



PRE-EMPLOYMENT

Information Needs of Migrant Workers in
the East and Horn of Africa-Gulf Corridor

BACKGROUND REPORT



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This publication has been produced by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), within the framework of the The Better Regional Migration Management Programme (BRMM) "*Labour Mobility and Regional Integration for Safe, Orderly and Humane Labour Migration in East and Horn of Africa: East Africa Migration Management*", a regional, multi-partner, pilot project funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) of the United Kingdom. The BRMM programme aims to enhance labour migration governance and protection of migrant workers and their family members' human, social and labour rights through intra and inter-regional cooperation on a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, to support regional integration and facilitate mobility for transformative inclusive and sustainable economic growth as well as youth and women empowerment.

Data collection and initial analysis for this report has been supported by Samuel Hall without whom this research would not have been possible. IOM expresses its sincere gratitude to its partners, particularly Government officials; civil society organizations; private employers; recruitment agencies; community leaders, and migrant workers, all of whom generally contributed their time, insights and knowledge throughout the development of this report. The research for this report has been undertaken with the financial support of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

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ACRONYMS

ADD	Abu Dhabi Dialogue
AfDB	African Development Bank
AUC	African Union Commission
BBS	Basic business skills
BCC	Behaviour change communication
BRMM	Better Regional Migration Management Programme
CIOP	Comprehensive Information and Orientation Programme
CSOs	Civil society organizations
DDA	Djibouti Diaspora Association
EHoA	East and Horn of Africa
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
GFMD	Global Forum for Migration and Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Practice
MPFA	Migration Policy Framework for Africa
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAO	Post-Arrival Orientation
PDO	Pre-Departure Orientation
PEO	Pre-Employment Orientation
PM&E	Participatory monitoring and evaluation
PRO	Pre-Return Orientation
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Growing body of evidence on push and pull factors of migration show that apart from political instability, conflict and natural disasters; lack of economic opportunity and the expectation to find better livelihood opportunities elsewhere are also major migration drivers. In this context, many times individuals seek to migrate from their homes to different climates, particularly in attempts to maximize earning powers. The process of embarking on labour migration involves a range of important decisions, steps of preparation and adaptation in countries of origin, transit and destination.

The very first stage of the labour migration cycle is the pre-employment phase. During this phase, prospective migrant workers, in their countries of origin, consider foreign employment as a possible livelihood option. It is a time of reflection, thinking and seeking information and guidance. It often involves a deeply personal multidimensional risk-benefit assessment, shaped by perceptions of local opportunities available, skills development as well as considerations on what is feasible or not.

In the East and Horn of Africa (EHOA)*, the experiences of prospective migrant workers are diverse. While there are common themes that impact the pre-employment phase regardless of geographical location, experiences themselves are largely driven by personal circumstances, composition of social networks, perceptions of country contexts as well as legal frameworks of migration.

At its core, considerations of foreign employment by EHOA prospective migrant workers appear to hinge on the desire to better support themselves and their families tied to the perception of better opportunities available abroad. This decision-making process is influenced by a number of other factors, including how prospective migrant workers have been impacted by socioeconomic developmental challenges, conflict and instability, climate change adversities, un/underemployment and the impact of COVID-19, to name a few. Such circumstances also dictate the level of urgency felt by prospective migrant workers to change their circumstances as well as the level of risk they are willing to consider.

This mapping and needs assessment aimed to better understand the context and framework in which prospective migrant workers make decisions on whether foreign employment is right for them or not, including the role of other actors as well as risk-benefit perceptions and assessments. A particular focus was given to analysing gender dynamics and its impact on information needs. Furthermore, it assessed the information ecosystem in which prospective migrant workers find themselves and the information gaps they currently contend with in the pre-employment phase. It highlights how information is gathered, processed and used as well as the preferences of prospective migrant workers on the type of information they wish to have and mechanisms of delivery.

The lack of adequate and accurate information, or in many cases, misinformation, can profoundly impact decision-making processes and can increase the possibility of engagement with risky and dangerous behaviours related to recruitment and irregular migration. Information at this stage of labour migration then becomes an important tool to not only protect and reduce the vulnerabilities of prospective migrant workers, but also empower them. Information on options, opportunities and potential risks and benefits allows the opportunity to make choices on a more informed and conscious basis.

***Note: For the purpose of this report, EHOA comprises the following countries from the subregion that were included in this mapping: Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda.**

Additionally, this report presents an overview of existing information and awareness programmes, initiatives, good practices and common challenges, and puts forward targeted evidence-based recommendations. This report is designed to be a resource for developing future orientation programmes for prospective migrant workers, and its findings will be of interest to a wide range of stakeholders in the EHoA.

This report is informed by an information ecosystem approach that seeks to better understand the range of actors, institutions, channels, policies and programmes through which information is produced, disseminated and consumed. This includes formal initiatives like State-supported awareness campaigns, but also informal information flows, through community and kin networks, social media and word of mouth. This report argues that a healthy information ecosystem – within which accurate, accessible and actionable information flows freely between stakeholders – is a necessary precondition for the protection, empowerment and success of prospective migrant workers.

COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION AND ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

This report is framed by the Comprehensive Information and Orientation Programme (CIOP) approach of harmonizing the information migrant workers receive at four key stages of the labour migration cycle:



Pre-Employment Orientation (PEO): Equips prospective migrant workers with information to support well-informed decision-making processes on foreign employment and provide accurate information on safe and ethical recruitment.



Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO): Supports outgoing migrant workers to ensure their departure process is safe while also providing information on the upcoming journey, adjustment period and how to access support and assistance.



Post-Arrival Orientation (PAO): Provides newly arrived migrant workers in the country of destination with information regarding national labour laws, sociocultural norms and practices, workplace expectations and good conduct.

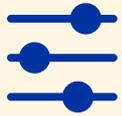


Pre-Return Orientation (PRO): Helps prepare returning migrant workers before leaving the country of destination, with useful information to support their access to social protection schemes, skills development opportunities and related resources.

Within the CIOP approach, this report is informed by key guiding principles for harmonized and tailored orientation:



Harmonized between countries of origin and destination to ensure that the information provided is accurate and relevant.



Tailored to distinct information needs and custom-made for specific labour migration corridors and industries.



Timely to deliver relevant information at the most appropriate point during the labour migration cycle.



Responsive to different learning needs, taking into account gender considerations and dimensions of possible vulnerability.



Rooted in a multi-stakeholder approach involving prospective and current migrant workers, employers, training institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), migrant associations and governments of countries of origin and destination.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In analysing the different pre-employment landscapes of the 10 EHoA countries in focus, it is evident that there is an array of different circumstances that lead prospective migrant workers to consider foreign employment as well as factors that influence their decision-making process. While this diversity exists, this assessment has found the below to be the common and priority information needs at pre-employment, as expressed by respondents:

COMMON AND PRIORITY INFORMATION NEEDS AT PRE-EMPLOYMENT

- Life and work in countries of destination, including working conditions as well as cultural and religious differences.
- Information on jobs abroad, particularly the kind of work they would do and salary.
- Means of reaching target countries of destination catered for their specific country contexts, including requirements related to financing and documents.
- Skills for being able to secure foreign employment, including communication and language requirements.
- Avenues of assistance and support in case of problems.

Against the backdrop of no formal and widespread PEO programmes across the countries in focus, prospective migrant workers tend to significantly rely on their network of family and friends for pre-employment information, including opportunities for foreign employment. While this informal information from these sources appears to play a key role in reaching a decision, it is important to note that many times it can be incomplete, inadequate and/or incorrect, often leaving prospective migrant workers confused.

Without accurate, tailored and accessible information at pre-employment, prospective migrant workers can be formulating labour migration decisions that could ultimately lead to an unsuccessful experience, with higher risks of vulnerability and exploitation.

The following are the main key findings and accompanying recommendations that have emerged from this mapping and needs assessment.

Key finding: There is an absence of formal and institutionalized information programmes aimed to provide specific information to prospective migrant workers to support during the pre-employment phase.



Recommendation: Relevant EHoA countries should consider the development of PEO programmes.

These programmes can be key reference points and can be designed to help nationals make informed decisions on whether foreign employment is the right decision for them at that particular point. PEO should be informed by global good practices, based on the principles of accessibility, relevance and impact.

Key finding: In contexts where labour migration is not wholly accommodated within legislative frameworks, prospective migrant workers appear to continue to explore options of foreign employment, along with associated means.



Recommendation: EHoA countries should continue to strengthen legislative frameworks related to employment, recruitment and labour migration.

In appreciating the relationship between labour migration and development, governments should continue strengthening legislative frameworks to cultivate an enabling environment for safe, orderly and regular migration. Migrant protection and empowerment should be at the heart of these initiatives, with a particular focus on promoting and institutionalizing ethical recruitment as the norm.

Key finding: Prospective migrant workers who live in rural and remote areas have more difficulty in accessing accurate and relevant information on labour migration. As a result, there is a tendency to rely on informal sources who do not necessarily provide adequate and/or correct information.



Recommendations: EHoA governments and partners should ensure nationals across the country have access to pre-employment information by embracing a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to information programming. This would maximize outreach and ensure beneficiaries in remote and rural areas are not left behind.

- **Whole-of-government:** Adopting a whole-of-government approach could help integrate pre-employment information, including on labour migration, into existing relevant strategies and programming run by the government. For example, relevant information could be included in education and training curricula, materials could be available in government-run health clinics around the country and online messaging can be highlighted on government websites and portals. Importantly, local administration, with their day-to-day exposure to communities and prospective migrant workers, plays a key role in the dissemination of information but also to provide feedback to different levels of governments. Established coordination mechanisms embedded within the government system would allow regular communication and feedback among all government actors engaged.
- **Whole-of-society:** As pre-employment decisions are made at a grass-root and community level, embracing a whole-of-society approach is crucial in being able to meaningfully engage with prospective migrant workers. Stakeholders, including but not limited to, civil society organizations, private sector, community leaders, returnee migrant workers, recruitment agencies and faith-based organizations, must play a part in the design and implementation of PEO or related initiatives. Integrating information channels into a community-based structure and network, would contribute to ensuring accessibility to remote or rural areas and that no one is left behind. Women-only spaces or points where tend to congregate should also be included in this infrastructure.

Key finding: There is an increasing number of women-led households in the EHoA, resulting in growing numbers of women considering foreign employment. Issues of accessibility to information as well as lack of relevant gender-responsiveness resources was noted, particularly on safety, assistance and family management and care.



Recommendation: PEO programmes and initiatives should prioritize and employ gender considerations in the design, implementation and evaluation of PEO programmes and policies.

PEO programmes should fully cater to the information needs of all genders,

recognizing that gender roles, relations and dynamics are constantly evolving and have a significant impact on decision-making processes and risk-benefit assessments seen at the pre-employment stage. These considerations should be reflected throughout the full cycle of programming, ensuring that the conceptualization, design, implementation and evaluation of PEO have gender as a cross-cutting theme. This will ensure that PEO is seen as a resource for all.

Key finding: Returnee migrant workers directly and indirectly influence the decision-making of prospective migrant workers, particularly in how (un)successful their labour migration experience is perceived to have been.



Recommendation: Returnee migrant workers can play an important role in PEO.

EHoA stakeholders who are investing in initiatives to support prospective migrant workers, are strongly recommended to consider meaningful roles for returnee migrant workers. They should be involved in the design and development of any programming as well as a key component of dissemination. Their lived experiences would equip beneficiaries and their families with information to help form realistic and healthy expectations as well as hear from first-hand accounts on benefits and risks associated with foreign employment.

Key finding: Comprehending complex pre-employment information, particularly on foreign employment, can be a challenge for prospective migrant workers who have low education attainment or literacy skills. This results in difficulties in accessing accurate information along with an overdependency on anecdotes; this can often lead to unrealistic expectations with regards to foreign employment as well as increasing risks of vulnerability.



Recommendation: Ensure that PEO or related initiatives is responsive to all learning needs.

PEO and related material should be designed to be inclusive and accessible to all, including those with lower levels of literacy. This is critical to ensure that no one is left behind. All resources should be in languages and dialects understood by the target prospective migrant workers, their families and their communities. For those who would have difficulty with written products, audio-visual aids are beneficial in highlighting key messages. Folk media, through visual, verbal and aural forms, is one of the most effective mediums at a community-level. This can include poetry, songs and dramas, to name a few.

Key finding: While each EHoA country in focus have different pre-employment landscapes with different information ecosystems, it is anticipated that labour migration will continue to increase from the subregion.



Recommendation: To support the information needs of prospective migrant workers, EHoA governments and partners are invited to consider different interventions when conceptualizing PEO to ensure relevance and responsiveness to national contexts and resources available.

