Project funded by the European Union
Project implemented by IOM

EU-IOM
Joint Initiative for
Migrant Protection
and Reintegration

RDH
IOM Regional Data Hub
East and Horn of Africa

THEMATIC SERIES - CASE STUDY REPORT No. 2

COMPARATIVE EASTERN CORRIDOR ROUTE ANALYSIS: OBOCK, DJIBOUTI AND BOSSASO, PUNTLAND

Snapshots from the Regional Data Hub's (RDH) research on

"Risk perception, expectations and migration experiences of young Ethiopians migrating along the Eastern Route towards the Arabian Peninsula"

IOM Regional Office for the East and Horn of Africa
December 2020

THE REGIONAL DATA HUB

Established in early 2018 at IOM's Regional Office for the East and Horn of Africa (EHoA), the Regional Data Hub (RDH) aims to support evidence-based, strategic and policy-level discussion on migration through a combination of initiatives. The RDH strategy is structured along four main pillars: **data collection capacity**, strengthening regional primary and secondary data collection and analysis to ensure harmonization and interoperability of key methodologies used to monitor population mobility; **information management capacity**, increasing information management capacity to strengthen data consolidation and quality control across the various data sources; **regional research and analysis**, conducting regional research and analysis on mixed migration topics and enhancing data dissemination and knowledge sharing across programmatic and policy-level stakeholders; and **capacity building development initiatives**, providing technical support to key governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to enhance their migration data portfolio in line with regional and global initiatives. Publications and the 2019 RDH snapshot can be consulted at https://ronairobi.iom.int/regional-data-hub-rdh.

The RDH and this particular research project are largely funded through the generous support of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in the Horn of Africa (EU-IOM JI). Launched in December 2016 with funding from the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration is the first comprehensive programme to save lives, protect and assist migrants along key migration routes in Africa. The programme enables migrants who decide to return to their countries of origin to do so in a safe and dignified way, and to help them restart their lives in their countries of origin. This is done through an integrated approach to reintegration that supports both migrants and their communities. The Joint Initiative covers and closely cooperates with 26 African countries in the Horn of Africa, the Sahel and Lake Chad, and North Africa. More information can be found at: https://migrationjointinitiative.org/.

Cover photo: Two migrants heading to the Obock MRC from where they intend to return to Ethiopia. © Alexander Bee/IOM

ACRONYMS

DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
EHoA	East and Horn of Africa
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
HoA	Horn of Africa
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Ethiopia)
RDH	Regional Data Hub
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
SNNP	Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region
USD	United States Dollar

DEFINITIONS

First-time migrants: individuals migrating along the Eastern Route to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) for the first time.

Re-migrating individuals: individuals migrating along the Eastern Route to the KSA who attempted or successfully completed previous migration(s) to this destination.

Returning migrants: individuals migrating along the Eastern Route to the KSA who have decided to stop their journey in Bossaso and are returning to Ethiopia.

Former internal migrants: individuals who have migrated internally within Ethiopia prior to their current experience of international migration.[1]

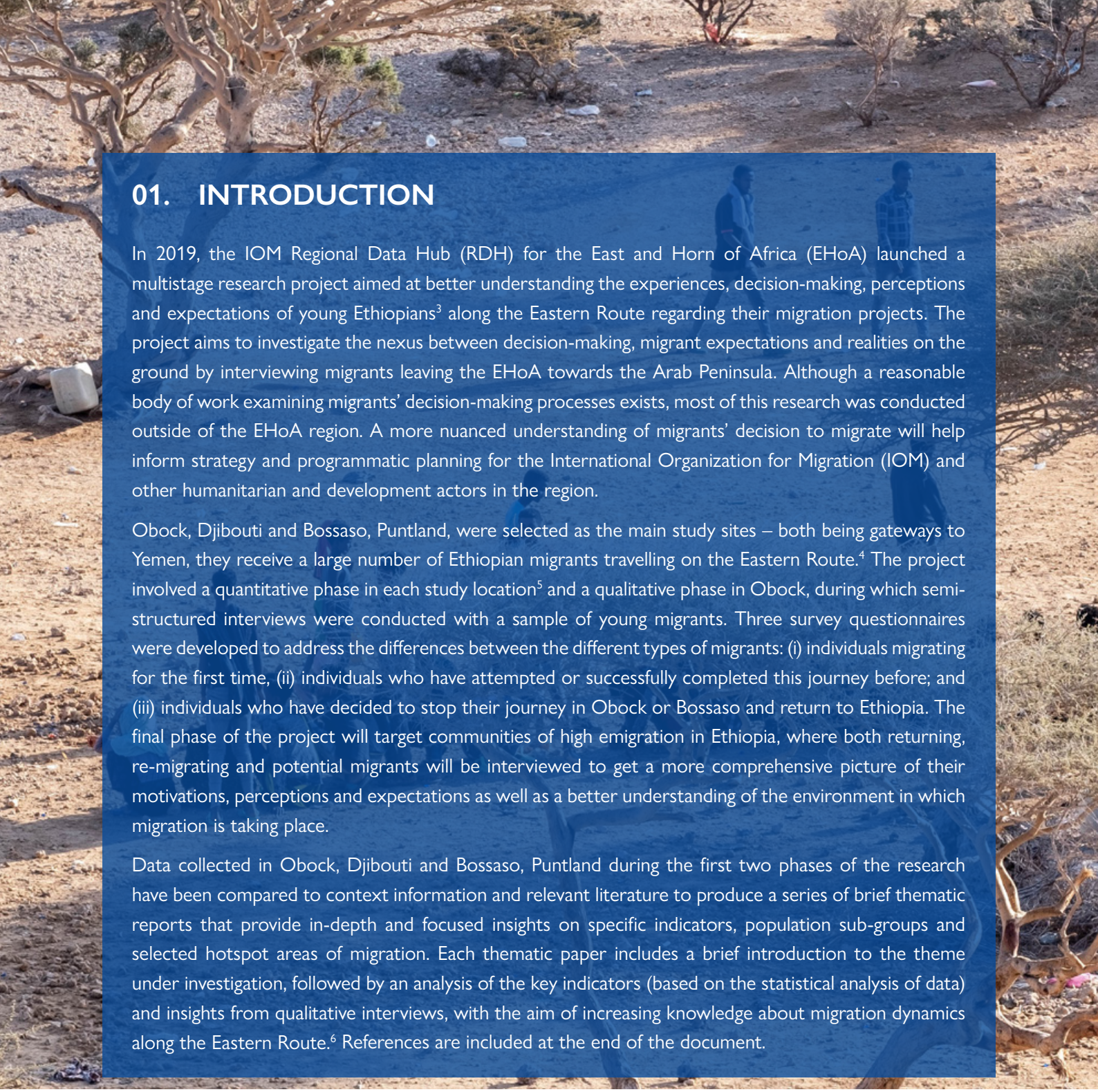
Internally displaced persons (IDPs): individuals who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.[2]

1. Internal migration is not uncommon in Ethiopia. Between 2008 and 2013 about 6.5 per cent of the Ethiopian adult population moved zone of residence. This type of migration is growing and is increasingly directed towards urban areas and their fringes. Most internal movements take place from rural to urban areas (34%) or represent intra-urban migration (25%, from one city to another) and happen within the boundaries of the regional states. Rural–urban migration is often the first step towards international migration, as urban migrants usually experience welfare improvement, which may give them the means and aspirations to migrate. (Bundervoet T. 2018)

2. As of March 2020, IOM recorded around 1,7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ethiopia. Most displacements are conflict-induced (67%), largely related to ethnic and border-based disputes, such as the contestation of the Oromia-Somali regional border. Droughts (22%) and floods (4%) are another major driver of internal displacement, especially during the kiremt rainy season. (DTM Ethiopia's National Displacement Report 4, 2020).

Table of Contents

Landscape view of Fantehero congregation point. © Alexander Bee/IOM



01. INTRODUCTION

In 2019, the IOM Regional Data Hub (RDH) for the East and Horn of Africa (EHoA) launched a multistage research project aimed at better understanding the experiences, decision-making, perceptions and expectations of young Ethiopians[3] along the Eastern Route regarding their migration projects. The project aims to investigate the nexus between decision-making, migrant expectations and realities on the ground by interviewing migrants leaving the EHoA towards the Arab Peninsula. Although a reasonable body of work examining migrants' decision-making processes exists, most of this research was conducted outside of the EHoA region. A more nuanced understanding of migrants' decision to migrate will help inform strategy and programmatic planning for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and other humanitarian and development actors in the region.

Obock, Djibouti and Bossaso, Puntland, were selected as the main study sites – both being gateways to Yemen, they receive a large number of Ethiopian migrants travelling on the Eastern Route.[4] The project involved a quantitative phase in each study location[5] and a qualitative phase in Obock, during which semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of young migrants. Three survey questionnaires were developed to address the differences between the different types of migrants: (i) individuals migrating for the first time, (ii) individuals who have attempted or successfully completed this journey before; and (iii) individuals who have decided to stop their journey in Obock or Bossaso and return to Ethiopia. The final phase of the project will target communities of high emigration in Ethiopia, where both returning, re-migrating and potential migrants will be interviewed to get a more comprehensive picture of their motivations, perceptions and expectations as well as a better understanding of the environment in which migration is taking place.

Data collected in Obock, Djibouti and Bossaso, Puntland during the first two phases of the research have been compared to context information and relevant literature to produce a series of brief thematic reports that provide in-depth and focused insights on specific indicators, population sub-groups and selected hotspot areas of migration. Each thematic paper includes a brief introduction to the theme under investigation, followed by an analysis of the key indicators (based on the statistical analysis of data) and insights from qualitative interviews, with the aim of increasing knowledge about migration dynamics along the Eastern Route.[6] References are included at the end of the document.

