and Yemen.<sup>35</sup> Many more are known to go unreported as migrants often die in remote, hard-to-reach locations. Therefore, the number of people who die or disappear while in transit is expected to be much higher.

In 2022, **89 migrants lost their lives on the Eastern Route both in the HoA region and while crossing the Gulf of Aden or the Red Sea.** The most frequent causes of death were drowning, vehicle accidents, sickness, and violence. Given the lack of access to basic needs and services including medical care in these remote and isolated areas, migrants often adopt survival coping mechanisms such as drinking unclean water that causes them to contract waterborne diseases. Smugglers have also been known to abandon migrants in remote stretches of desert after developing an illness or if the migrant can no longer continue for other reasons. The maritime crossing to Yemen has resulted in many migrant deaths along the Eastern Route in recent years. In October 2022, a boat carrying at least 31 irregular passengers departed from Djibouti and capsized off the coast of Yemen due to high tides and overloading of the vessel. In December 2022, the Djibouti Coast Guard intercepted and rescued around 253 Ethiopian migrants from an overcrowded vessel heading to Yemen.

In Yemen, more migrants are detained,<sup>36</sup> die or go missing due to the effects of the ongoing armed conflict characterized by among others, unexploded ordinances and remnants of war.<sup>37</sup> Incidents of sexual violence against migrant women and girls often perpetrated by smugglers and armed groups are commonly reported. Anecdotal reports indicate forced recruitment of migrants by parties to the conflict. Extortion by smugglers is also common, as well as forced transfers by authorities which in some instances result in disappearances. Furthermore, several cases of migrant deaths were reported at the border between Yemen and Saudi Arabia and an investigation by OHCHR is ongoing.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> IOM Missing Migrants Project. <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/western-asia>. Accessed 8 February 2023.

<sup>36</sup> Human Rights Watch. (2021). [Yemen: Scores Die in Migrant Detention Center Fire.](#)

<sup>37</sup> United Nations. (2022). [‘We Must Not Turn our Backs’ on Migrants Stranded in Yemen.](#); Human Rights Watch. (2020) [Yemen: Houthis Kill, Expel Ethiopian Migrants.](#)

<sup>38</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2022). [Ref: AL SAU 9/2022.](#)

Returning migrants often arrive in their country and community of origin exhibiting various forms of vulnerability and protection needs. Due to conflict, drought and other adverse conditions, some areas of return remain inaccessible and/or unfavorable forcing returnees to settle in alternative locations with relatives whose capacity to accommodate their needs are limited, while other are at risk of destitution. Most migrants return empty-handed and some are stigmatized due to their failed migration. Women and girls who are victims of sexual violence and are returning with children born as a result of rape face additional stigma and often find it difficult to reintegrate into their community. There are instances where returning children are rejected by families in situations where alternative care arrangements are limited or non-existent. Some returnees (especially non-voluntary returnees) do not benefit from reintegration support making it difficult for them to re-establish themselves in their communities and lead a productive life. Returning to the same if not worse conditions remains a major trigger for irregular re-migration.

Trafficking in persons is another serious human rights violation that can occur at various stages of a migration journey. In the EHoA, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Burundi were the countries where trafficked persons were most frequently identified. Kenya seems to be a key hub in the region as a source of origin (28%), transit point and destination for exploitation (35%). Citizens of Uganda (23%), Ethiopia (20%), Burundi (13%) and Eritrea (8%) formed the top five share of identified persons. Of all identified trafficked persons in the EHoA, 78 per cent were female and 22 per cent were male. Most trafficked persons identified in the EHoA were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation (42%), 39 per cent were trafficked for forced labour and 19 per cent were trafficked for other forms of exploitation, such as forced marriage or the removal of organs.<sup>39 40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Figures for this section are taken from CTDC, n.d.a (accessed 17 March 2022). The Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC) is the world's largest data repository of human trafficking case data, publishing harmonized data from multiple counter-trafficking organizations around the world. These data on identified cases cannot be considered a random sample of the population of persons who are trafficked but larger country samples are often interpreted as fairly representative, given the pressing need for informed response amid limited alternative sources of data.

<sup>40</sup> IOM (2022). [A Region on the Move 2021](#).

The Migrant Response Plan for the Horn of Africa and Yemen coordinated by IOM brings together almost 50 partners from governments, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), UN Agencies and NGOs to ensure a coordinated approach to protection and assistance along the Eastern Route. The humanitarian assistance provided under this framework, including but not limited to food, water, shelter, medical assistance and protection interventions provided to migrants, for example through Migration Response Centres in strategic locations along the corridor, are a lifeline to the thousands of migrants traversing this corridor each year. This plan, together with the assistance provided through the Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in Africa (EU-IOM Joint Initiative) which was launched in 2016, contributed significantly to ensure essential services along this route. However, the recent closure of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative leaves significant gaps as the large number of migrants and their varied needs remain and far surpasses the resources available. Further and sustained commitment to facilitate access to life-saving, humanitarian assistance and protection services, and to provide options for assisted voluntary return and reintegration schemes, are critical to assist vulnerable and stranded migrants along this route. Continued investment in supporting migration data and research related programming to enhance the evidence-base for good migration governance and management is also key to ensure effective **policymaking, programming and coordination between all stakeholders involved.**<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> More information on the Regional Data Hub is available [here](#).