- **Mass awareness campaigns:** Mass awareness campaigns can be effective in highlighting key messages relevant to the pre-employment stage. This can include information on national and foreign employment opportunities, guidance on engaging with recruitment, national laws and regulations as well as considerations to protect and empower prospective migrant workers. Such a campaign should use different networks and mediums to ensure maximize outreach.
- **Community-based information interventions:** Acknowledging the significant role of communities at pre-employment, community-based information interventions are essential. This is particularly the case in considering dissemination to rural and remote areas. For PEO to be sustainable and accessible, communities should not just feel that they are merely recipients of information but should actively participate and feel ownership of such programmes. Key resource persons, such as community leaders, should be mobilized to become trusted reference points. Their involvement will be instrumental in reducing the vulnerability of prospective migrant workers, particularly with regards to human trafficking and engaging with unscrupulous and dangerous recruiters. The more embedded these information channels and roles are within the very structure of communities, the more accessible and effective these interventions can be for prospective migrant workers. For example, many respondents suggested youth clubs and community-based organizations as accessible spaces to disseminate information.
- **Hotspot focused information activities:** In resource-limited settings and contexts where fully fledged PEO programmes may not be currently possible, information interventions targeting specific geographical locations would be beneficial. Data suggest that these hotspot locations contain a higher concentration of nationals who have gone abroad. This could be an effective starting point in implementing knowledge-building activities which could support the information needs of prospective migrant workers in these hotspots. Importantly, it would allow EHoA stakeholders to learn from these initial activities and understand how they could be scaled up to other geographical locations in the country.

Key finding: Many prospective migrant workers still consider embarking on irregular migration, despite having a level of awareness of risks involved. A risk-benefit assessment is a key component of the decision-making process at the pre-employment phase.



Recommendation: Behaviour change communication interventions should be recognized as key to assist prospective migrant workers in their consideration of risks associated with irregular migration.

While information programming at pre-employment will be pivotal in ensuring that all have a robust understanding of risks in engaging with irregular migration, EHoA stakeholders may consider initiating behaviour change communication interventions. These can help in promoting positive behaviours of prospective migrant workers and their families in their engagement with safe and ethical recruitment channels, with the desired outcome of lowering exposure to exploitation and danger in embarking on irregular migration. EHoA stakeholders could consider first implementing these interventions in geographical locations where these vulnerabilities are most evident and/or linking with hotspot focused information activities.

Key finding: In response to changing contexts and personal considerations of prospective migrant workers, pre-employment information needs are dynamic and constantly evolving.



Recommendation: In considering the development of PEO, it is critical to establish participatory monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure responsiveness and sustainability.

As the pre-employment phase is centred on prospective migrant workers and their communities, it is essential that participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) is used to understand how effective PEO and related initiatives are in supporting them. This approach would involve pre-employment stakeholders, ensuring their perspectives and aspirations feed directly into strengthening information programming. This PM&E approach, prioritizing inclusiveness and participation, would allow a meaningful assessment of the impacts, use of resources and effectiveness of PEO. Furthermore, it would enable the identification of challenges and opportunities, which would subsequently inform the design of pre-employment orientation and related initiatives.

BACKGROUND



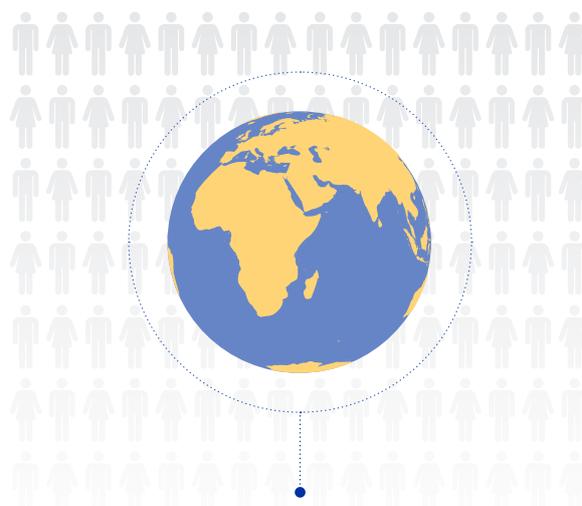
INTRODUCTION

Labour migration is a global phenomenon driven by economic factors and influenced by a spectrum of other elements such as social, political, cultural, environmental and health considerations. Over the last two years, the field of labour has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly with regards to mobility restrictions, the global economic downturn and increased vulnerability of migrant workers around the world.

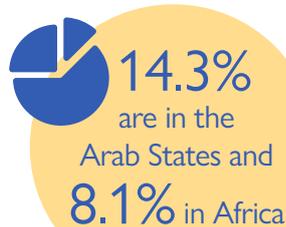
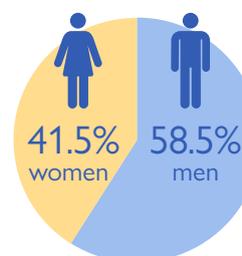
As per latest estimates of 2020, there were approximately 169 million international migrant workers, comprised of 98.9 million men and 70.1 million women, marking 58.5 per cent and 41.5 per cent respectively.¹ While impacted by COVID-19, global international remittances totaled USD 702 billion that year.²

With regards to geographical distribution, it is understood that 8.1 per cent of the total population of international migrant workers are in Africa while 14.3 per cent are in the Arab States.³ In terms of outward migration from Africa in November 2020, IOM stated that some five million African migrants were living and working outside the continent.⁴ With particular reference to East Africa,⁵ IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix observed 744,113 movements; of these, over 63 per cent were intending to travel eastwards to the Gulf States from the East and Horn of Africa (EHoA) region.⁶

Growing body of evidence on push and pull factors of migration show that apart from political instability, conflict and natural disasters; lack of economic opportunity and the expectation to find better livelihood opportunities elsewhere are also major migration drivers. In this context, many times individuals seek to migrate from their homes to different climates, particularly in attempts to maximize earning powers. The process of embarking on labour migration involves a range of important decisions, steps of preparation and adaptation in countries of origin, transit and destination.



169 million
migrant workers globally in 2020



THE POWER OF INFORMATION

Throughout these experiences, information plays an essential role and shapes movements of persons in unprecedented ways. It informs migrant workers throughout their journeys, from the point of considering foreign employment at home, through to their deployment, departure and return. Prior to going abroad, the information available to potential or “would-be” migrant workers is often one of the main factors shaping their decisions on why, how, when and where to migrate for employment. With the global spread and accessibility of information, particularly through social media, there is a heightened awareness of work opportunities available in other parts of the world. This continues to significantly contribute to aspirations and greater population mobility.

While information is powerful, research carried out previously⁷ has documented how inaccurate information and misinformation have the potential to lead migrants into difficult and dangerous situations, risking their health, well-being or even their lives.

OVERVIEW OF THIS MAPPING AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

It is within the above-mentioned context, a mapping and needs assessment was carried out to understand the information landscape at the very earliest stages of the labour migration cycle, focusing on the labour migration corridors between select countries in the EHoA and the Gulf. As a result of the very nature of this exercise, EHoA countries of origin were at the forefront of this assessment; these included Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda. Analysis was also drawn from the Gulf region.

This assessment aimed to better understand the information needs of prospective migrant workers in their home countries prior to making decision on whether foreign employment is the right decision for them and their loved ones. This was complemented by a mapping of the existing information ecosystem available that could influence decision-making processes.

This mapping and needs assessment adopted a multi-stakeholder and gender-responsive approach,⁸ ensuring the voices of migrants are at its very heart. It is envisioned that the findings and recommendations of this report will contribute to forming the basis for designing orientation programmes and information interventions that support and empower prospective migrant workers during their very first steps of labour migration. Additionally, the recommendations will inform future programmatic planning as well as policy and advocacy strategies for the consideration of governments, humanitarian and development actors in the region.

Finally, this report is part of a series of mappings and information needs assessments to span the entire labour migration cycle. For this, it is recommended to be read in conjunction with the following:

- *Background Report on the Pre-Departure Information Needs of Migrant Workers in the East and Horn of Africa-Gulf Corridor.*
- *Background Report on the Post-Arrival Information Needs of Migrant Workers in the East and Horn of Africa-Gulf Corridor.*
- *Background Report on the Pre-Return Information Needs of Migrant Workers in the East and Horn of Africa-Gulf Corridor.*



INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS ON INFORMATION

The central importance of the provision of timely and accessible information in the labour migration cycle has long been recognized. In addition to governments around the world developing innovative approaches to disseminating and making readily available key information at different points of the labour migration cycle, information itself has emerged as a key theme in international migration discourse. The International Labour Organization (ILO) *Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration (2006)*, for example, highlights the importance of:

- Providing information to employers' and workers' organizations concerning the rights of migrant workers (10.9).
- Disseminating information on trafficking to warn potential victims of its dangers and raise public awareness on the issue (11.8).
- Facilitating migrant workers' departure, journey, and reception by providing, in a language they understand, information, training and assistance prior to their departure and on arrival concerning the migration process, their rights and the general conditions of life and work in the country of destination (12.1).

More recently, the *Global Compact on Migration (2018)* dedicated one of its 23 objectives to the theme of information. Five actions are laid out under Objective 3 – *Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration* – including:

- (a) Launch and publicize a centralized and publicly accessible national website to make information available on regular migration options, such as on country-specific immigration laws and policies, visa requirements, application formalities, fees and conversion criteria, employment permit requirements, professional qualification requirements, credential assessment and equivalences, training and study opportunities, and living costs and conditions, in order to inform the decisions of migrants.
- (b) Promote and improve systematic bilateral, regional and international cooperation and dialogue to exchange information on migration-related trends, including through joint databases, online platforms, international training centres and liaison networks, while upholding the right to privacy and protecting personal data.
- (c) Establish open and accessible information points along relevant migration routes that can refer migrants to child-sensitive and gender-responsive support and counselling, offer opportunities to communicate with consular representatives of the country of origin, and make available relevant information, including on human rights and fundamental freedoms, appropriate protection and assistance, options and pathways for regular migration, and possibilities for return, in a language that the person concerned understands.
- (d) Provide newly arrived migrants with targeted, gender-responsive, child-sensitive, accessible and comprehensive information and legal guidance on their rights and obligations, including

on compliance with national and local laws, obtaining of work and resident permits, status adjustments, registration with authorities, access to justice to file complaints about rights violations, as well as access to basic services.

(e) Promote multilingual, gender-responsive and evidence-based information campaigns and organize awareness-raising events and pre-departure orientation training in countries of origin, in cooperation with local authorities, consular and diplomatic missions, the private sector, academia, migrant and diaspora organizations and civil society, in order to promote safe, orderly and regular migration, as well as to highlight the risks associated with irregular and unsafe migration.

The critical importance of orientation programmes has also been advocated for in Africa. In 2018, for example, governments in Africa adopted the *Migration Policy Framework for Africa* (MPFA) and its Plan of Action (2018 – 2030).⁹ To fulfil commitments under the MPFA, Member States are recommended to:

- Provide access to accurate information on labour migration at pre-departure and post-arrival stages, including terms and conditions of work, remedies and access to legal advice in the event of violations.
- Provide comprehensive socio-economic, psychological, legal, and orientation services to returning women and girls, before, during and after the returning process, with the aim of facilitating their reintegration.
- Provide access to complaints/reporting mechanisms that protect women against reprisals, identify and address coercion and abuse and ensure safe and sustainable reintegration, including services to recognize and certify the skills and competences of returning women and girls.
- Promote the integration of migrants into host societies, including through public information and education campaigns, in order to prevent xenophobia, foster mutual cultural acceptance and ensure that the rights of migrants are respected and protected.
- Promote informational/educational campaigns to raise awareness about the gender dimension of migration among migrants, those affected by migration, and policy makers and personnel involved in migration, especially in the managing of the migration process.

Additionally, article 7(a) of the *AU Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers* calls for AU Member States to **“Strengthen the capacity of [our] regional and national systems to provide free and accurate information about migration to migrant workers and members of their families that is gender responsive and includes information about the general working and living conditions in countries of destination, immigration laws and policies, terms and conditions of work, and access to legal advice and remedies in a manner and language that can be readily understood.”**

Following the *High Level Regional Ministerial Forum on Harmonizing Labour Migration Policies in East and Horn of Africa* in January 2020, a Communique and Call to Action Priorities (2020-2023) was signed by participation of the 11 countries within the EHoA (including the 10 countries covered in this report and Sudan).

A year later, the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD) emphasized the importance of coordination between countries of origin and countries of destination, looking to the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD), and in particular the Comprehensive Information and Orientation Programme (CIOP) as best

practices (Bisong 2021). The African Union Commission (AUC), in partnership with the Governments of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), announced their intention to partner with one another to pilot CIOP across key labour corridors.¹⁰ This demonstrates the growing recognition of the need to develop orientation programmes throughout key stages of the labour migration cycle, harmonized between countries of origin and destination.

THE CIOP APPROACH

IOM is a strong advocate for the provision of accurate, timely and relevant information and has extensive experience in developing orientation programmes for migrant workers in different contexts. Since 2017 and building on its history of over 70 years providing tailored migrant orientation at the request of governments, IOM has been acting as the management site for the implementation of the CIOP, under the patronage of the ADD. The programme was designed to strengthen the labour market integration and protection of migrant workers by addressing critical information gaps and misinformation among the migrant worker population arriving to the Gulf from ADD-participating countries of origin.