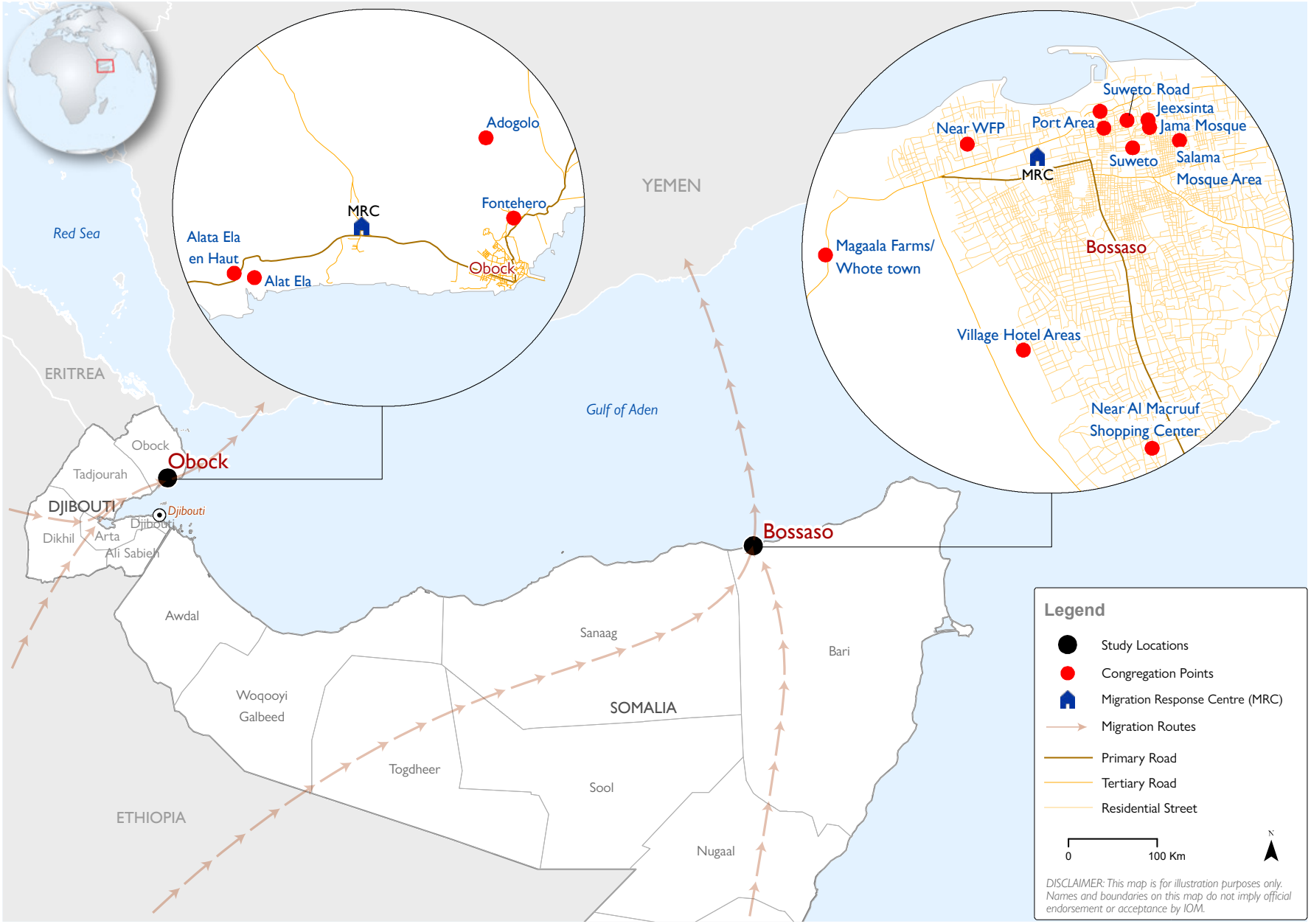
Background photo: Migrants lining up in Fantehero before departure. © Alexander BEE/IOM

3. Young Ethiopians are defined as young adults between 15 and 29 years old. Interviews with migrants younger than 15 years were not conducted for ethical reasons.

4. Between January and December 2019, around 140,000 migrant arrivals were recorded at the five Flow Monitoring Points along the southern coast of Yemen. Bossaso was the main area of departure (62%), followed by Obock (38%). Between January and August 2020, 32,505 arrivals of migrants were recorded at the five Flow Monitoring Points along the southern coast of Yemen. Bossaso was the main area of departure (68%), followed by Obock (32%). This is significantly different from the same time period in 2019, when 97,069 arrivals were tracked in Yemen. Migrant crossings continued at a sustained pace between January and March 2020, with the arrival of 27,948 migrants in total, followed by a sharp decline between April and August, due to the emergence of the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. During the latter time period, a total of only 4,557 arrivals were tracked. (2019 Mobility Overview in the East and Horn of Africa and the Arab Peninsula, 2019).

5. Overall, 3,667 migrants were interviewed, of whom 2,140 were interviewed in Obock and 1,526 in Bossaso. The difference in sample size can be attributed to more challenging logistics and shorter data collection period in Bossaso compared to Obock, where data collection was carried out before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. Results are representative of the sample only and cannot be extended to the national level.



Map 1: Data collection sites in Obock, Djibouti and Bossaso, Puntland

Migrants walking towards Obock. © Alexander Bee/IOM

02. RESEARCH CONTEXT

The Eastern Route to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries via Djibouti and Somalia is the most relevant among the three main international exit routes in Ethiopia.[7] Although exact figures on outward migration are largely unknown,[8] the World Bank cites the 2017 stock of Ethiopian emigrants to be at around 850,000, of whom around 20 per cent reside in the KSA alone.[9] According to figures provided by the Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), these estimates appear to be conservative and the total number of Ethiopian migrants abroad is likely closer to 3 million, 17 per cent of whom are in the KSA (Yeshitla, 2019). Data on flows are also very limited. MoLSA estimates that between 2008 and 2014, around 480,000 Ethiopians migrated to the Middle East through legal channels – 79 per cent of whom to the KSA (Yeshitla, 2019). However, most movements are believed to have been irregular, with MoLSA further estimating that regular labour represents only 30–40 per cent of all Ethiopians in the GCC countries (Frouws B., 2015).

IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) data confirm the importance of the Eastern Route in the context of both the East and Horn of Africa (EHoA) region and Ethiopia: of the approximatively 744,000 movements tracked throughout the region, 63 per cent were observed along the Eastern Route alone, towards Yemen (which is ultimately a transit country to reach the KSA) and to the KSA and other GCC countries – nearly 470,000, with a 7 per cent increase compared to 2018 (A region on the move, 2019). Ethiopian nationals were by far the majority of those moving along the Eastern route (97%) and Flow Monitoring teams in coastal points in Yemen confirm the arrival of around 140,000 migrants from the HoA between January and December 2019, nearly all Ethiopians.

7. Three main migration routes out of Ethiopia exist: the first includes movements through Sudan and sometimes Egypt to Libya (Northern Route); the second includes migration towards Yemen and the KSA via Djibouti and Somalia as international transit countries (Eastern Route); and the third one entails movement towards South Africa via Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi as the main international transit countries (Southern Route).

8. Obtaining an accurate picture of the current migration situation in Ethiopia is extremely difficult. Limitations of migration data include the existence of different definitions for different categories of migrants, and the lack of documentation on irregular migration.

9. World Bank staff estimates based on UN Population Division, 2015-2020.

Obock, Djibouti and Bossaso, Puntland, are the two main gateways for Ethiopian migrants travelling to the KSA via Yemen along the Eastern Route. Migration flows to the Arabian Peninsula from Ethiopia via Djibouti go back several decades, with historical ties between Muslim communities in Ethiopia and Ethiopian diaspora communities in the Gulf, laying the foundation of a migration route that further developed around religious pilgrimages, work visas and educational opportunities in subsequent decades (Yemen Country Statement, 2017). The sea-corridor that connects the town of Bossaso and the small coastal maritime centres on the Somalia side (including Bargaal, Bareedo, Tooxin and Xaabo) to Mukalla and the smaller sea-ports of Al Shihir and Qusay'ir on the Yemen coast also has a longstanding history of trade and mobility and is known as the Bossaso-Mukalla corridor (Majid N. & Abdirahman K., 2019).

Since mid-2014, Somalia has emerged as an increasingly popular transit country for Ethiopians seeking maritime passage to Yemen, surpassing neighbouring Djibouti as the most frequent country of embarkation. In 2014, for the first time, Ethiopians became the majority of migrants departing for Yemen from Puntland and Somaliland (Yemen Country Statement, 2017). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) monitoring missions along the Yemen Strait, between 2008 and 2016, it appears that consistent reports of abuse, especially abduction,[10] on the Obock route reached prospective migrants in places of origin, pushing more to depart from Bossaso. The shift may also partly be attributed to the increased military patrolling of coastal areas along the Red Sea and the intensified fighting and air strikes in Ta'iz Governorate, Yemen, where many of the arrivals landed (RMMS, 2016). According to IOM Flow Monitoring data, most of the 2019 arrivals in Yemen had departed from Bossaso in Somalia (62%) and 38 per cent had travelled from Obock in Djibouti, while in 2018 these correspond to 58 per cent and 42 per cent, respectively.[11] Similar to the migrants tracked along the Eastern Route in the Horn of Africa (HoA), most arrivals tracked in Yemen were Ethiopian nationals (92%) (A region on the move, 2019).

Migrants can face a wide range of challenges and hardships during their journey from Ethiopia to the KSA via Obock and Bossaso, including a lack of access to basic services, shelter, medical care, food and water. They can be vulnerable to threats to their security such extortion, trafficking, death by drowning, exhaustion and disease, as well as physical and psychological abuse, with women and girls most at risk of gender-based-violence (GBV) perpetrated by various actors including smugglers and other migrants.

One of the main challenges experienced by migrants on their way to Obock is the harsh climate in Djibouti, where temperatures often exceed 40 degrees Celsius during summer. Migrants often endure long journeys on foot through the desert, where they are not only exposed to the extreme elements but also have very little access to water. They are thereby exposed to life-threatening risks to their health and well-being, including exhaustion, dehydration and water-borne diseases as they may resort to drinking contaminated groundwater as a strategy to cope with dehydration. The degree of hardship experienced depends on a variety of factors, including migrants' agreements with their brokers, travel modalities and location, with conditions being the harshest on isolated, off-road routes outside transit hubs such as the Obock area, where migrants are able to purchase food and water if they have money, and have access to medical support and other services provided by IOM at its Migration Response Centre.