To accomplish this, CIOP takes a whole-of-cycle approach (hereafter referred to as the CIOP approach) of harmonizing the information migrant workers receive at four key stages of the labour migration cycle:



Pre-Employment Orientation (PEO): Equips prospective migrant workers with information to support well-informed decision-making processes on foreign employment and provide accurate information on safe and ethical recruitment.



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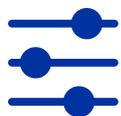


Pre-Return Orientation (PRO): Helps prepare returning migrant workers before leaving the country of destination with useful information to support their access to social protection schemes, skills development opportunities and related resources.

Guiding principles for CIOP



Harmonized between countries of origin and destination to ensure that the information provided is accurate and relevant.



Tailored to distinct information needs and custom-made for specific labour migration corridors and industries.



Timely to deliver relevant information at the most appropriate point during the labour migration cycle.



Responsive to different learning needs, taking into account gender considerations and dimensions of possible vulnerability.



Rooted in a multi-stakeholder approach involving prospective and current migrant workers, employers, training institutions, CSOs, migrant associations and governments of countries of origin and destination.

UNDERSTANDING THE PRE-EMPLOYMENT PHASE

The pre-employment phase is considered the very first stage of the labour migration cycle. Typically taking place in countries of origin, during this stage, a prospective migrant worker considers foreign employment as a possible livelihood option. It is a time of reflection, thinking and seeking information and guidance. It often involves a deeply personal multidimensional benefit-risk assessment, shaped by perceptions of local opportunities available, skills development as well as considerations on what is feasible or not.

Experiences of prospective migrant workers are diverse and varied. While there are common themes that impact the pre-employment phase regardless of geographical location, experiences themselves are largely driven by personal circumstances, composition of social networks, perceptions of country contexts as well as legal frameworks of migration.

One of the most influential and cross-cutting elements of this phase is family and loved ones. They not only often act as key motivators for prospective migrant workers to consider foreign employment, but in many cases also participate and influence the decision-making process of the prospective migrant worker. Importantly, they can play an active role in the process of preparedness, crafting paths towards safe migration and help avail of the best terms and conditions in working and living abroad.

The stage of pre-employment ends when the prospective migrant worker has made the decision to seek foreign employment and has taken steps towards this goal.

At pre-employment, information is powerful. Reliable, accessible and updated information on recruitment, labour migration as well as domestic and international employment opportunities can be a crucial avenue of support. Equipped with correct information on this as well as potential risks and challenges regarding foreign

employment gives prospective migrant workers the opportunity to make their choices on a more informed and conscious basis. Information, thus, becomes an important tool to empower prospective migrant workers and reduce their vulnerability to unethical practices, exploitation as well as to human trafficking.

INTRODUCING PRE-EMPLOYMENT ORIENTATION

Recognizing the cruciality of information at this stage, PEO aims to support prospective migrant workers in making an informed decision on whether foreign employment is the right option for them and their loved ones. It provides practical information and tools on a range of relevant topics, including assessing the feasibility of foreign employment, skills, reflecting on mental preparedness, family and ensuring safe recruitment and labour migration.

As PEO must cater for prospective migrant workers from all different walks of life, its success hinges on accessibility and social trust. For this, it should take place at the grass-roots level, embedding itself within the structure of local communities.



INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM

This report is informed by an information ecosystem approach that seeks to better understand the range of actors, institutions, channels, policies and programmes through which information is produced, disseminated and consumed. This has been elaborated with evidence-based findings in the section “The Information Ecosystem at Pre-Employment”.

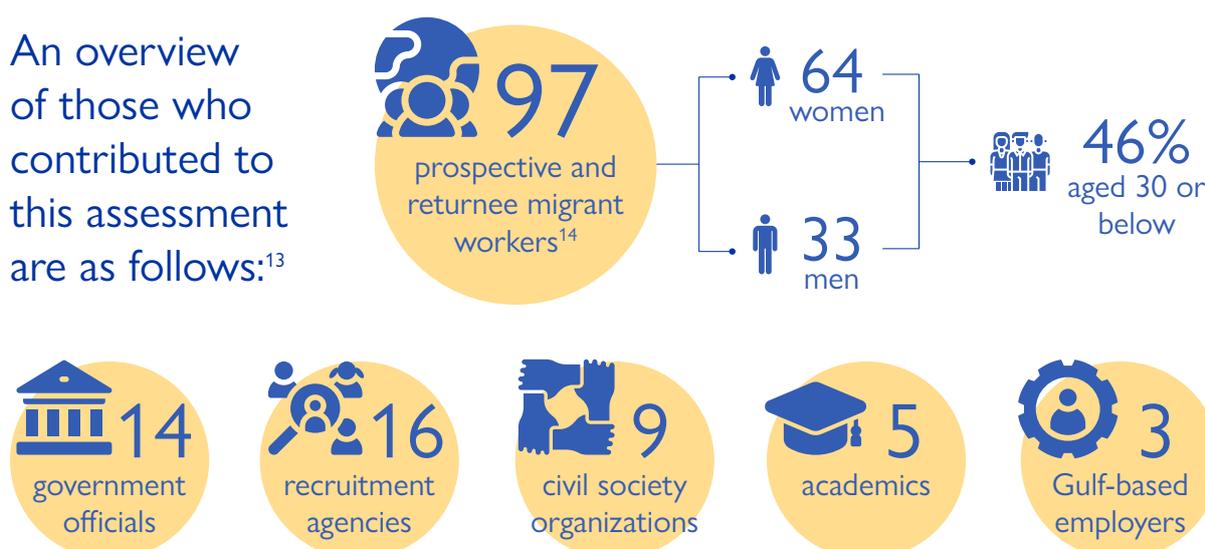
METHODOLOGY

This report employed a qualitative research design to contextualize and interpret data using both primary and secondary sources. The geographical scope of this mapping and needs assessment included Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda, along with some analysis from the Gulf States.¹²

To ensure an evidence-based and whole-of-society approach, primary data was collected from a wide range of stakeholders involved in the labour migration cycle between the EHoA and the Gulf. These groups included prospective and returnee migrant workers, government officials, civil society organizations, recruitment agencies, employers as well as academics. Data collection tools, including structured key informant interview and focus group discussion guides, were designed to understand how aspirations coupled with perceptions relating to national contexts, shape decisions and motivations in relation to foreign employment.

A particular focus was given to exploring the mindsets of both women and men prospective migrant workers, differences in decisions-making processes as well as perceptions of risks and opportunities. Data was collected using key informant interviews, focus group discussions as well as relevant written requests for information. These took place from December 2021 to February 2022. As a result of COVID-19 restrictions and to safeguard the health of data collectors and respondents wherever possible, data was collected remotely.

An overview of those who contributed to this assessment are as follows:¹³



An extensive desk review was also carried out, capturing previous research on the decision-making process of prospective migrant workers along with their expectations and realities on the ground. It also focused on labour migration frameworks, policies and agreements as well as the latest labour migration trends and developments between the Gulf States and the EHoA, particularly with regards to COVID-19.

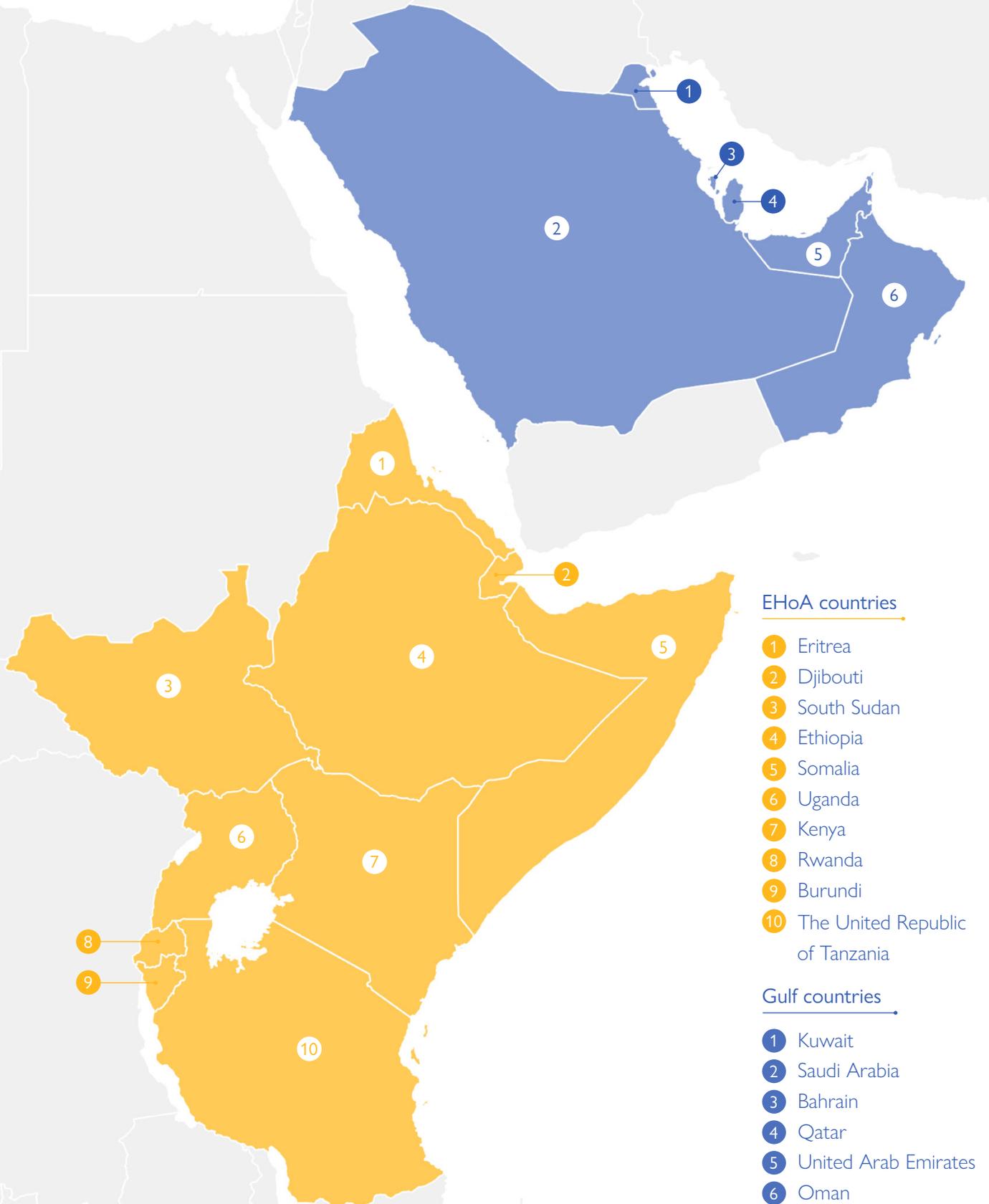
This research applied a gender-sensitive lens in terms of both the methodological approach and the substantive analysis undertaken, endeavouring to understand the particular challenges and information needs of prospective women migrant workers in the EHoA. Acknowledging that a number of EHoA women go abroad to work in the domestic sector, particular attention was given to understanding their motivations and decision-making process.

PART ONE

BACKDROP OF PRE-EMPLOYMENT ACROSS THE EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA



Figure 1: Map of the East and Horn of Africa and Gulf States



Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

INTRODUCTION

Africa is the world's second largest and second-most populous continent, after Asia. The total population as of 2020 is estimated to be more than 1.3 billion, predicted to continue growing rapidly and by the end of 2030, it will be more than 1.6 billion and more than 2.4 billion by 2050.¹⁵

Data also suggest that Africa is the world's youngest continent, as the proportion of youth among the region's total population is higher than in any other continent.¹⁶ With growing populations, impacts of climate change, conflict and difficult economic conditions in different countries, nationals are on the move in search of better lives and livelihoods for themselves and their loved ones.

As per a study on African migration, 80 per cent of labour migration in Africa is largely interregional¹⁷ and mainly categorized by low-skilled workers. Among African migrants who have moved off the continent - some 11 million live in Europe, almost 5 million in the Middle East, and more than 3 million in Northern America.¹⁸ Within Africa, the main driver of migration is perceived availability of economic opportunities in sectors such as agriculture, fishing, mining and construction as well as services such as domestic work, health care, cleaning, retail trade, restaurants and hotels. Better opportunities and compensation, peer experiences working in foreign country and greater security are few significant drivers for migration outside Africa.

THE EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA

The EHoA is a region in the eastern part of the African continent, home to many countries. Situated near the Indian Ocean, the Horn is often considered the continent's gateway to the Middle East and is a known route to the Gulf countries (see Figure 1). Today, mixed migration and labour migration are key features of the migration landscape in Eastern Africa.¹⁹

With regards to the pre-employment landscape across the EHoA, a number of key demographic and economic factors appear to play important roles in determining what this stage of the labour migration cycle looks like.

Firstly, the region has faced and continues to face different socioeconomic developmental challenges, compounded with climate change adversities as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The economies of the EHoA countries in focus are largely agriculture based, predicted to continue to be impacted by climate change.

Growing populations, with large and increasing numbers of youth, indicate trends of significant outgoing migration, towards urban locations, other parts of the region and/or beyond continent.

Across a number of countries, rates of unemployment, particularly among youth, plays a noteworthy role for those at the pre-employment stage in influencing what they perceive as opportunities at their disposal.

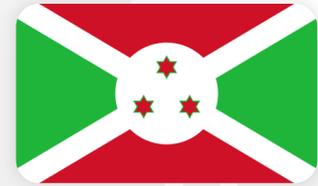
Often driven by conflict and dire socioeconomic circumstances, the role of EHoA women is evolving. More women are becoming sole breadwinners, often acting as head of households. The responsibility to financially support families, often inclusive of extended family members, is found to be a contributing factor in more women looking to enter labour markets and consider looking for opportunities abroad. These gender dynamics are powerful in driving decision-making processes and are a key component of all pre-employment landscapes across the subregion.

For the purpose of this report, the EHoA comprises the following countries included in this assessment: Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda.

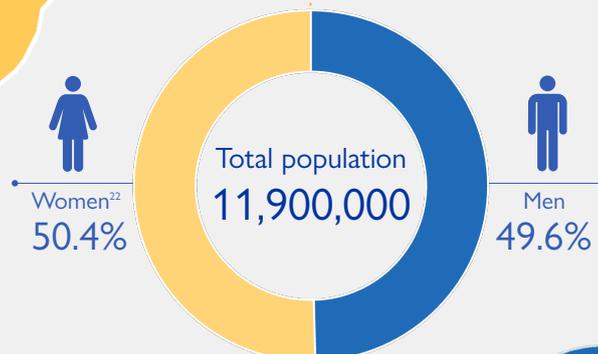
COUNTRY PROFILES²⁰

Each country in the EHoA have different demographic landscapes which provide important insights on the characteristics that make up the pre-employment phase across the subregion. While this report highlights several subregional trends and commonalities, the following profiles aim to sketch out country-specific nuances and particularities of pre-employment profiles.

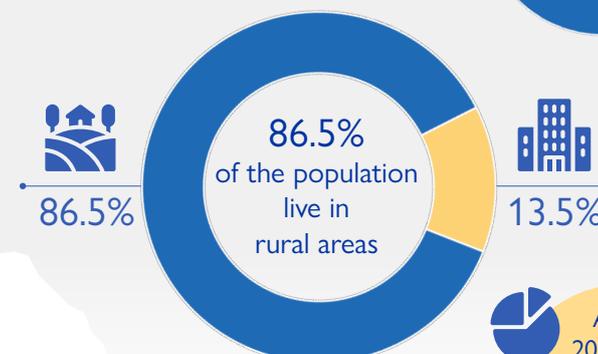
BURUNDI



As of 2020, the estimated population was approximately
11,900,000



21.84%
of the population
is between 15-24
years old²³



As of 2020, the unemployment rate was **1.7%** of the total labour force

Burundi is a country in East Africa, sharing borders with Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Largely rural and densely populated, the country is increasingly shaped by migration. Top countries of destination for Burundians include neighbouring countries and Uganda, with significant numbers residing in Europe and North Africa. Over the last decade, trends suggest an increasing number of Burundians making their way to Gulf countries for employment. The Government is currently exploring different areas of collaboration with counterparts in the Gulf.²¹

Pre-Employment Profile

The pre-employment phase in Burundi is mostly composed of nationals who are looking to better their economic circumstances. With over 90 per cent of the country dependent on subsistence farming, with an average family of six children having less than half a hectare each on which to farm, many report employment opportunities as scarce and characterized by inadequate wages and informality.²⁴

“

Working abroad will allow me to take care of my whole family.

Burundian woman sharing her considerations during a focus group discussion

”

Respondents of this report point to the economic recession and dire financial conditions that act as primary driving factors in considering foreign employment. This is further heightened by extreme climatic events, such as floods and droughts that have displaced Burundians, particularly in the North and Northeast regions.²⁵

“

I have just spent 6 years without a job; who would prevent me from going to work elsewhere if the opportunity arose!

Burundian woman sharing her experience at the pre-employment stage

”

It is also evident that decisions related to work overseas are not taken lightly by Burundians. This is centred on a process of weighing Government regulations with an analysis of alternatives. Some expressed their belief in not having any other options.

Burundian prospective migrant workers report the strongest factor in considering the Gulf was the anticipation of higher wages and being able to support family at home. All the women who took part in this assessment highlighted the prospect of working as domestic workers, particularly as cleaners. With fewer perceived opportunities for men in the Gulf, global events like the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 are understood to be seen as avenues for men to be more successful in obtaining employment.

“

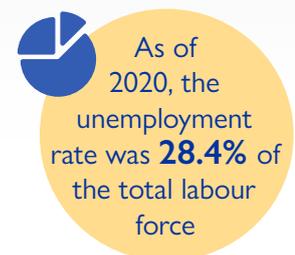
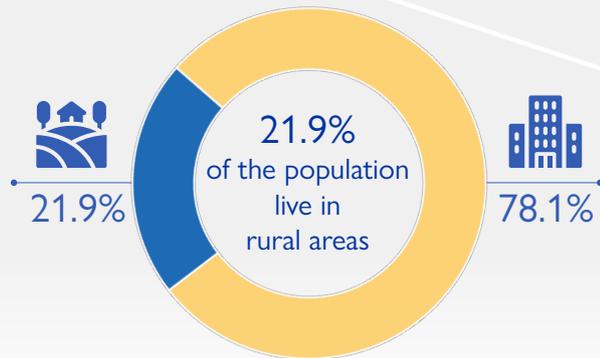
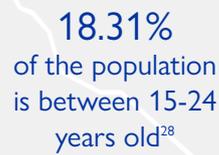
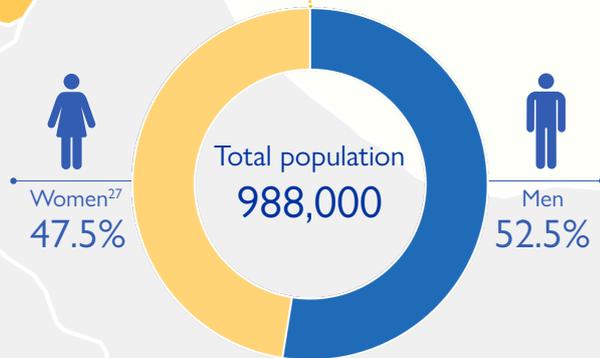
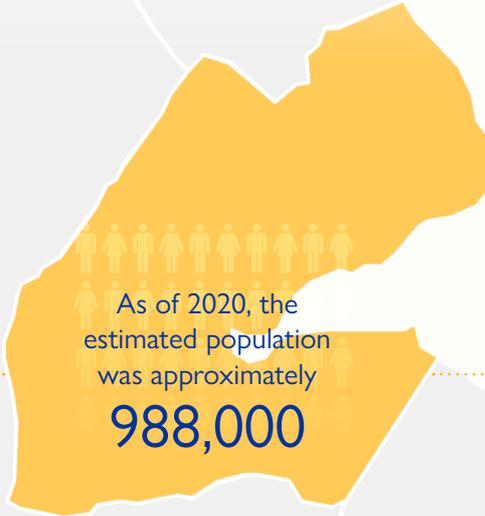
With the current cost of living, it is impossible to make ends meet with the meager salary. I'm still in debt to the point that if the opportunity to earn more money presents itself, I'd leave with my eyes closed.

Burundian prospective migrant worker

”

This consideration of foreign employment is also linked to the changing role of Burundian women, with trends suggesting more women are acting as heads of households and sole breadwinners for their families. Pre-employment profiles among women also range in age, with women participating in this assessment ranging from 20 – 40 years of age, expressing serious consideration of foreign employment. It was also found that the decision-making process of women with children was tempered with a significant deal of concern on how their children would fare back home without them. For many, work overseas is seen as a necessity and self-sacrifice for loved ones, with little notion of skills development and personal betterment playing a role in the decision-making.

DJIBOUTI



Djibouti is a country in the Horn of Africa bordered by Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea. It is a key point of transit for many on the move in the EHoA. This is particularly the case for those looking to arrive to Gulf countries by traversing the Bab al-Mandab strait and heading onwards through Yemen. As a country of origin as well, top countries of destination for Djiboutians include Ethiopia, France, Canada, Libya and Belgium, with trends indicating a growing flow of nationals going to Gulf countries to find employment. According to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix, both Djibouti City and Obock are departure points for nearly one third of the total migration movements in 2021.²⁶

Pre-Employment Profile

Djiboutians in the pre-employment phase appear to be most impacted by difficulty in securing employment due to the country's high unemployment rate. This is further exacerbated by the growing youth population, with more than 73 per cent under the age of 35. Financial instability and a perceived lack of domestic opportunities, compounded by the sense of responsibility to support family members, are the driving factors that make up the pre-employment experience of many Djiboutians. There is a belief that foreign employment, particularly in the Gulf, is the most feasible avenue to earn sufficient income. This is particularly felt by low-skilled workers who struggle to find work in the country.

“

The biggest factor is unemployment or lack of job satisfaction... When people see on social networks the life that migrants lead, they are influenced and will seek to go abroad. They will therefore contact their acquaintances and family members who are there.

Representative of a civil society organization in Djibouti

”

According to research, Qatar and Saudi Arabia appear to be the most common countries of destination for Djiboutians in the Gulf. This assessment has identified that ties to the Djibouti diaspora in these countries can be a factor influencing the decision-making process of prospective migrant workers, through the provision of information on opportunities. For example, the Djibouti Diaspora Association in Doha reports assisting with sharing details on vacancies available in the country.

“

I was the one who paid the family expenses during my stay in Saudi Arabia. My family needs me a lot.

Djiboutian migrant worker after his return

”

Finally, another common characteristic that prospective migrant workers share, who have an ambition to work in the Gulf, is a good knowledge of Arabic and a basic understanding of English. There is an awareness that without language skills, Djiboutians may struggle to succeed in the Gulf.

Respondents of this report also expressed how the experience of returnee Djiboutians, who have worked abroad, influences their own considerations. This can be both in the form of returnee migrant workers in their own communities as well as exposure to different experiences of their peers seen through social media. Some noted that this led them to believe that an improvement in quality of life would come from financial gains of employment in the Gulf.

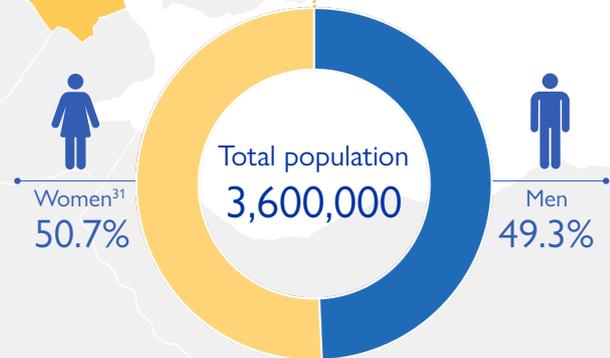
“

I am married and have children. In my family, I am the only child, and currently I am the one who takes care of the family's expenses... My family depends on me a lot.

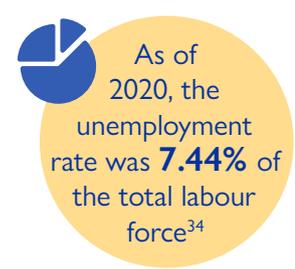
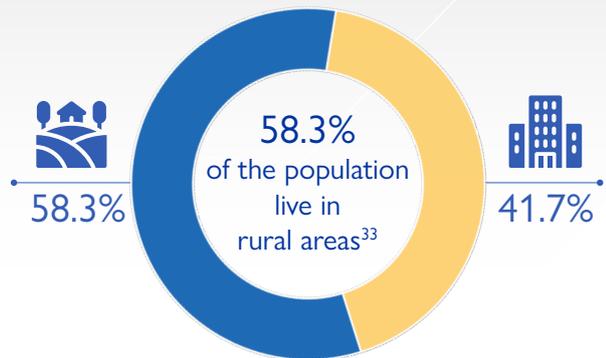
Ethiopian prospective migrant residing in Djibouti during pre-employment

”

ERITREA



Eritrea is a country located in the Horn of Africa, with a long coastline along the Red Sea. It has borders with Djibouti, Ethiopia and Sudan. Considerable outwards mixed migration has been seen over the last 20 years, with many Eritreans seeking better opportunities abroad. The Eritrea diaspora consists of over 750,000 with major countries of destination including Ethiopia, Germany, Sudan, Sweden and the United States.²⁹ In the Gulf, approximately 100,000 Eritrean migrant workers are believed to be in Saudi Arabia.³⁰



Pre-Employment Profile

Eritreans at the pre-employment phase appear to be predominantly young men, however trends indicate women also migrating in increasing numbers.³⁵

This assessment identifies that the socioeconomic conditions of the country, along with requirements related to Government national service mandates, appear to be among the key push factors for Eritreans considering employment abroad. Research also highlights difficulties Eritreans encounter in obtaining an exit visa, in line with Article 29 (2) of Proclamation 24/1992 on entry and exit visas from Eritrea.³⁶ Government regulations and control are suggested to play a key role in the decision-making process of nationals, particularly in weighing the degree to which it is feasible to leave and how it can be done. While data is scarce, many outbound Eritreans transit through Ethiopia and Sudan. Port Sudan, Kassala and Khartoum in Sudan are reported to be among the most used routes.³⁷

“

In Eritrea, migration is not an individual decision, you have to know. This is a complex family decision; who to migrate, where to migrate, [and] how... In Muslim African countries with extended family, all relations are one, [you must] feed all the family and so as I was doing myself, I was feeding more than 20 family members. This is a social obligation. It is in our culture, it doesn't matter Christian or Muslim - we all have this social obligation. Even the Orthodox Church, they have social obligations... The most important incentive is economic, but on the social push factors - people push them to go to work.