Almost all qualitative respondents interviewed in Obock reported having experienced challenges and hardships during their journey to Obock, most commonly hunger and/or thirst: "There was hunger. We have no water. We haven't eaten or drunk

10. The threat of abduction and kidnapping for ransom remains a significant threat for those moving, and particularly Ethiopian nationals who are perceived to be able to pay ransoms more readily than their Somali counterparts. (RMMS, 2014)

11. Access constraints limit the ability to collect data at all migrant departure and arrival points, both along some parts of the cost in Somalia and in occupied areas of Yemen. https://displacement.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/YE_2018_Migrant_Arrivals_and_Yemeni_Returns_From_Saudi%20Arabia_Dashboard.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=5223

anything in the last three days. Some people we were travelling with have died."[12] Exhaustion and fatigue from walking long distances on foot, often wearing inadequate clothes and shoes, under the 'intense heat during daytime'[13] with little access to food and water, was another commonly cited challenge:[14] "Tiredness. It's very sunny. There was no food, no water. It is very difficult, especially for women. There were no cars, much of the journey was walking on foot."[15] Qualitative interviews conducted in Obock also indicate that instances of SGBV (Sexual and Gender-based Violence) seem to be fairly prevalent along the route, with most female respondents reporting sexual harassment and/or that violence including rape had been perpetrated against themselves or other women in their group:[16] "I have a friend in my group who got raped"[17]. Sexual violence and rape were also reported amongst problems female respondents had anticipated prior to departure, with one respondent reporting that she had heard many stories of rape along the journey and therefore gotten a contraceptive injection prior to departure.[18]

The Bossaso route appears to be even longer and more dangerous. It generally starts in Jijiga, Ethiopia and/or Tog Wajaale, Somaliland, and includes some very perilous trails in the final part of the journey between the Burko and/or Las Anod and the coast of Bossaso. Studies have shown that the multi-day journey to Bossaso occurs along two main routes from the transit point of Guumays. The first route runs along the road to Tukaraq and is most commonly used by poorer migrants or those who are travelling independently without a broker and is usually done on foot. The second, more expensive route is most commonly used by females and is off-road, typically in cramped, overcrowded trucks, with little to no food and water during the approximately two-day journey (EU Trust Fund Research & Evidence Facility, 2017). Vehicle incidents resulting in migrant injuries and deaths are commonly reported along this route. Other challenges such as dehydration, diseases including Malaria, extortion by brokers, kidnapping and SGBV including rape have also been recorded (EU Trust Fund Research & Evidence Facility, 2017). Two qualitative respondents in Obock who had migrated via Bossaso during previous journeys reported that in comparison, the journey through Obock is easier and less dangerous: "I went the last one through Somalia. Dead people were like stones lying on the roads. You would accidentally step on dead bodies because there were many. The smell of dead bodies was very suffocating. Therefore, this one is better."[19]

Migration along the Eastern Corridor also involves a perilous sea crossing on vessels that are often barely seaworthy. A re-migrating individual interviewed during the qualitative interviews in Obock reported: "Before [during previous journeys], our ship broke down at sea. I experienced this twice. I'm expecting it this time too."[20] As opposed to other maritime routes such as the Mediterranean crossing, which has been well researched and reported on by the media and humanitarian agencies alike, information about the dangers of the passage across the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea is limited. Many prospective migrants seem either unaware of the dangers of the sea crossing or are overly confident about their chances of reaching Yemen safely (IOM, 2020). Even migrants who demonstrate awareness of the risks associated with the maritime crossing reported that they had not been deterred by the information received: "We hear information about boats capsizing. We migrate knowing that the boats usually capsize. It is way better to take the risk of being in a capsizing boat than sitting idly in our country as you will not change your life no matter how much you put effort into it."[21]

12. Respondent 1_Tigrayan_Male
13. Respondent 4_Tigrayan_Male
14. Respondent 15_Amhara_Male; Respondent 18_Tigrayan_Male; Respondent 20_Oromo_Male; Respondent 28_Oromo_Male; Respondent 3_Tigray_Female; Respondent 36_Tigrayan_Female; Respondent 4_Tigrayan_Male; Respondent 41_Oromo_Male; Respondent 53_Amhara_Female; Respondent 55_Amhara_Female; Respondent 58_Amhara_Male; Respondent 62_Oromo_Male; Respondent 8_Oromo_Male
15. Respondent 15_Amhara_Male
16. Respondent 3_Tigrayan_Female; Respondent 47_Oromo_Female; Respondent 36_Tigrayan_Female; Respondent 9_Amhara_Female; Respondent 40_Oromo_Female; Respondent 31_Oromo_Female
17. Respondent 9_Amhara_Female
18. Respondent 54_Amhara_Female
19. Respondent 38_Tigrayan_Male
20. Respondent 52_Tigrayan_Male
21. Respondent 25_Afar_Male

IOM Flow Monitoring data show how instances of difficulties reported along the Eastern Route are increasing: in 2019 these represented 28 per cent of all difficulties reported along the main migration routes involving the HoA – versus 3 per cent in 2018.[22] In addition, in 2019, IOM's Missing Migrants Project recorded 66 migrants as dead and another 33 as missing along the Eastern Route. The majority of recorded migrant deaths and disappearances occurred during a boat incident off the coast of Djibouti. The remaining incidents were vehicle accidents, as well as deaths due to dehydration, starvation or disease. Although largely undocumented, human trafficking, including kidnapping for ransom and forced labour, also takes place within the context of these movements.[23]

Migrant smuggling networks spanning between Ethiopia and the Arabian Peninsula play a significant role in shaping and defining the characteristics of these routes. These networks, which have proven highly adaptable to the changing dynamics, operate in different ways depending on the situation on the ground. Therefore, understanding how migrants interact with these networks is crucial to increase knowledge and raise awareness on specific needs and vulnerabilities of migrants.

Migrants walking along the side of the road in the desert near Burco, Somaliland. © Mohammed Muse/IOM.

22. Routes monitored include Northern route, Southern route and HoA route. (A region on the move, 2019).

23. The actual number of migrant disappearances and deaths along the Eastern Route is likely far higher than the number recorded, as fatal incidents often occur in remote areas with little to no media coverage and on routes that have been chosen with the explicit aim of avoiding detection. Moreover, due to the irregular nature of most journeys, it is difficult for migrants to report the deaths of fellow migrants and hard for authorities to trace and identify missing migrants and migrant fatalities. Limited resources among authorities and international organizations have further compounded the scarcity of information on migrant deaths. Missing Migrants Project, available from: https://missingmigrants.iom.int/

Migrants gathering in Adogolo. Photo: © Alexander Bee/IOM

03. SAMPLE DATA BY ROUTE[24]

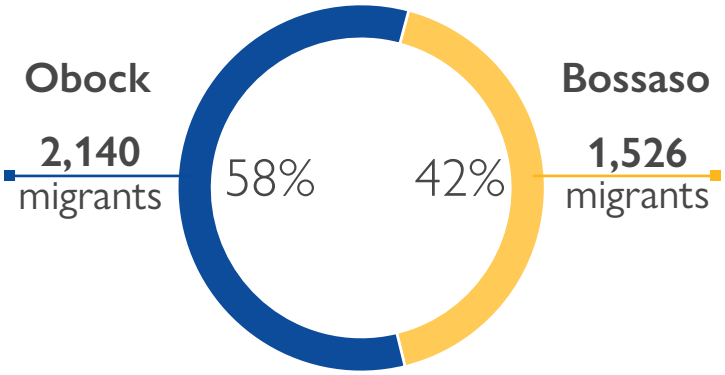


Figure 1. Age groups

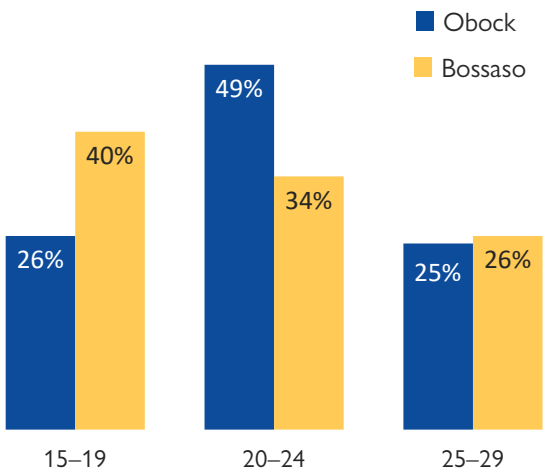
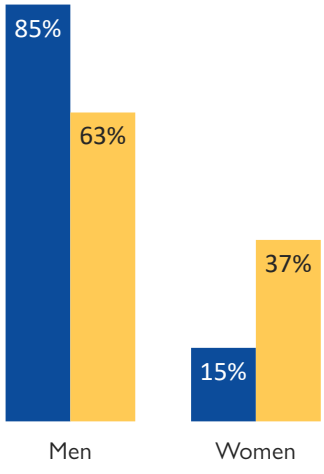


Figure 2. Average age

Figure 3. Sex



24. All socio-demographic data refer to sample data collected in Obock, Djibouti, and Bossaso, Puntland in the course of the study.