Academic in Eritrean studies

”

Like in all other EHoA countries in focus, family well-being represents an important factor. Some research suggests that the decision of foreign employment for Eritrean women, compared to men, is more intrinsically linked to considerations related to the family life cycle and socioeconomic conditions. For example, it is reported that women may migrate to better financially support a large family, while widows may migrate as a means of supporting themselves elsewhere. In some instances, elder daughters may be expected to contribute towards the dowries or other fees associated with younger siblings, and thus, they may migrate to a country where a better salary is expected.³⁸

“

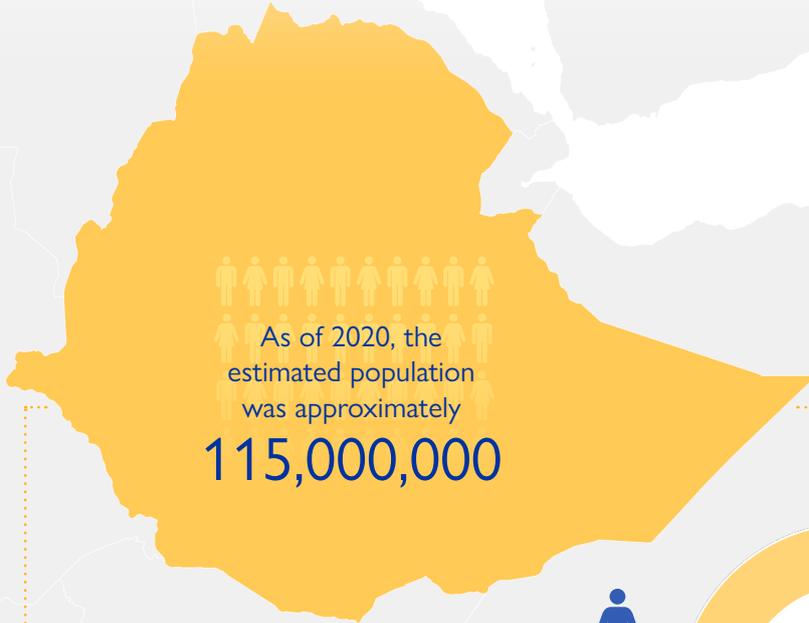
It's very common for migrants to remigrate many, many times.

Academic in Eritrean studies

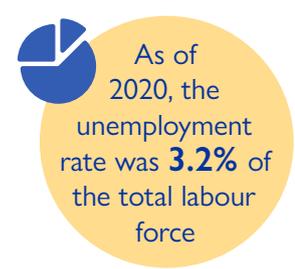
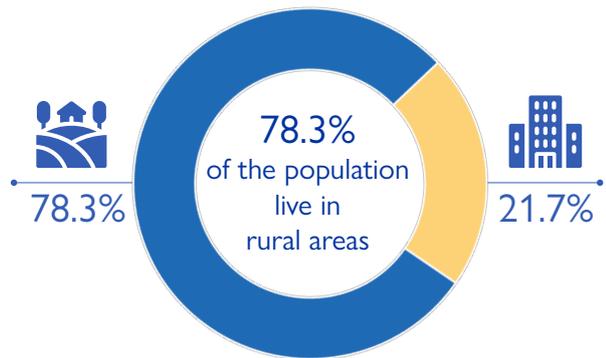
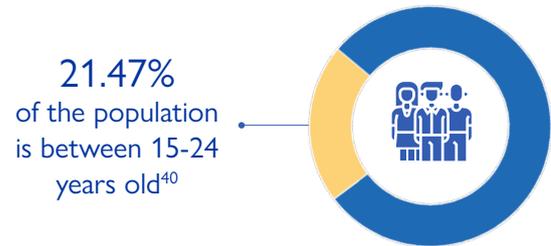
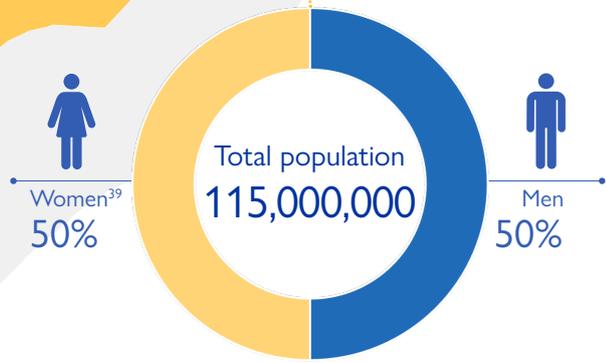
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Another key finding is that some Eritreans view migration to the Gulf as a stepping-stone to further migration. The Gulf is seen as an opportunity to save the financial resources required to continue onwards through additional transit countries until the desired final country of destination is reached. This can highlight the degree of mixed migration dynamics and trends.

ETHIOPIA



Ethiopia is the most populous landlocked country in Africa, bordering Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. With conflict and war, difficult socioeconomic conditions and the impact of climate disasters, a growing number of Ethiopians are engaging in outwards migration.



Pre-Employment Profile

The respondents that took part in this assessment pointed to wanting to better their socioeconomic circumstances and, often, escape poverty. The cost of the war in the country has exacerbated poverty levels in 2021 and has intensified the need for many to move.⁴¹

“

The factor that drives [male men and female migrants] is quite similar – that is, poverty and the absence of meaningful jobs. But you can see [that] women shoulder family responsibility and their families expect them to do so.

Private recruitment agency in Ethiopia sharing on drivers of foreign employment

”

A common narrative driving decision-making was seen with Ethiopian women, who underlined their sense of responsibility towards assisting their loved ones, including extended family. However, it is important to note that many noted their preference to stay in the country if they had access to suitable employment opportunities, suggesting that foreign employment is an avenue considered out of perceived necessity rather than desire. Economic difficulties also appear heightened in rural settings, where nationals may have less access to employment and credible information on opportunities.

“

“I haven't been able to find work in the field in which I have been certified, which has a negative impact and is driving [my] stress. Furthermore, you cannot rely on occasional jobs like I have been doing — finishing work. Working as a finisher on an irregular basis is akin to living hand to mouth, since you live off the money you get from one job until you find another. Nowadays, it is quite tough to find these part-time positions. As a result of these circumstances, I became desperate and decided to look for work in another country.

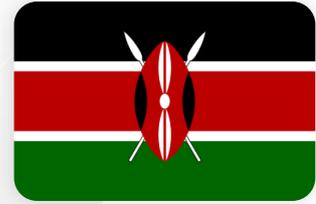
Ethiopian man sharing motivations for consideration foreign employment

”

This assessment identified geographical “hotspot” areas or particular points of origin for outwards migration. These include Oromia (Arsi, Jimma, Hararge and Bale Zone), Amhara (Oromo Special Zone, North Wollo Zone, South Wollo Zone and North Shewa Zone), Tigray (Raya and Eastern Tigray)⁴² and the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (in Hadiya Zone, Silt'e Zone, Gurage Zone, Wolayta Zone and Kembata Tembaro Zone). Findings indicate that nationals who choose to migrate from these regions tend to choose similar migration paths and countries of destination as their peers.

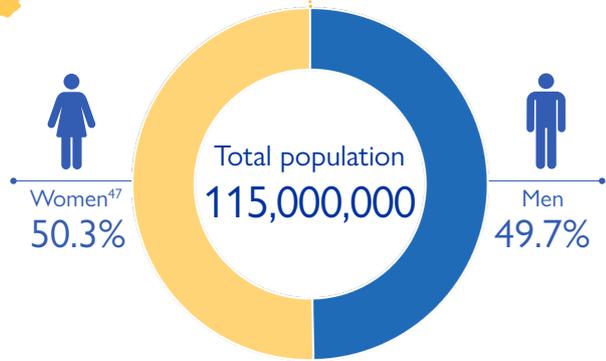
These factors, along with the geographical proximity to, and strong Ethiopian diaspora in the Gulf, have laid the foundation for many nationals to endeavour to find work in the Gulf. Along with the United States of America, South Africa and Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar and Kuwait host a significant number of Ethiopian migrant workers.⁴³ Over the years, many Ethiopians use irregular pathways, particularly the Eastern Route, travelling across Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia and the Gulf of Aden, to then traverse Yemen to reach the Gulf States. It is understood that Ethiopians make up approximately 95 per cent of those travelling the Eastern Route, facing high risks of exploitation, abuse and violence en route.⁴⁴

KENYA

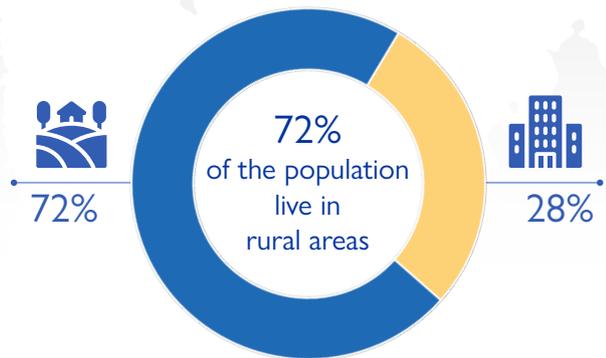
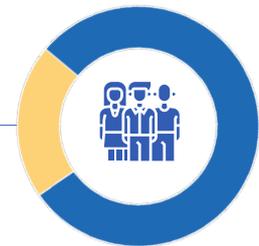


As of 2020, the estimated population was approximately **53,800,000**

Kenya is a country in the Great Lakes region of East Africa, bordering Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan to the north, Uganda to the west, the United Republic of Tanzania to the south and the Indian Ocean to the east. It is a major country of origin, transit and destination and labour migration has contributed to Kenya's sustainable development. Waves of migration in previous decades have resulted in a vibrant diaspora, with large numbers of nationals in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, the European Union, Uganda as well as India.⁴⁵ Over the years, the Gulf region has hosted increasing numbers of Kenyan migrant workers, also in part to the Government signing Memorandums of Understanding with the Governments of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.⁴⁶



20.82% of the population is between 15-24 years old⁴⁸



As of 2020, the unemployment rate was **5.7%** of the total labour force

Pre-Employment Profile

The typical profile of prospective migrant workers consists of young, unemployed Kenyans, often living in rural areas or outside of urban centres. Peri-urban spots outside of Nairobi are noted as areas with increasing numbers of outbound migrant workers, particularly those impacted by climate events.

“

My kids are in school. Paying school fees has been a problem and my husband's income is too little. So I would like to go abroad in order to help my family because abroad people are being paid better.

Kenyan woman speaking of her reasons for considering work abroad

”

With an increasingly young and urbanized population, prominent factors that push labour migration are youth unemployment and underemployment. With difficulties in absorbing its young population into the national workforce, foreign employment is often seen as an avenue of securing longer-term employment with income security, driven by the perception of higher wages offered abroad. Particular for Kenya, respondents with higher skill-levels also highlighted their desire to experience new cultures and gain international work experience that would support the enhancement of their skill sets.

“

I would like to go to Qatar to be a cook in order to sustain myself, not to be someone who is dependent on people. If I go abroad, I expect my life will be well and my kid will be able to go to school.

Kenyan woman sharing during a focus group discussion

”

Considerations related to their family and households appear to be particularly prioritized by Kenyan women. This is in part due to evolving family structures in the country, with increasing trends of women-led households. Six in 10 Kenyan women are now likely to be single mothers by the age of 45, adding to the responsibilities and pressures felt by women to sufficiently provide for their families.⁴⁹

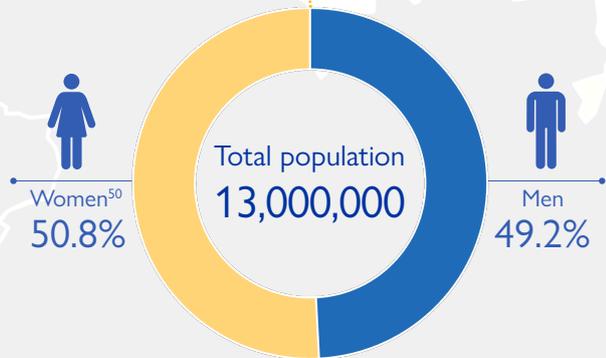
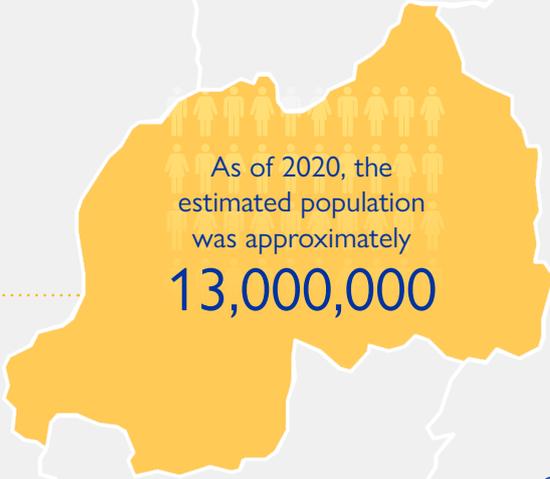
“

The biggest challenge pushing me to go abroad is though I would want to proceed with my education, but there is no money to pay school fees and that is why I have been at home. I haven't taken my Form 4 Certificate and yet it's 2 years since I left school. I have arrears of almost Ksh.100,000, so I need to pay it in order to pick my certificate and proceed with my education. So that's what is pushing me to look for money. The urge to continue with my education is what pushes me to look for money.

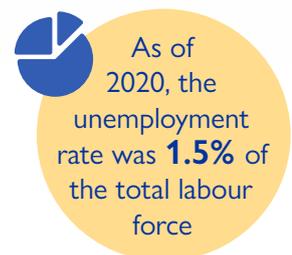
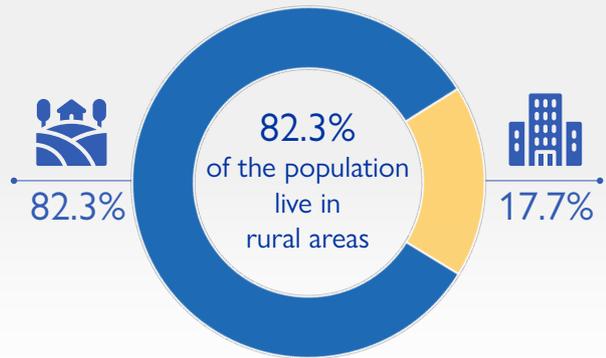
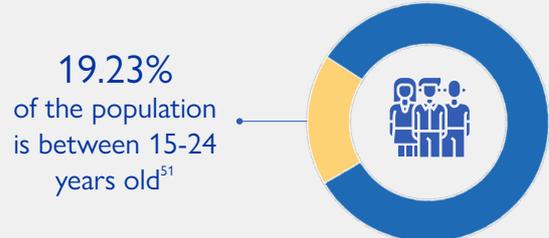
Prospective Kenyan migrant worker sharing how she considers foreign employment a means to further her own education

”

RWANDA



Rwanda is a landlocked country sharing borders with Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Outward and inward migration represents an important element of life and work for Rwandans.



Pre-Employment Profile

Prospective Rwandan migrant workers are predominantly young and looking for employment in professions across skill-levels. Similar to other countries in the subregion, difficulties in obtaining suitable employment in the country's workforce appears to be one of the driving reasons to consider going abroad for work. Many of those who decide to engage in labour migration to the Gulf take up occupations as domestic workers, security guards, drivers as well as teachers.⁵²

“

“After I was laid off from my first job and started business due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures in place, small fashion businesses were not making much money. People were living for survival, everyone was buying food and drinks, very few people were interested in clothes. Sometimes I would sell nothing in three days, yet I had my family relying on me.

Rwandan woman speaking of economic difficulties during COVID-19 pandemic

”

While economic well-being for themselves and their loved ones was cited by most respondents, some also referenced specific goals they had in working abroad, including funding further education or opening a business in the future.

“

I am divorced and the sole breadwinner for my family. My eldest child was going to high school. With my job, I was struggling to make ends meet, so this was a golden opportunity for me, I needed the money.

Returnee Rwandan migrant worker reflecting on their decision-making process.

”

For Rwandan women, foreign employment represents a way to provide for their families, particularly true for those who are the heads of their households. As a result of Rwandan Civil War and the 1994 genocide, over 30 per cent of households are led by women.⁵³

All respondents reflected on their previous professional and educational experience, linking it with belief that it would help them gain stable employment abroad. Many were also keen to gain more training, particularly on language, culture and job-specific skills that would be required or competitive in the Gulf.

In considering the Gulf as countries of destination, many respondents detailed their methods of keeping afloat on needs of different job markets, to continue informing their decision-making process. For example, at the time of conducting this assessment, many prospective migrant workers linked the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 as an avenue of increased opportunities.

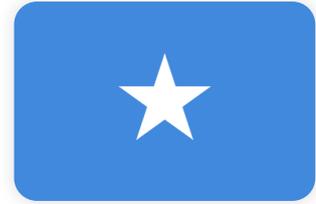
“

I wish to migrate to Qatar and continue doing any job in the hospitality industry, like being a waiter. I have heard that the World Cup 2022 will take place, and I think I have a great chance, as there will be many visitors during that time.

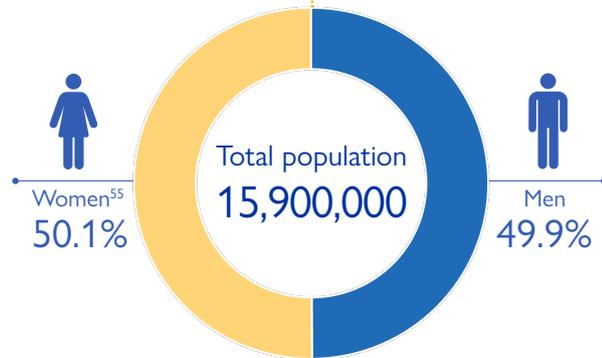
Rwandan man speaking of perceived prospects abroad

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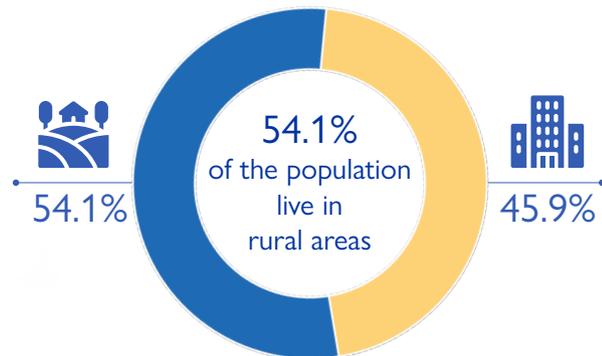
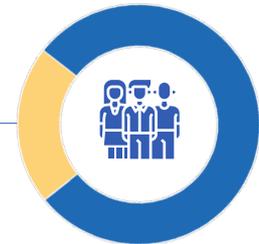
SOMALIA



As of 2020, the estimated population was approximately **15,900,000**



21.4% of the population is between 15-24 years old⁵⁶



As of 2020, the unemployment rate was **19.7%** of the total labour force

Somalia is located in the Horn of Africa and shares borders with Ethiopia, Kenya, the Gulf of Aden to the north, the Somali Sea and Guardafui Channel to the east. It hosts complex mixed migration patterns; Somalis and other EHoA migrants are active on three key migration routes out of the EHoA: the Eastern Route towards the Arabian Peninsula, the Northern Route to Libya and Europe and the Southern Route to South Africa. Considered a significant country of origin, the number of Somali migrants has doubled to approximately 2 million between 1990 and 2015.⁵⁴

Pre-Employment Profile

Movement out of Somalia is primarily impacted by perceptions of socioeconomic instability, climate shocks as well as protracted conflict. With particular focus on the Eastern Route, this assessment has found that many Somalis depart and pass through coastal towns such as Bossaso and Berbera, as well as transit points such as Laboy Ade. Over the years, it is evident that many Somalis look to make their way to Gulf countries, with Saudi Arabia and the UAE as two of the top non-European countries of destination for Somali nationals.⁵⁷ This is due to geographical proximity as well as linguistic, religious and cultural ties.

“

[I hope to migrate] to get a better life and support my family by sending some money for them. I also had the intention to save some money and, when I came back to Mogadishu, to open a business.

Somali man sharing his motivations on foreign employment

”

While there is little formal data on gender dynamics in outwards migration towards the Gulf, the majority of Somali migrants who have successfully arrived in Yemen are found to be men; however, regional evidence on the feminization of migration appears to suggest an increase in Somali women travelling abroad in search for work as well.⁵⁸ Among the respondents of this report, deliberations of foreign employment is often made by single mothers who have the role of sole breadwinner in their households.

A cross-cutting theme appearing to push Somali prospective migrant workers to consider foreign employment are the experiences of unemployment in the country, particularly among youth. Interviews for this report highlighted a clear desire to become economically self-sufficient, support loved ones and find meaningful work. Many respondents also underscored their intention to return to Somalia and open a business, suggesting nationals are weighing the potential of higher earnings as well as the opportunity to develop skills that would allow them to be successful upon their return.

“

I have tried hard to find a job in my country but didn't find one. That is why I migrated. I tried selling milk, but it was not giving me a good return. I tried to sell vegetables in the local market, and this too has not worked. Also, I had an inner thing that was forcing me to migrate and the persuasion of my friends, too, [put pressure on me to want] to migrate.

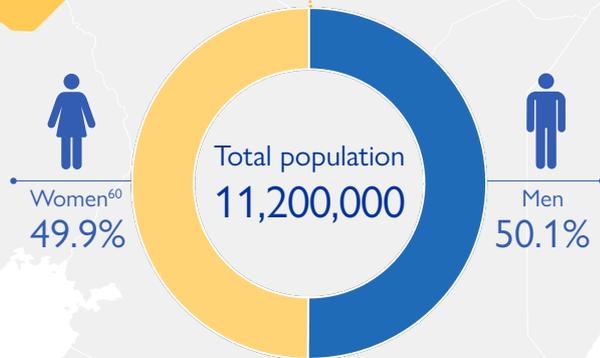
Somali woman reflecting on her pre-employment experience

”

The presence of strong Somali diaspora networks in the Gulf also appears to play a key role in influencing the decision-making process of prospective migrant workers, with respondents commonly citing being persuaded to migrate by friends and family who were already in the Gulf, coupled with offers of accommodation and support to find suitable employers.

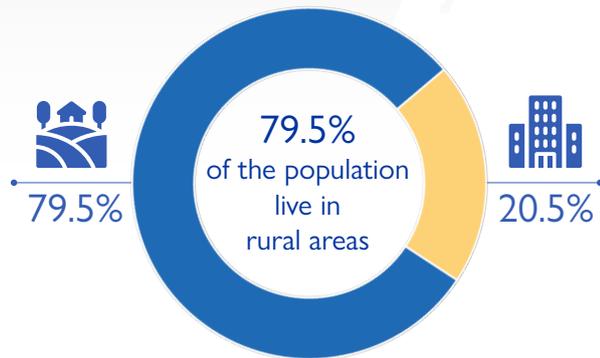
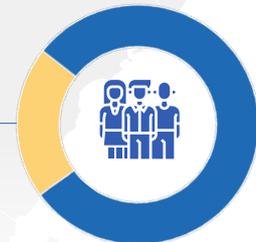
Another key finding is that unlike in some of Somalia's neighbouring countries, Somalis who migrate for work are often not among the poorest. Access to capital to make the trip is a key factor that influences decision-making processes, with many paying several hundred of US dollars to reach their countries of destination.

SOUTH SUDAN



South Sudan is a landlocked African country, bordering with Ethiopia, Sudan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Kenya. Movements from the country are mixed, with many South Sudanese nationals remaining the region, predominantly in Sudan, Chad, Ethiopia and Uganda.⁵⁹

20.53% of the population is between 15-24 years old⁶¹



As of 2020, the unemployment rate was **14%** of the total labour force

Pre-Employment Profile

South Sudanese prospective migrant workers, particularly those in rural areas, all cite difficulties in securing employment in the country as key motivating factors to consider looking beyond South Sudan's borders. With more than three quarters of the population living below the income poverty line of USD 1.90 a day,⁶² employment stability is not only a priority, but felt as an urgent necessity. This could play a contributing role to Gulf countries growing in popularity over the years, with many South Sudanese migrant workers now filling jobs as drivers, domestic workers and construction workers as well as security guards.⁶³

“

People need decent lives. Unemployment is the key and low level of education makes them go abroad to look for employment and in South Sudan there are few companies, private sector that could provide more employment opportunities for many people.