Figure 4. Marital status

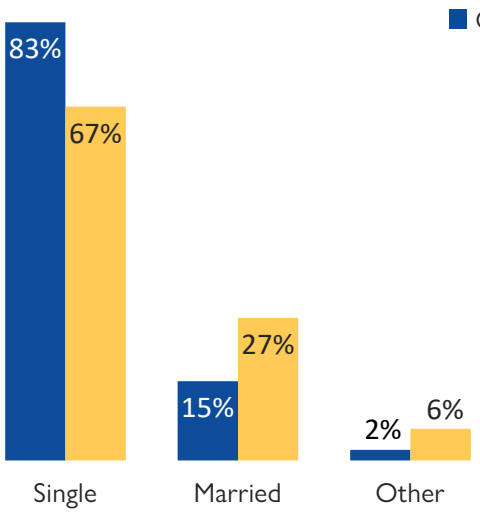


Figure 5. Have children/dependents

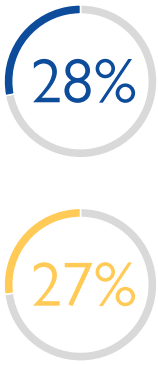


Figure 6. Type of migrant

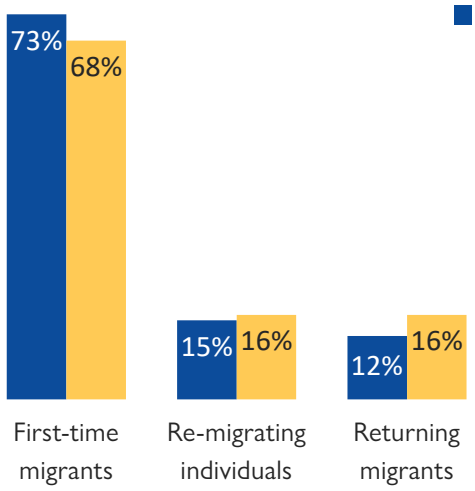


Figure 7. Have migrated internally

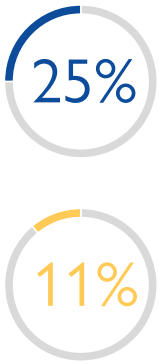


Figure 8. Highest level of education completed

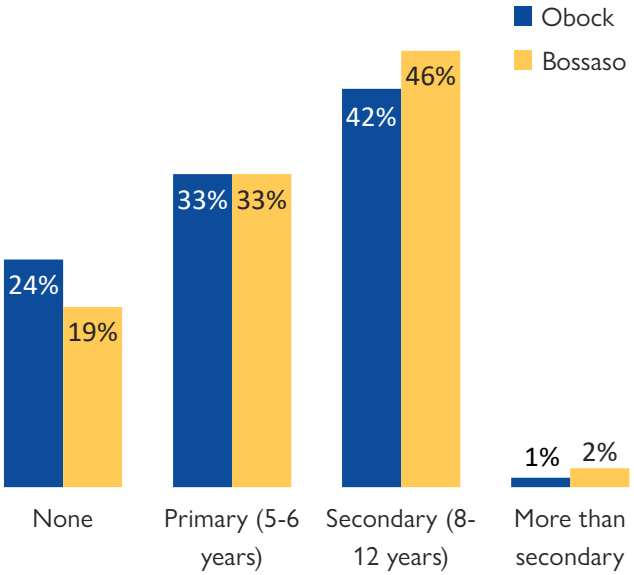


Figure 9. Had a source of income before departure

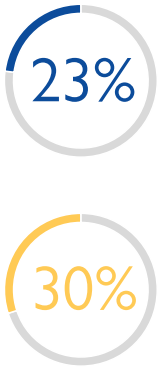
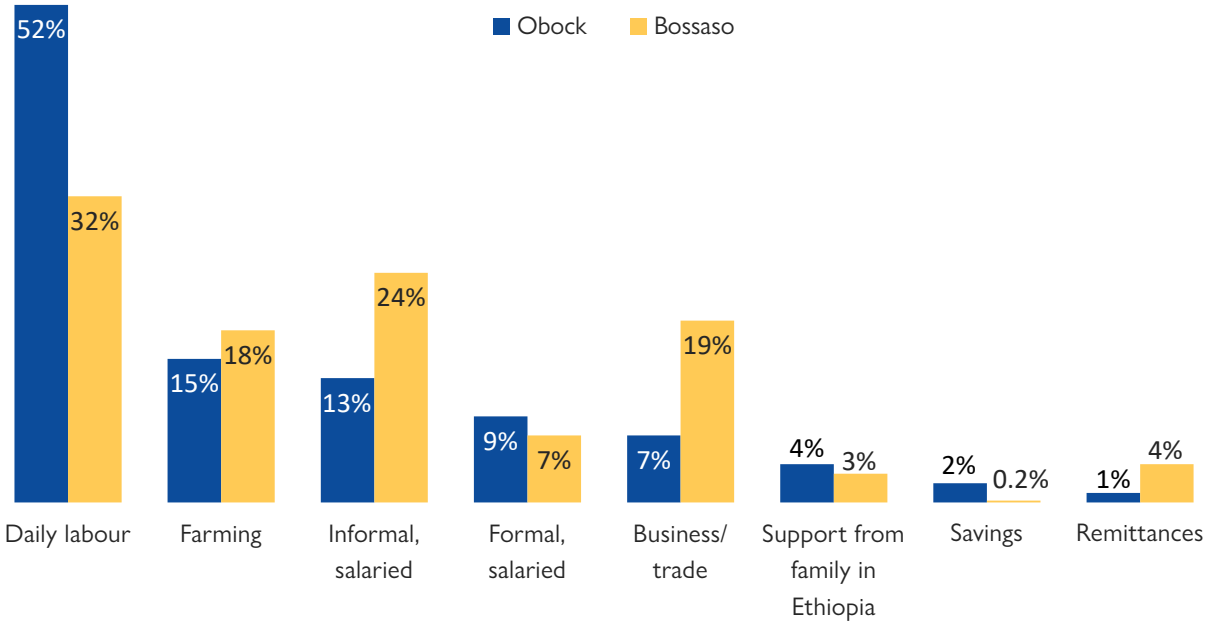


Figure 10. Main sources of income



A young migrant waits at a community centre for Ethiopian migrants in Hargeisa, Somaliland. The 15-year-old arrived in the country with his younger brother, aged 14. The two were persuaded by friends to leave their village in Ethiopia to travel to Saudi Arabia. *"They would call and tell us how amazing it was over there. They only spoke of good things and said that we needed to do the same."* The journey, which they took with many others, was very dangerous. One night, while on the road, the driver of the vehicle they were travelling in was briefly distracted arguing with someone in the van and lost control, causing it to roll over. Many were injured. Stranded in Hargeisa the boys found refuge at a centre for migrants where they learned of the dangers ahead on their continuing journey. *"They only told us that we had to cross Yemen… they never said that there was a war happening."*

Photo: @ Mohammed Muse/IOM

Migrants on the road to Obock.
Photo: © Alexander Bee/IOM

04. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF MIGRANTS

Regardless of the route chosen, young Ethiopian migrants travelling to the KSA through Obock or Bossaso have many traits in common: around three quarters are unmarried, young men attempting the journey for the first time; around half have no education or have only attended primary school, and around one quarter have some source of income, most of which unstable (daily labour, informal employment and/or trade/business). Yet, notwithstanding the differences due to sampling,[25] a few socio-demographic differences between the two routes were identified.

The sample of migrants interviewed in Bossaso is more heterogenous in terms of gender, age and marital status compared to those interviewed in Obock. Women and girls were more frequently surveyed (37% versus 15%), they are more commonly young (40% have between 15-19 years versus 26%) and more likely to be married (27% versus 15%), whereas migrants interviewed in Obock were nearly all single (83% versus 67% in Bossaso).[26]

The lower age of migrants interviewed in Bossaso could explain the greater share of unplanned decisions to migrate: nearly 25 per cent of migrants interviewed in Bossaso said they left 'spontaneously,' versus 10 per cent of those sampled in Obock. The higher share of migrants without an intended destination in the KSA (25% in Bossaso; 9% in Obock) supports this finding, together with the higher share of migrants who have been influenced by friends to migrate (23% versus 4% in Obock). Very young migrants seem particularly vulnerable to migrating due to peer pressure. What links all qualitative respondents who reported migrating due to their friends' influence is the fact that they left their homes without any information on the journey, in many cases more or less blindly following their peers: "I didn't know a thing. I started the migration with

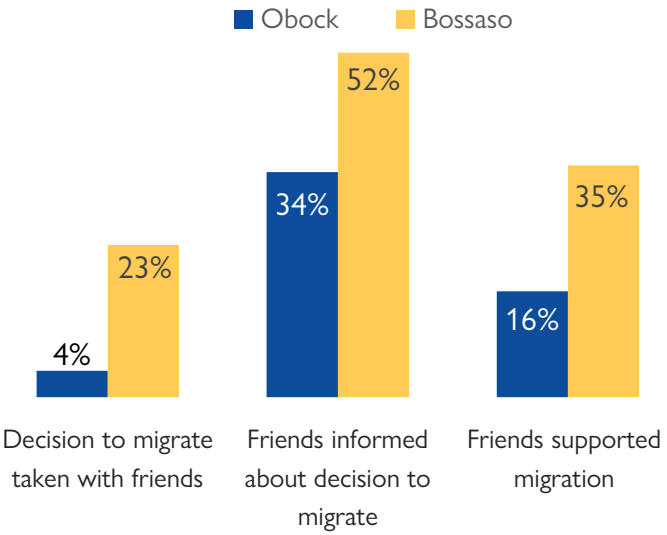
25. The sample of migrants travelling via Obock is larger than that of migrants travelling via Bossaso (2,140 versus 1,526 individuals). The data collection period is also longer, since around 4 weeks were spent in Obock and 3 weeks in Bossaso. No qualitative interviews were carried out in Bossaso due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

26. The difference in the share of female migrants between study locations is not necessarily indicative of the larger population of young Ethiopians along the Eastern Corridor and may be the result of sampling bias and challenges interviewing female migrants in Obock (e.g. language barriers).

my friends. They told me to migrate and I agreed and left school". Migrants were also slightly more likely to end their journey in Bossaso compared to Obock (16% versus 12%) – lack of experience and planning could be a factor triggering the wish to return to Ethiopia, together with the accounts of the Bossaso route being even longer and more dangerous than the route through Obock.[27]

Friends seem to be more involved during the migration decision-making process amongst migrants interviewed along the Bossaso route. Migrants interviewed in Bossaso were more likely to inform friends of their decision to migrate (52% in Bossaso; 34% in Obock) and more likely to receive support from them (35% Bossaso; 16% Obock) compared to migrants interviewed in Obock. This finding is also confirmed by migrants in Bossaso more commonly reporting that they had received assistance from friends in planning their journeys (14% in Bossaso; 9% in Obock), setting them up with brokers (15% in Bossaso; 2% in Obock) and gathering information (11% in Bossaso; 1% in Obock). Friends also play a more significant role in providing financial support for migrants interviewed in Bossaso, both at the beginning (7% in Bossaso; 2% in Obock) and during the journey (4% versus 2%).

Figure 11. The role of friends in migration decision-making



27. See section below, Characteristics of routes, length and costs.

Ethiopian migrants in Obock. Photo: © Alexander Bee/IOM

05. AREAS OF ORIGIN AND AREAS OF DESTINATION

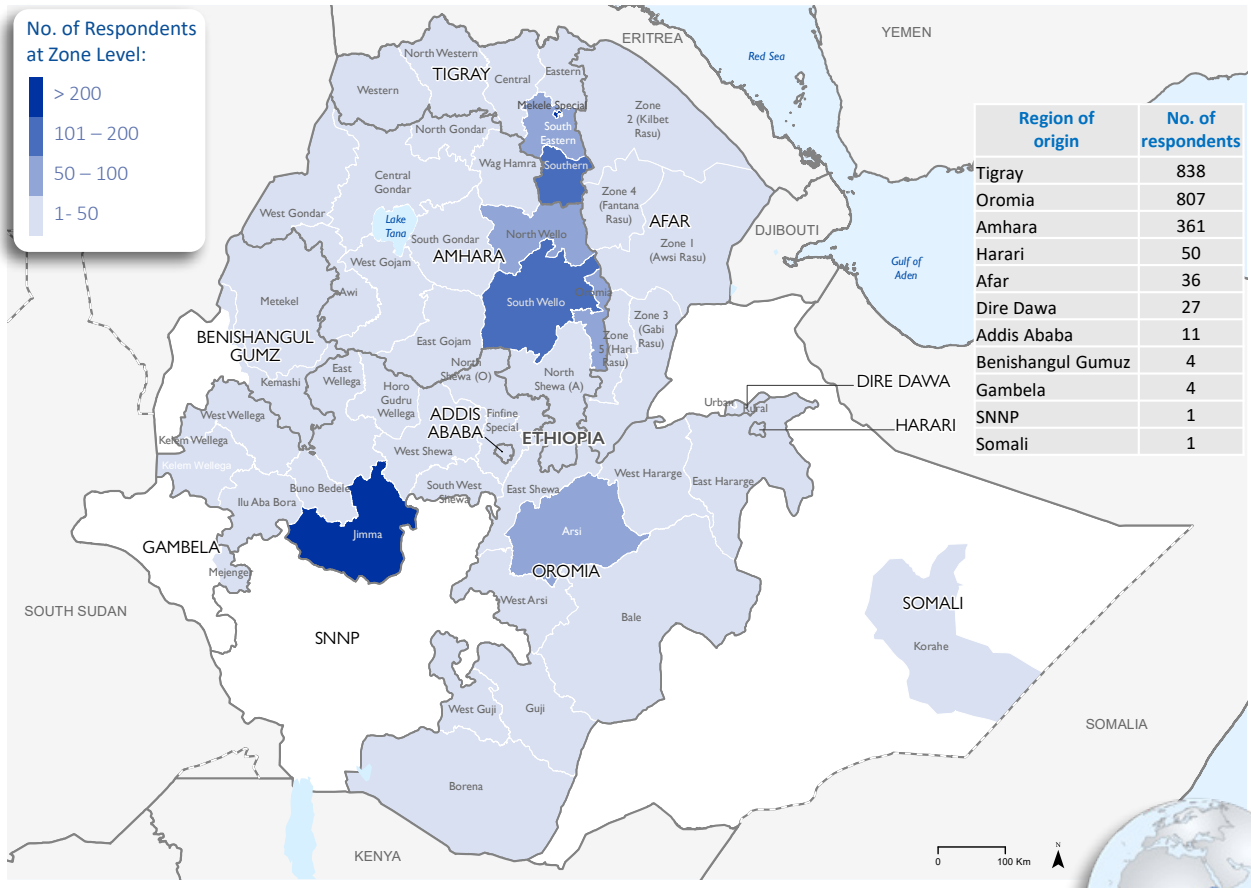
Around 60 per cent of migrants along both routes are originally from the two most populous Ethiopian regions: Oromia (38% in Obock and 41% in Bossaso) and Amhara (17% in Obock and 25% in Bossaso). Route preference is more marked at zone level, with migrants originally from East and West Hararge (Oromia), Bale (Oromia), Arsi (Oromia) and North Wello (Amhara) more commonly migrating via coastal Puntland and those from Jimma (Oromia), South Wello (Amhara) and Oromia (Amhara) more commonly moving through Djibouti.

Migrants from Tigray, a region that only represents around 7 per cent of the Ethiopian population, were predominantly surveyed in Obock (39% versus 10% through Bossaso).[28] This finding is likely attributable to the solid migration culture established in the region, particularly in the Mekelle area, and its geographical proximity to Djibouti. The 10 per cent share of migrants originally from Tigray surveyed in Bossaso could be indicative of emerging networks of brokers operating between Tigray and the Ethiopian-Somali border, alongside the long-established networks originally facilitating the migration of Oromos via Bossaso (Tinti, 2017).

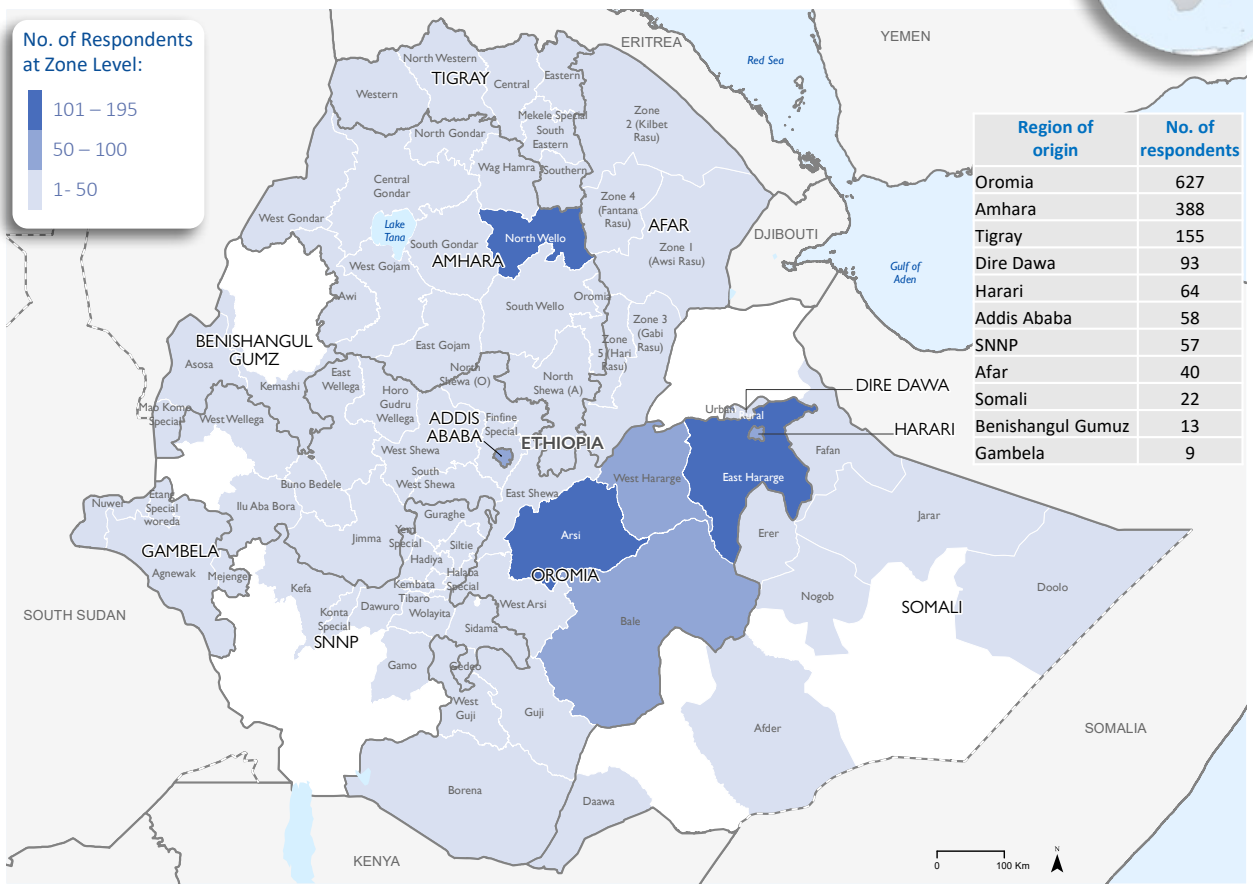
As expected, the share of migrants originally from the SNNP region is low (2%) due to their higher likelihood of traveling along the Southern Corridor (through Kenya and Tanzania towards South Africa).[29] All sampled migrants from SNNP are transiting through Bossaso. Around 5 per cent of migrants originate from urban areas in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa, most of whom were interviewed while transiting through Bossaso.

28. For Ethiopian population figures, projection on Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia data were used. Available from: https://www.citypopulation.de/Ethiopia

29. In addition to destination countries' migration policies and historical links, geographical proximity and transnational migration networks are important factors in explaining patterns of migration at sub-regional level. For instance, north-western regions, like Gondar and Gojam in Amhara, show patterns of migrating along the Northern Route through Sudan to Libya (and then Europe, North America and Australia); southern regions, like Kembata and Hadiya in SNNP, display a stronger preference towards the Southern Route; while movements from the eastern regions tend to occur along the Eastern Route (Girmachew, 2019).



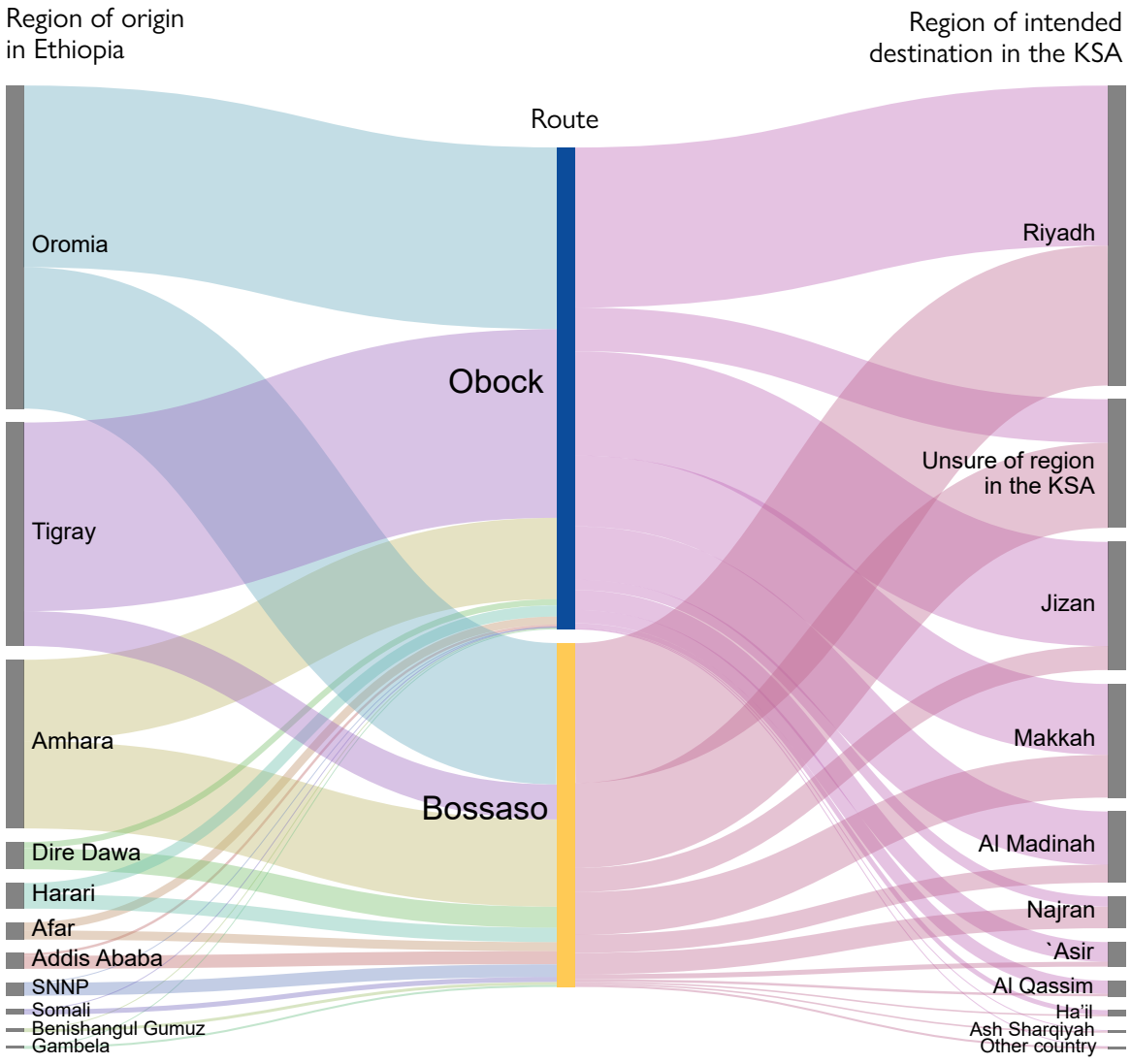
Map 2. Regions and zones of origin in Ethiopia for migrants using the Obock route