A civil society representative

”

The majority of respondents who took part in this assessment also highlighted their significant efforts in trying to find work at home before considering options abroad, with heightened difficulties as a result of the national conflict. However, it appears that overseas employment is not something that is necessarily intrinsically desirable, but rather a 'last resort' in many cases. Once this decision and investment towards foreign employment has been made, prospective migrant workers appear to have high level of expectations.

The idea of being able to change their lives was frequently mentioned as was references to fulfilling their dreams. For many such dreams involved coming back to South Sudan to save money to return to formal education or to start businesses - signifying a plan or desire to return following employment abroad. The primary driver appears to be the potential for economic well-being, with less focus on opportunities for training and skills development.

“

Like before in my country, I applied for a security guard and I failed to get the job and now as I'm still in this age, and there's nobody helping me to find a job I don't see any, but I am ready to do any job.

South Sudanese man during the pre-employment phase

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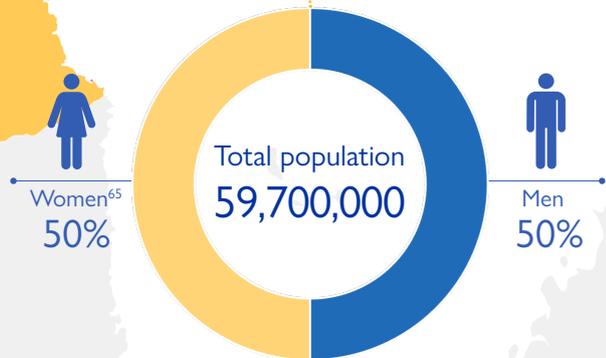
While many South Sudanese who contemplate foreign employment are young and single without direct dependents, they detail their sense of responsibility to provide for their extended family, particularly care for younger siblings and elderly parents. According to a Government official, it appears less common in the country for married men and women with children to consider foreign employment, compared to dynamics in other EHoA countries in the subregion.

With little gender-sensitive data on outwards labour migration, it is understood that many communities expect men to leave the country for employment, with women expected to stay to care for the family and home. This plays an important role in the pre-employment phase for South Sudanese women.

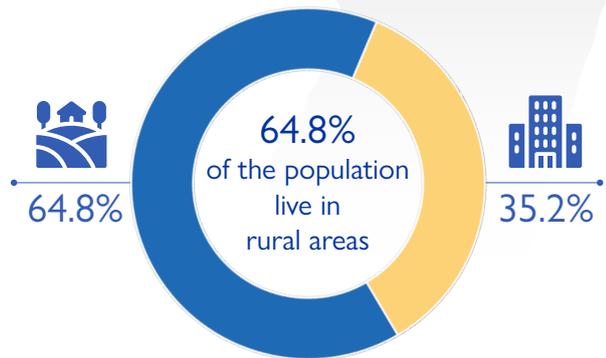
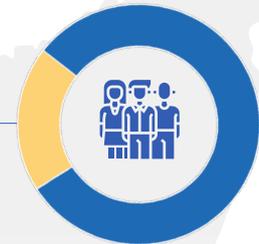
THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA



As of 2020, the estimated population was approximately **59,700,000**



19.6% of the population is between 15-24 years old⁶⁶



The United Republic of Tanzania is a relatively large country in East Africa, sharing borders with many countries, including Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Outwards migration is a familiar phenomenon, with the Tanzanian global diaspora estimated at 328,000 and major countries of destination including the United States, the United Kingdom, Rwanda and Kenya.⁶⁴

As of 2020, the unemployment rate was **2.5%** of the total labour force

Pre-Employment Profile

Prospective Tanzanian migrant workers considering foreign employment appear to be young, from disadvantaged economic backgrounds and with obligations or desires to support their dependents or family members. As with other EHoA countries, respondents highlight the perceived lack of economic opportunities at home and expectations of more attractive financial compensation abroad, as key factors guiding their decision-making process.

“

It's like I am sacrificing myself so that my dependents can benefit from something. This is my major target. Therefore, I will do any work related to computer science which I will come across, as long as it earns me [an] income.

Tanzanian man detailing his motivations during pre-employment

”

This economic driver is cross-cutting for both Tanzanian men and women, however women report that difficulties in access to credit, support services and land, has a particularly impact on considering foreign employment and also plays a role in affecting the pathways of labour migration that they consider.

In terms of ambitions, prospective migrant workers put forth their aims of either saving enough money to be able to return and open a business or priority intention to support their family as best they can. Some acknowledge that the act of migrating is a sacrifice for their family, but it is often one they feel compelled to make.

“

I have people depending on me; my parents and my young siblings who are still in school... For them, they never understand that there are no employment opportunities – they only think that now [that] I have graduated, my life is good.

Tanzanian man on family expectations on employment

”

An element guiding the consideration of particular countries of destination is often a prospective migrant worker's perception of similarities with the United Republic of Tanzania. For example, labour migration from the United Republic of Tanzania to Oman is well-established, further cemented by the historical and cultural ties as well as a history of trade between the two countries. Oman is a key country of destination for Tanzanians seeking employment, particularly for domestic workers.⁶⁷

One respondent provided important anecdotal insights on skills development. The respondent viewed foreign employment in the Gulf as an opportunity to further his own skill set, particularly with regards to technology and computer science. To date, no comprehensive data is available on the linkages between perceptions of foreign employment and professional progression.

“

When we see our young generation aspire for a better life, most of them believe that outside Tanzania there are better job opportunities, [a] better life, better education, medical [treatment] and the like.

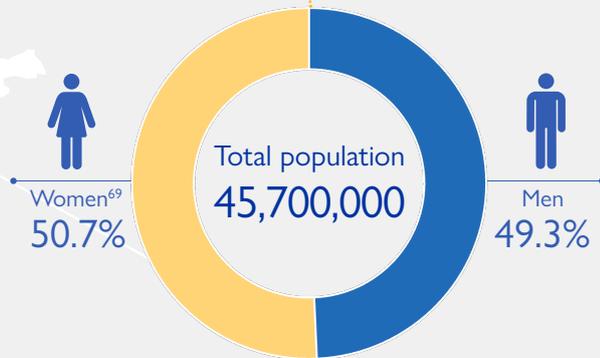
Representative of a civil society organization in Tanzania

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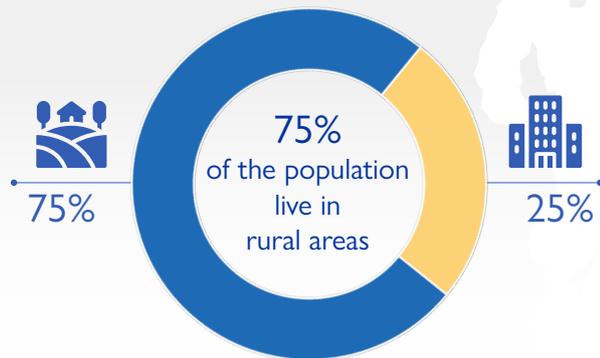
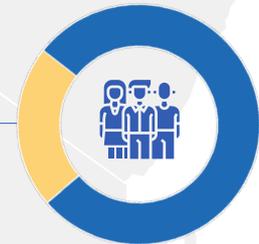
UGANDA



As of 2020, the estimated population was approximately **45,700,000**



21.88% of the population is between 15-24 years old⁷⁰



Located in East Africa, Uganda is a landlocked country, sharing borders with Kenya, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Uganda is a key country of origin, destination as well as transit. In 2015, the diaspora was understood to be composed of approximately 3 million Ugandans, with top countries of destination including Kenya, South Sudan, Rwanda, the United Kingdom and the United States.⁶⁸

As of 2020, the unemployment rate was **2.8%** of the total labour force

Pre-Employment Profile

Ugandans at the pre-employment come from all walks of life, with varying professional and personal backgrounds. Respondents who took part in this study illustrate this well; some ran their own small businesses cutting hair, selling second-hand shoes and selling vegetables, while others worked in the service industry and many were unemployed. Of those who had attended college, some had backgrounds in business administration, while others had teaching qualifications. This suggests few common characteristics related to education and skills-based qualifications; however, it is noted that many prospective Ugandan migrant workers are young.

“

I moved from the village to Kampala to find a job, but after three years of trying in vain, I gave up the idea [of ever finding a professional job]. Whenever my mum would call me [possibly for financial help], I would not answer the call but instead start shedding tears because I had run out of excuses. When I saw my former classmates, who had actually stopped in senior six [high school], post pictures of themselves enjoying life abroad, I thought that would be my way out of suffering too.

A Ugandan man reflecting on his pre-employment experience

”

However, two factors were noted by most Ugandan participants as key in influencing their decision-making process when considering whether foreign employment is the right option for them. With three out of ten Ugandan youth unemployed, young adults are citing difficulty in securing adequate employment as motivation for looking beyond the country's borders. This is heightened for prospective migrant workers who come from backgrounds of poverty. Additionally, some respondents expressed their struggle in working in Uganda for what they felt was little recognition and inadequate pay for what they had invested in their jobs as well as skill sets.

With rural-urban migration making up a key theme of the pre-employment phase, this assessment also points to recent research that analysed these trends in Uganda. It found that many outbound Ugandan migrant workers from rural areas do not typically come from families in dire economic need. Conversely, it suggests that families in rural locations that are less financially comfortable are less likely to make members of their family migrate for employment due to lack of access to information and capital required.⁷¹

“

I would say about one hundred (candidates per month are sent abroad). Mostly girls. And mostly domestic workers.

A private recruitment agency in Uganda

”

Over the years, more Ugandans have been migrating to Gulf countries for employment, with estimates suggesting over 165,000 nationals in the region.⁷² A large proportion of Ugandan women in the Gulf are understood to be working as migrant domestic workers in Saudi Arabia. Insights from this assessment suggest that many see the Gulf as a place for more opportunities, better financial compensation and a clear pathway to achieve financial stability. As there is a perception of a disproportionate demand for domestic workers, particularly as house-help, labour migration is felt to be more accessible to lower-skilled Ugandan women.

PART TWO

UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATIONS AND DECISION-MAKING



INTRODUCTION

At the very heart of the pre-employment phase is a matrix of inter-related factors - motivations, pressures, careful deliberations, assessments of risks and opportunities – that ultimately drive the decision-making process of prospective migrant workers on whether foreign employment is the right decision for them and their loved ones at that particular moment in time. It is multi-layered with many different spheres of influence that can impact how one passes through this phase.

While this is unique to each prospective migrant worker, a common thread that passes through all these experiences is the process of decision-making. This is, at its essence, a problem-solving process which ends when a satisfying solution is reached.

“Decision-making could be considered as an argumentative or emotional process which could be (ir)rationality based on implicit/explicit assumptions. In general, decision-making is a mental process that all humankind are involved in throughout their lives. The process of decision-making is done on the bases of culture, perceptions, belief systems, values, attitudes, personality, knowledge and the insight of the decider(s).”⁷³

Pre-employment decisions are multidimensional in nature. While influenced by a spectrum of factors, socioeconomic well-being, perceptions of opportunities at home as well as expectations of work abroad, are particularly influential. These are accompanied by another tangible factor: aspirations. In this context, aspirations can be seen as the conviction that leaving would be better than staying.

FRAMING PRE-EMPLOYMENT AND MIGRATION DECISIONS

“Migration aspirations” has become a commonly employed conceptual tool in seeking to understand what impels people to migrate and is based in an individual’s understanding of and interaction with the society and environment in which they find themselves.⁷⁴

In the EHoA countries mapped, it was largely observed that the attitudes towards labour migration of prospective migrant workers, irrespective of their gender, are mostly shaped by their perceptions of the socioeconomic contexts they are in, coupled with a sense of responsibility to their family. Their intentions to consider foreign employment get stronger with positive perceptions of migration and, many times, amplified further when exposed to successful experiences of labour migration, particularly from returnee migrant workers.

In terms of selection of country of destination, it appears that this is driven primarily by the extent to which it is believed the country would offer opportunity to make money, along with considerations on working conditions, geographical proximity as well as ties to a possible diaspora. Many young respondents cited their aspiration to work in the Gulf, as they perceive, where the working conditions are better and unlimited opportunities are available. They perceive these opportunities will help them enhance their skills and build a successful career.

This research also found that many prospective migrant workers, particularly women, take additional measures in weighing their decisions to migrate for employment to the Gulf. This involves logical analysis of migration benefits versus migration expenses. This analysis forms the basis for their selection of job locations. For instance, few prospective migrant workers mentioned that due to geographical proximity, the migration cost

to the Gulf is less than any other country. It was observed that the prospective migrant workers direct their plans in terms of selecting country to migrate based on job availabilities and demand linked to events like FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

WHO MIGRATES FOR WORK?

To further understand the pre-employment phase and motivations, it is important to understand who ultimately has decided to migrate for employment, particularly accounting for gender dynamics.