Map 3. Regions and zones of origin in Ethiopia for migrants using the Bossaso route

Riyadh (41% in Bossaso and 33% in Obock) and Makkah (12% in Bossaso and 15% in Obock) are the most commonly reported destinations by migrants interviewed in both locations. However, individuals going through Obock are more likely to intend migrating to Jizan (18%) and Al Madinah (9%), whereas one quarter of migrants interviewed in Bossaso are unsure about their final destination (9% in Obock). While indecision can be interpreted as an "I will go wherever I find a job" choice, consistent with the larger share of unplanned journeys and the younger population migrating along the Bossaso route, the likelihood of having family members who have already migrated to specific regions/areas in the KSA can increase migrants' willingness to follow the same path (IOM 2020b).

Figure 12. Region of origin in Ethiopia, route and region/area of destination in the KSA



Migrants crossing the desert on their way to Obock. Photo: © Alexander Bee/IOM

06. CHARACTERISTICS OF ROUTES, LENGTH AND COST OF TRAVEL

While the main logistics hubs such as Obock and Bossaso are stable, the routes chosen between hubs may shift in response to dynamics on the ground. Nonetheless, routes do tend to follow well-established patterns defined by migrant smuggling networks between Ethiopia and the Arabian Peninsula (Migration Between the Horn of Africa and Yemen, 2017). According to data collected in this study, the Bossaso route appears to be longer and more expensive compared to the passage through Obock. Migrants in our sample took an average of 23 days to reach Bossaso and expect a total cost of around 900 USD[30] to reach the KSA – compared to 12 days and around 800 USD for those transiting through Obock. In comparison to other migratory corridors out of Ethiopia, both routes along the Eastern corridor are considered to be 'budget' routes, or routes that require an investment that can be as low as USD 500.[31]

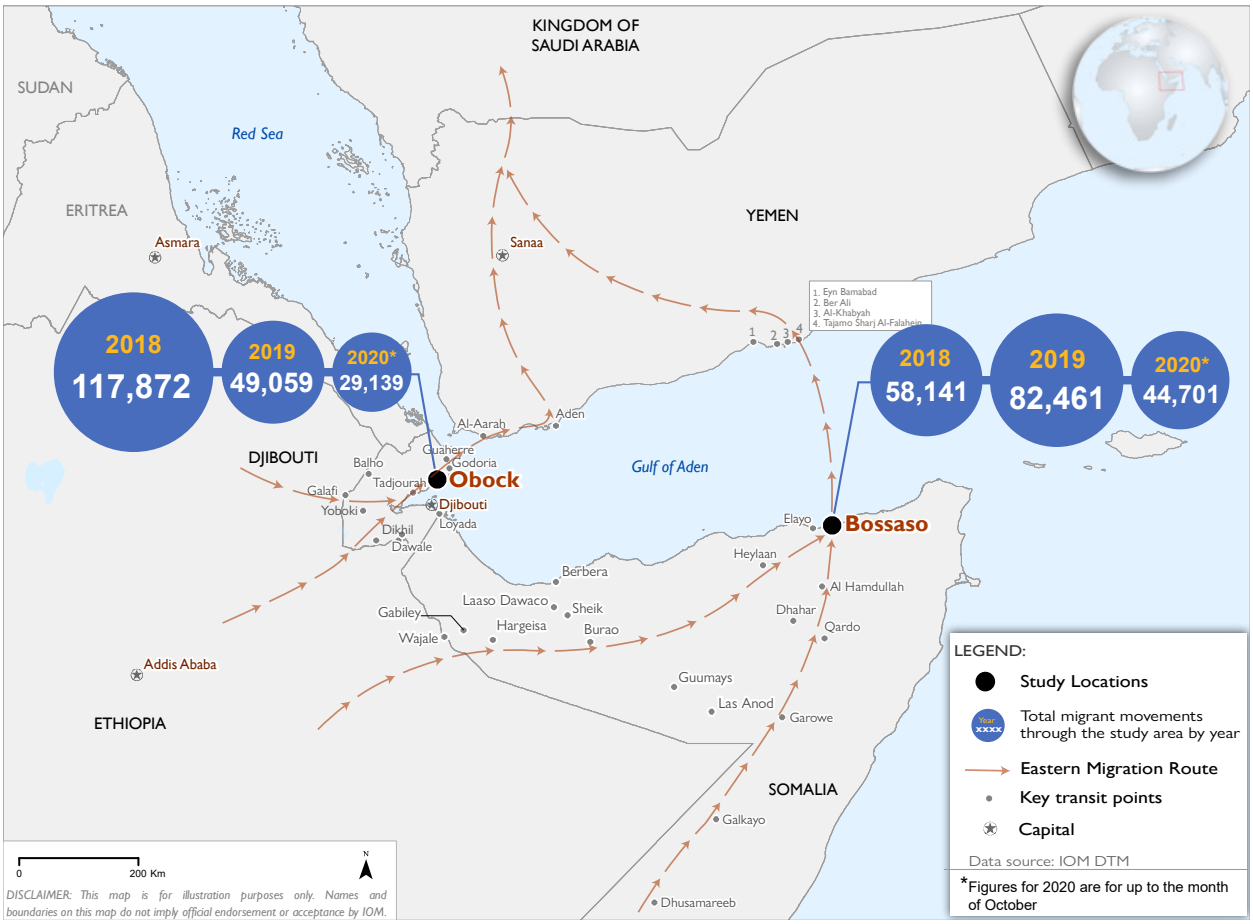
Figure 13. Length and cost of the travel

	Obock	Bossaso
Number of days to reach...	12	23
Amount paid (USD) to reach...	350	405
Total amount (USD) expected to reach destination in KSA	795	900

30. Amounts that were provided in Ethiopian Birr (ETB) were converted into USD at a rate of 1 USD = 33 ETB.

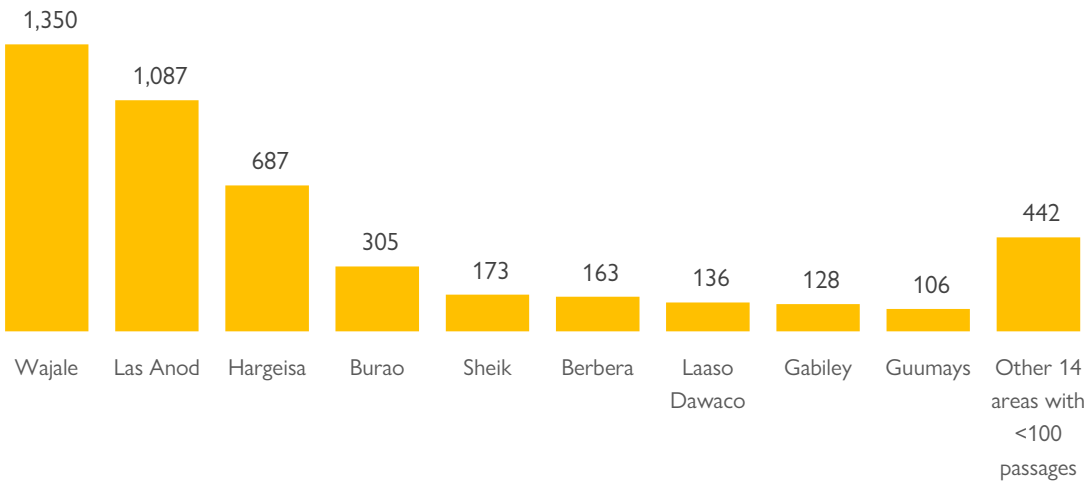
31. In financial terms, the dynamic routes used by Ethiopians can be categorized into three major groups: (i) expensive routes (mainly Europe and North America) requiring more than USD 7,000; medium-cost routes (Africa & Asia) that require a minimum of USD 4,000; and budget routes (Middle Eastern countries) that require as little as USD 500. (Yeshitla, 2019).

Along the Obock route, the border town of Galafi seems to be the principal hub from where Ethiopian migrants cross into Djibouti on their way to the town of Tadjourah, strategically located between the border and the coastal departure points near Obock. In addition to being areas where smuggling arrangements are made, both towns are working hubs where migrants can take on temporary jobs and raise money to pay for their journey. Around 20 per cent of first-time migrants and around 30 per cent of re-migrating individuals interviewed in Obock stated that they financed their journey by working en route. Some migrants also opt to stay in Djibouti city and/or Obock town to work and earn enough money for their onward journey.



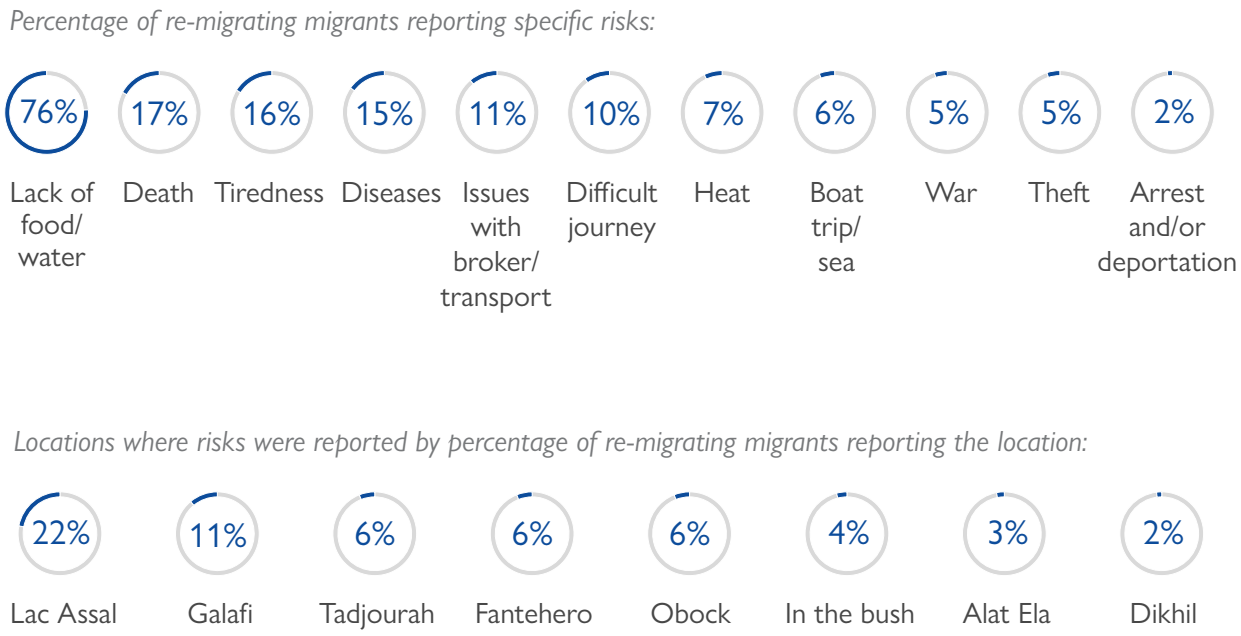
Map 4. Migration routes, key transit points and total migration movements towards Yemen, through Djibouti and Puntland.

Figure 14. The route to Bossaso: Areas or towns/cities mentioned by migrants by number of mentions



The first part of the journey between Galafi and the coastal town of Tadjourah is usually very difficult, as it requires to cover long distances on foot through difficult terrain in the desert and across mountains in the area surrounding Lac Assal, the riskiest transit location (22%) according to re-migrating individuals, even more commonly reported than Yemen (17%). During the summer, temperatures in the Lac Assal area can reach 40–50 degrees Celsius and dehydration along this stretch is common as migrants receive little food and water, while walking on foot under the blazing sun.

Figure 15. The route to Obock: type and place of risk (feedback from re-migrating individuals)



In nearly all cases, the route passing through Bossaso begins in Jijiga, Ethiopia, and/or Tog Wajaale, a city of around 100,000 people on the Ethiopian-Somaliland border. From there, migrants cross the border and reach the towns of Hargeisa and Burao (45% and 20% of all transit points mentioned by re-migrating individuals, respectively). Both cities are hubs where migrants can secure arrangements with smugglers. Hargeisa is also an area where many migrant families, in particular women and children, have settled. However, unlike the transit hubs on the way to Obock, only around 5 per cent of both first-time and re-migrating individuals stated that they worked en route before reaching Bossaso. The second part of the journey after Hargeisa is usually very difficult, as it involves going through disputed areas and dangerous trails between Las Anod before reaching the coast around Bossaso.

Migrant overlooking Alat Ela congregation point.
Photo: © Alexander Bee/IOM

07. WHICH ROUTE TO TAKE: THE ROLE OF BROKERS

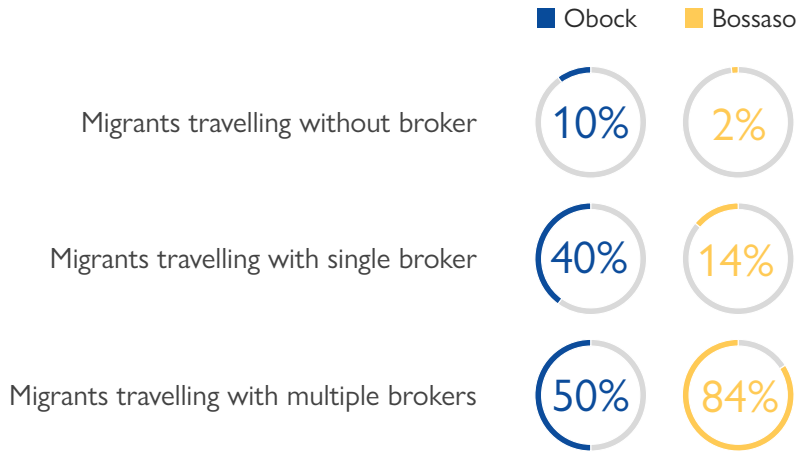
Choosing which route to take is not always an individual choice, as most migrants are heavily reliant on their brokers.[32] Although the qualitative data collected during this study indicates that most migrants do not necessarily trust their brokers, they still migrate with them due to lack of alternatives and the territorial nature of the industry. Travelling without a broker is extremely rare and entails a very high level of risk, especially along the Bossaso route.[33] Consequently, the share of people migrating via Bossaso without a broker is very small (below 2%), as well as that of people travelling with a single broker (14%). Conversely, around one in ten migrants travelled to Obock without a broker (10%). In addition to most migrants relying on brokers to assist with movement, they also heavily rely on brokers for information about the journey. Brokers were the main source of information amongst respondents surveyed in Obock who reported that they had tried to inform themselves about the journey prior to departure, and are more commonly consulted than family, friends and even returnees. Of those migrants who reported that they did not try to inform themselves about the journey prior to leaving, around one in five (22%, 476 individuals) chose not to inform themselves before leaving because 'the broker seemed informed' and a similar share (18%, 377 individuals) went directly to the broker when seeking information.

As was the case during the quantitative interviews, most migrants who were interviewed in the qualitative phase of the research reported that based on their experiences until reaching Obock, they would evaluate the information the broker had given them prior to departure as mostly inaccurate. Among the misinformation migrants reported receiving was false information on the duration of the journey, usually around four to five days; that there would be 'no problems' or 'dangers' on the road and/or the 'journey is easy,' as well as incorrect information on the cost of the journey and/or not informing the migrant of additional payments that would be required later on during the journey. Very few migrants reported that their broker had mentioned any of the challenges they might face during migration, while many reported that that the broker had emphasized the stories of those who had successfully and safely reached the KSA. While there are some exceptions, it seems that many brokers propagate false and misleading narratives about migration to the KSA that help shape migration decisions by downplaying risks and failures and overstating the perks of migration.

32. Brokers are considered the main 'door openers' of illegal migration: they assist migrants in circumventing layers of migration control and navigate the complex, risky mobility landscape in the context of governments' campaign to stop 'illegal migration'. Brokers, migrants and the state: Berri Kefach "door openers" in Ethiopian clandestine migration to South Africa. (Adugna, Deshingkar and Ayalew, 2019).

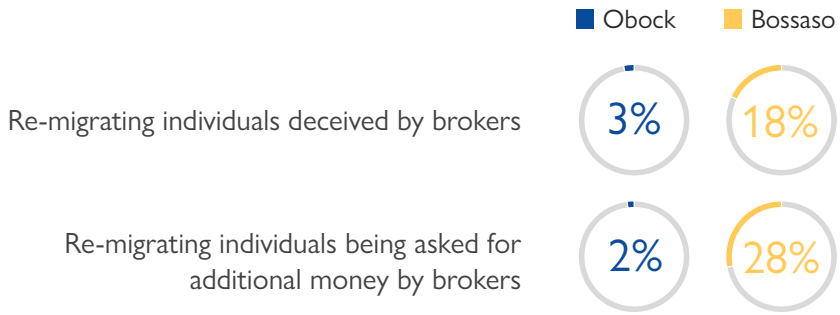
33. The journey through Somalia to Puntland has become very difficult to afford without the help of one or more brokers since their absence would very likely lead to arrest by local authorities or kidnapping by clan in self-governing areas. Ethiopian migrants who, over the years, have made repeated attempts to travel along this route reported seeing substantial differences in their experience of these networks over time. (Migration Between the Horn of Africa and Yemen, 2017).

Figure 16. Usage of brokers



The arrangements migrants make with the broker (important factors are the distance travelled, the level of safety and protection granted, the means of travel and time spent on foot as opposed to in vehicles, and to what extent basic necessities such as food and water are provided) has an impact on the level of risk migrants face en route. According to the feedback provided by re-migrating individuals on their previous journeys, the route to Bossaso carries a greater risk of migrants being deceived by brokers (18% versus 3% in Obock), being asked for additional money (28% versus 2%) and/or being detained (24% versus 3%) – most of which are likely the consequence of being 'passed on to other brokers.' One qualitative respondent explained that he knew he could not trust his brokers "as they collect their money whether you arrive safely or not"[34], while another one reported that he did not see how his broker would be able to assist him as "he is there in Ethiopia and we are in this wilderness, so he can do nothing for us."[35]

Figure 17. Re-migrating individuals' experience on reliability of brokers



According to survey's data, brokers tend to be territorial and establish strong links with the migrants they smuggle. This is especially the case in small rural areas where there are fewer brokers.[36] However, even where there is more than one broker, changing or replacing one broker with another can be difficult, indicating that migrants are not always able to select a broker simply based on who they trust most. One re-migrating migrant explained that although he had had a bad experience with his broker during his first migration, he was migrating with the same broker to keep the peace within his community: "I couldn't change the first

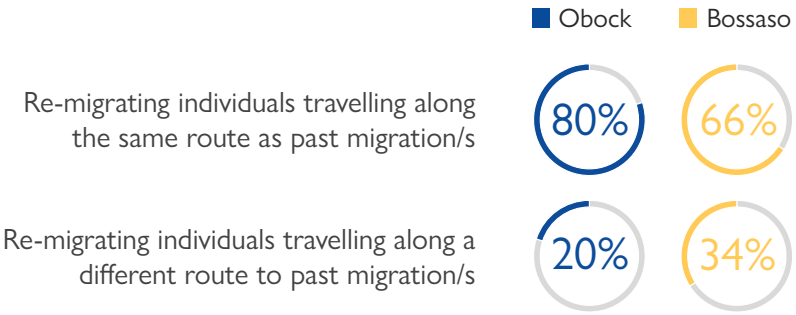
34. Respondent 1_Tigrayan_Male

35. Respondent 38_Tigrayan_Male

36. As a general pattern, smaller-scale smugglers are either ethnically linked to the territories where they operate or share ethnic or linguistic ties with the migrants, which enables them to establish and secure a 'reliable' connection with the migrants in an otherwise unregulated market. (Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants, 2018).

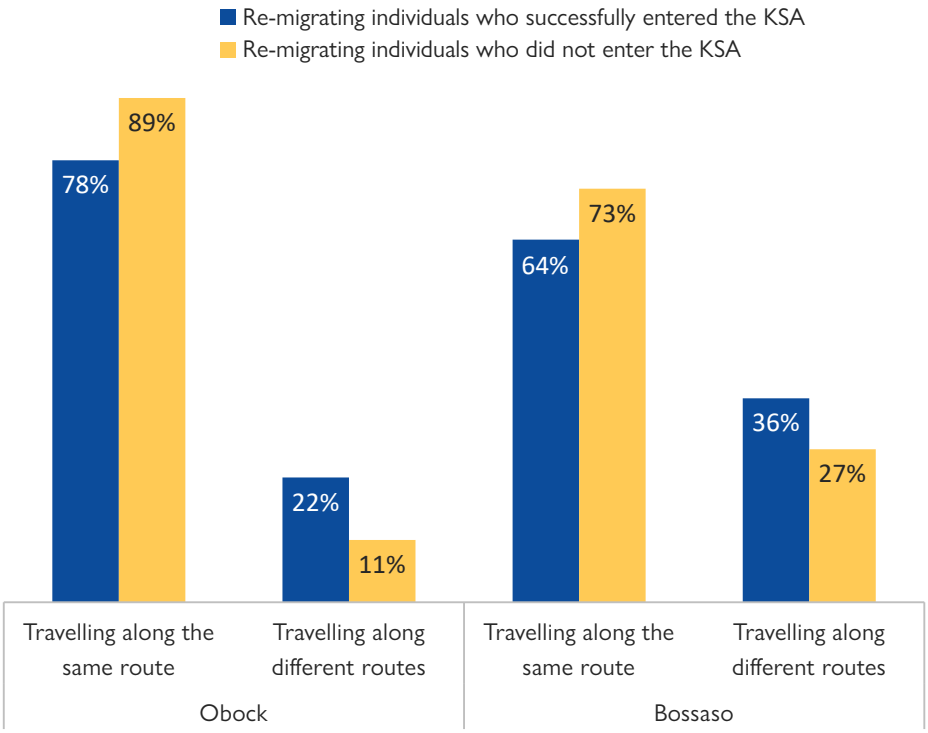
broker; I made a deal with because if I went to another, they would fight each other. The dallala [broker] I spoke with first would think that the other dallala took me by advertising and they would start to talk ill of each other to customers and the tension would exacerbate". The heavy dependence on brokers therefore makes routes very 'sticky': around 80 per cent of re-migrating migrants surveyed in Obock and 66 per cent of those surveyed in Bossaso stated they were migrating along the same route taken during their last journey.

Figure 18. Routes of re-migrating individuals



The fact that most re-migrating individuals tend to use the same broker and follow the same route does not seem linked to their rate of successfully reaching the KSA, which is nevertheless very high on both routes (altogether around 80 per cent of migrants managed to enter the KSA). In fact, one or more unsuccessful attempt(s) to enter the KSA does not increase the chance of changing route. Almost 90 per cent of re-migrating individuals travelling through Obock who did not enter the KSA are migrating along the same route they took during previous, unsuccessful journeys and this holds true for around 73 per cent of re-migrating individuals travelling through Bossaso.

Figure 19. Re-migrating individuals and change of routes



Although the two routes are different and entail different levels of risk, it seems that many migrants are not fully in control of the decision on which route to take. The existence of established networks, previous individual or family ties with broker(s) and former migrants are all key factors in determining route and destination, and are often beyond migrants' control. Moreover, the smaller and more sparsely populated communities are, the fewer choices migrants have. Migrants also seem to tend to stick to the same route (or broker) previously employed by family, friends and/or community members. Despite the difficulties faced and dangers encountered during previous, and oftentimes failed, migration attempts, the stability and popularity of routes within communities seems to increase over time.

Migrant washing in a stream near Alat Ela congregation point in Obock. Photo: © Alexander Bee/IOM

08. REFERENCES

Adugna, G. (2019). Migration patterns and emigrants' transnational activities: comparative findings from two migrant origin areas in Ethiopia. Comparative Migration Studies, 7(1), 5.

Adugna, F., Deshingkar, P. & Ayalew, T. (2019). Brokers, migrants and the state: *Berri Kefach* "door openers" in Ethiopian clandestine migration to South Africa. Migrating out of Poverty Research Programme Consortium. Working Paper 56.

Bundervoet, T. (2018). *Internal Migration in Ethiopia: Evidence from a Quantitative and Qualitative Research Study.* World Bank Group. Retrieved from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/428111562239161418/Internal-Migration-in-Ethiopia-Evidence-from-a-Quantitative-and-Qualitative-Research-Study>.

Central Statistical Agency. (2016). ETHIOPIA: Demographic and Health Survey 2016. Retrieved from <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR328/FR328.pdf>.

De Regt, M. & Tafesse, M. (2016). Deported before experiencing the good sides of migration: Ethiopians returning from Saudi Arabia. *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*. 9:2, 228-242. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/17528631.2015.1083178>.

Erulkar, A., Ferede, A., Ambelu, W., Girma, W., Amdemikael, H., GebreMedhin, B., ... & Teferi, M. (2010). Ethiopia gender survey: A study in seven regions. Population Council, Addis Ababa.

EUTF Research & Evidence Facility. (2017). *Migration Between the Horn of Africa and Yemen A Study of Puntland, Djibouti and Yemen*. EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. Retrieved from <https://www.soas.ac.uk/ref-hornresearch/research-papers/file122639.pdf>.

Expertise France. (2017). Yemen Country Statement: Addressing Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking in East Africa. Retrieved from <https://www.expertisefrance.fr/documents/20182/234347/AMMi+-+Country+Report+-+Yemen.pdf/754f6a54-ac81-4adb-964c-f566e0ff8f4c>.

Fernandez, B. (2017). *Irregular Migration from Ethiopia to the Gulf States*. In Fargues, P. & Shah, N. (Ed.), *Skilful Survivals: Irregular Migration to the Gulf States* (pp. 243-267). Gulf Research Centre Cambridge.

GMDAC. (2020). Missing Migrants Project [Dataset]. Retrieved from <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/>.

ILO. (2018). *Situations and needs of Ethiopian returnees from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Assessment report*. Retrieved from <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---africa/---ro-abidjan/---sro-addis_ababa/documents/publication/wcms_670539.pdf>.

IOM. (2019a). *A Region on the Move: 2019 Mobility Overview in the East and Horn of Africa and the Arab Peninsula.* Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/region-move-2019-mobility-overview-east-and-horn-africa-and-arab-peninsula>.

IOM. (2019b). *Ethiopia - National Displacement Report 2 (September - October 2019)*. Retrieved from <https://displacement.iom.int/reports/ethiopia-%E2%80%94-national-displacement-report-2-september-%E2%80%94-october-2019>.

IOM. (2019c). *Migrant Arrivals and Yemeni Returns From Saudi Arabia in October 2019*. Retrieved from <https://migration.iom.int/reports/yemen-%E2%80%94-flow-monitoring-points-migrant-arrivals-and-yemeni-returns-saudi-arabia-october-2019>.

IOM. (2019d). Return of Ethiopian migrants from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (5 May 2017 - 31 December 2019). Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/return-ethiopian-migrants-kingdom-saudi-arabia-5-may-2017-31-december-2019>.

IOM. (2020a). *Ethiopia - National Displacement Report 4 (February - March 2020).* Retrieved from <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/ethiopia-%E2%80%94-national-displacement-report-4-february-%E2%80%94-march-2020>.

IOM. (2020b). *Impact of COVID-19 Movement Restrictions on Migrants along the Eastern Corridor, Report 4 - as of 30 June 2020.* Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/djibouti/impact-covid-19-movement-restrictions-migrants-along-eastern-corridor-report-4-30>.

IOM. (2020c). The Desire to Thrive Regardless of the Risk: Risk perception, expectations and migration experiences of young Ethiopians migrating along the Eastern Route towards the Arabian Peninsula" - Background Analysis by Migrant Category: Bossaso, Puntland. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/desire-thrive-regardless-risk-risk-perception-expectations-and-migration-experiences>.

IOM. (2020d). The Desire to Thrive Regardless of the Risk: Risk perception, expectations and migration experiences of young Ethiopians migrating along the Eastern Route towards the Arabian Peninsula - Background Analysis by Migrant Category: Obock, Djibouti. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/djibouti/desire-thrive-regardless-risk-risk-perception-expectations-and-migration-experiences>.

Italian Agency for Development Cooperation. (2017). *About Migration 7 Researches of 5 Ethiopian Universities on the Roots Causes.* Retrieved from <https://www.aics.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ABOUT-MIGRATION_2017_AICS.pdf>.

Majid, N., & Abdirahman, K. (2019). Mobility, Trust and Exchange: Somalia and Yemen's Cross-border Maritime Economy. Rift Valley Institute.

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. (2010). *Report on Labour Market Situation and Employment Exchange Service.*

RMMS. (2014a). Abused & Abducted. Retrieved from <http://www.mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/010_abused-and-abducted.pdf>.

RMMS. (2014b). Blinded by Hope: Knowledge, attitudes and practices of Ethiopian migrants. Retrieved from <http://www.mixedmigration.org/resource/blinded-by-hope/>.

RMMS. (2014c). Pushed and Pulled in Two Directions: An analysis of the bi-directional refugee and migrant flow between the Horn of Africa and Yemen. Retrieved from <http://www.mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/014_pushed_and_pulled.pdf>.

Tinti, P. (2017). Migrant Smuggling Paths from the Horn of Africa to Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Institute for Security Studies. Retrieved from <https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/aitwr-7.pdf>.

UNDESA. (2019). International Migrant Stock. [Dataset]. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp>.

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2019). World Population Prospects 2019. Retrieved from <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>.

United Nations Population Division. (2015). International Migrant Stock. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SM.POP.TOTL>.

UNODC. (2018). Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants. Retrieved from <https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glosom/GLOSOM_2018_web_small.pdf>.

Yeshitla, Z. (2019, July). Illegal Labour Recruitment Prevention Team Leader at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs at a workshop organised by GAATW, CVM, Freedom Fund and Agar in Addis Ababa. [Presentation].

Zewdu G. A. 2018. Ethiopian Female Domestic Labour Migration to the Middle East: Patterns, Trends, and Drivers. African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal 11 (1): 6–19. doi:10.1080/17528631.2017.1342976

Migrants playing at the IOM MRC in Obock. Photo: © Alexander Bee/IOM


IOM
UN MIGRATION