Women: While migration traditionally had been a predominantly male phenomenon, in recent years, trends across the EHoA countries in focus indicate more women engaging in labour migration. This may be related to the increase in women-headed households. Women interviewed for this assessment underscored a heightened sense of responsibility in providing support to their families, with many highlighting their role as sole breadwinner in the home. These added responsibilities, combined with limited opportunities for higher paid local jobs, especially in rural areas, appear to be pushing women to consider foreign employment, viewing it as a potential source to meet their needs. This appears to be further accentuated by educational background (the majority of prospective women migrants included in this assessment possessed minimum educational attainment, see Figure 2) as well as exposure to returnee migrant workers from the Gulf (most noted close networks with women who had previously worked in the Gulf).

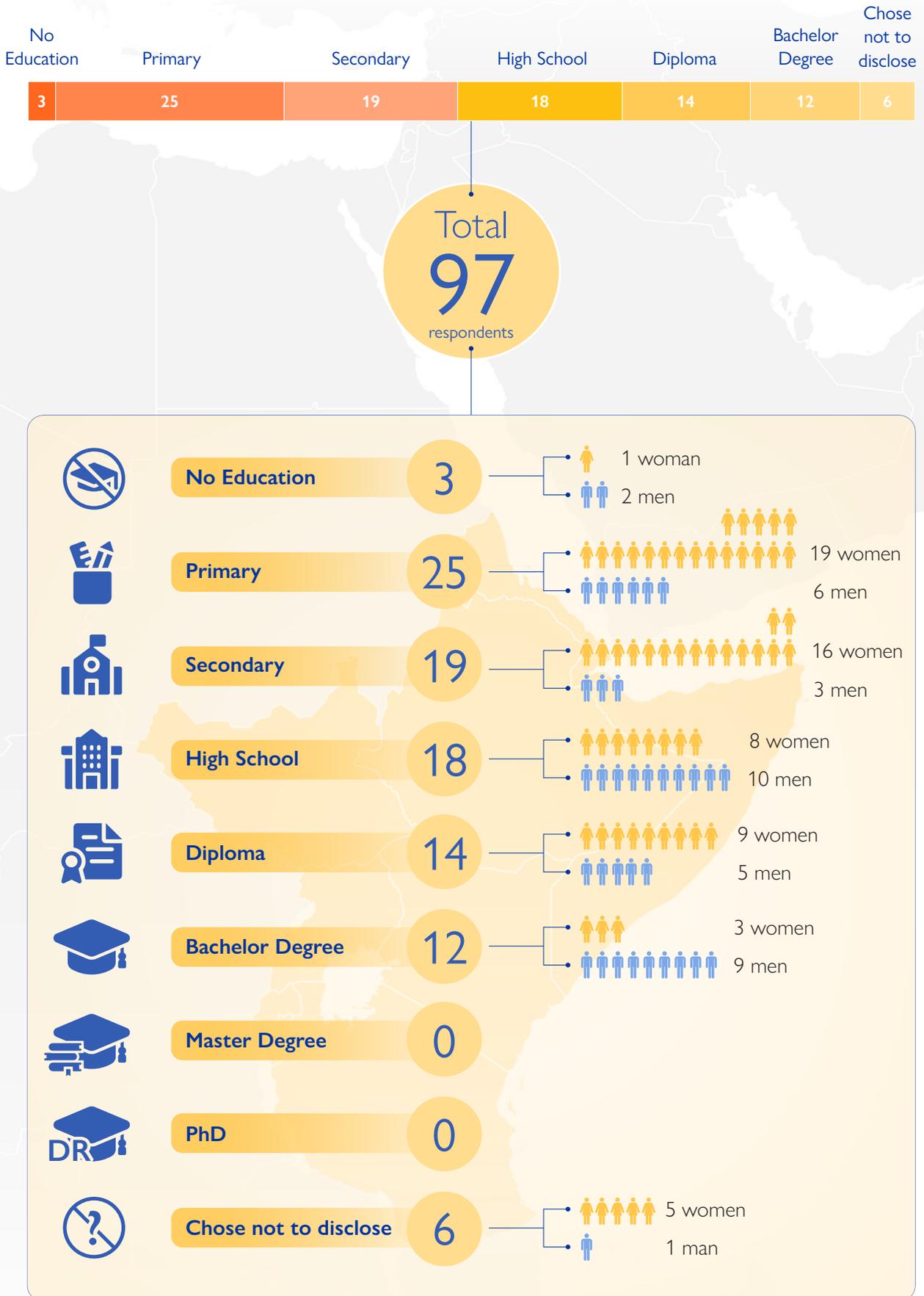


Men: In the mapped countries, the research noted that men respondents between the age of 25 and 30 years old consider migrating to the Gulf primarily to reduce employment vulnerability, earn more money and fulfill social responsibilities. In this age group, the majority of the respondents were married at the time of research, with most noting added responsibilities of extended families along with their primary family members. In comparison to women respondents who reported lower-levels of education and professional experience, most of the men respondents were high-school educated (see Figure 2) and had work experience in their respective sectors; this research noted that these respondents were much more prepared in terms of skills and work experience.



Youth: This assessment also notes an increase in the EHoA's youth, of both men and women, considering and engaging with labour migration, particularly to Gulf countries. Driven by the high levels of unemployment, youth particularly from rural areas travel first to urban centres and cities to look for work and then, many, turn toward foreign employment. Overwhelmingly, this appears to be linked to the prospects of more opportunities and higher wages perceived abroad. Across countries mapped, prospective migrant workers gave varying degrees of attention to skill sets. In some countries, such as Djibouti, respondents were taking steps to become more competitive, such as learning languages, in order to maximize the possibility of securing employment. However, regardless, most interviewed men underlined their preparedness and willing to take up any job, despite skills mismatch.

Figure 2: Level of education attained by respondents



WHO DECIDES?

Embarking on foreign employment is a complex decision, which usually involves families and friends. However, the research across the locations noted disparity in this common notion and observed the involvement of families and friends depended on individual circumstances.

This assessment has found that when the prospective migrant worker is a married woman, it is expected for families to be particularly involved or consulted in the decision-making process. In such cases, decisions are made based on available information on multiple criteria, attributes of the destination and these are weighted against preparedness capabilities. Preparedness capabilities includes financial resources, head of the family especially in case of women-headed families and arrangements for those who are left behind such as elderly parents and children.

However, many respondents, particularly single men, appear to make decisions on labour migration on their own, without significant involvement from their immediate family members.

The experience of returnee migrants and their success stories shape their desire to migrate to the Gulf. The reason could be the patriarchal setting of the research locations.

“

I heard the money in Dubai has more value than here so that I can build a house for my children and get capital for my business.

Burundian woman living in South Sudan

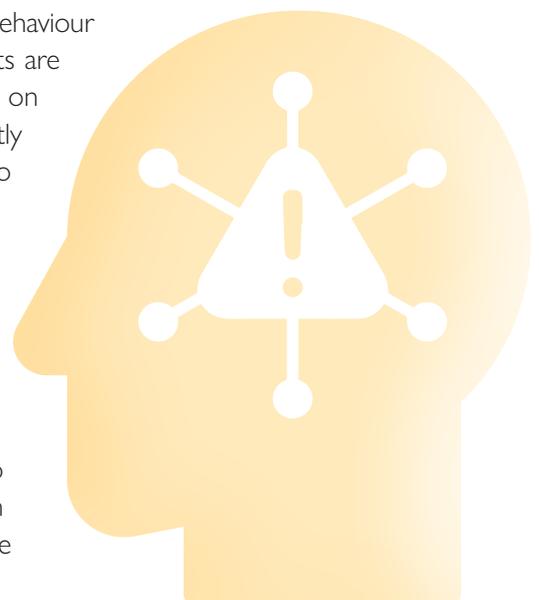
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Wide range of literature suggest that recruitment brokers are involved in the migration decision process. This assessment adds to this by noting that while some respondents cited their decision being influenced by brokers, family and loved ones appear to remain the most significant source of information for all.

RISK PERCEPTION

Conventional risk theory argues that individuals engage in risk-taking behaviour if the ratings of the risks are perceived as low or when the benefits are regarded as more valuable than the expected risk.⁷⁵ In studies on the decision-making processes of migrants, these gains are mostly understood as the economic advancement an individual expects to receive by migrating (Massey et al. 1993; Stark and Taylor 1991).

This assessment has found that perceptions of risk among prospective migrant workers at the pre-employment stage is a key component of decision-making. Respondents of this report shared how they understand and weigh the benefits and risks of labour migration to then assess whether to migrate and how to initiate the process. While these calculations appear to begin at the individual level, it often is informed and evolves with the input and involvement of families, friends and perceptions of the experience of those who are currently overseas or have returned.



There was a strong divide in terms of risk perception between those who consider migrating through regular and irregular pathways. Those who felt that they would not be able to take advantage of the services of licensed and ethical recruitment agencies were typically cognizant of the enhanced dangers they could face. Those who planned to use a recruiter felt that the organizations could be trusted to look after them. Their decision on whether to use irregular or regular routes depended on whether the individual already had a source of income, their financial (in)security and whether their current salaries supported dependents.

Many of the respondents shared their opinions on risks of working in Gulf countries, either informed by their own experiences or that of their family, friends or returnee peers. However, there did not appear to be high levels of fear or concern among those interviewed; perceptions of risks are overshadowed by their hopes for personal change for a better future for their loved ones.

“

Yes, most of the friends said there are risks working in Arab countries but always they are not clear or specific and exactly to the point anyway from consultations there are issues like risk of abuses, overworking and for me heading to a country of not knowing the official languages is not easy but due financial challenges I will have to accept.

Burundian woman living in South Sudan

”

This report finds that one of the reasons prospective migrant workers lean towards migrating for employment, despite knowing risk factors, is that their desire to improve their current situations is stronger than fears of facing these risks. For many, they felt it was their only option when faced with great financial hardship and also shared their preference to stay in their home country if opportunities allowed.

Whereas several mentioned that they would not believe stories they have heard until they 'saw for themselves', others simply accepted that possible exposure to risk was part of experiences of labour migration.

Few of the respondents downplayed risk by linking it to individual's fate. There is a perception that whether you succeed or suffer entirely depends on either your fate or luck. Thus, while in many cases, it is immediate family members that are most concerned, networks of friends and acquaintances in the Gulf portray labour migration as a gamble worth taking.

There were few who mentioned that their decisions were informed by the risk information received from their peers who had migration experience. One prospective migrant, for instance, reported to have been detracted from taking the Eastern Route after learning about the risks involved in the journey and having little trust in the intermediaries offering to help them travel.

“

I would never go through irregular routes because I am more worried about raising my child than the risks [associated with] irregular routes should anything go wrong. I have found a few jobs here and there before, and I am willing to stay and try harder rather than using irregular routes.

Prospective migrant worker

”

“

I also have relatives who returned home after working in Gulf countries who encouraged me to move abroad and work there. These friends and relatives told me the risks but all depend on your fate or chances.

Prospective migrant worker

”

The proportion of respondents who demonstrated little awareness of the reality of living and working in the Gulf was very minimal. However, these respondents showed increased awareness on the positive benefits that labour migration to the Gulf could bring in and potentially alleviate their socioeconomic conditions.

“

I once wanted to go to Saudi Arabia, but due to the uncertainty associated with the journey, I didn't take the risk and decided to stay. I sat with one man who is my relative, and he was among the middlemen who were facilitating the youth to take a risky journey on the sea, and after sitting with for some hours to ask him about the journey and the country of destination, I didn't like his comments because they were too positive, and he wanted me to go [how much the smuggler pushed him made him suspicious].”

EHoA man reflecting on his pre-employment stage

”

With this analysis, this report therefore suggests that perceptions of risk are linked and weighed against the benefits that labour migration are believed to bring to the prospective migrant worker and their families (see Figure 3) The socioeconomic well-being appears to directly feed into this risk-benefit assessment; the more dire the economic situation is felt to be, the more manageable or necessary the risks are seen as.

Linked to this, prospective migrant workers understand risk information in general, but efforts of justifying or dismissing these risks are noted when respondents look to process these risks to their own situations. Additionally, in societies where a culture of migration has developed, the pressure to migrate is intensified, irrespective of the risks.

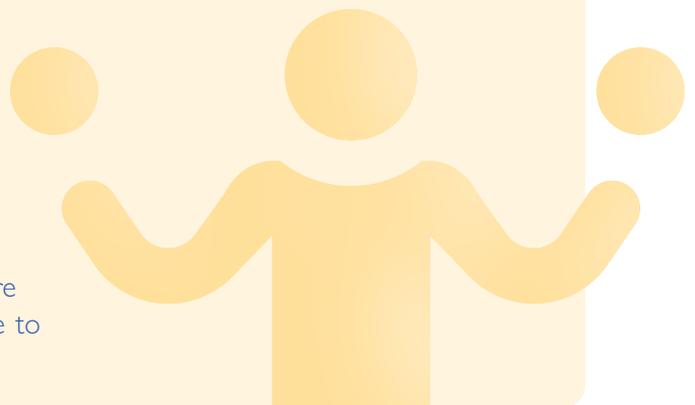
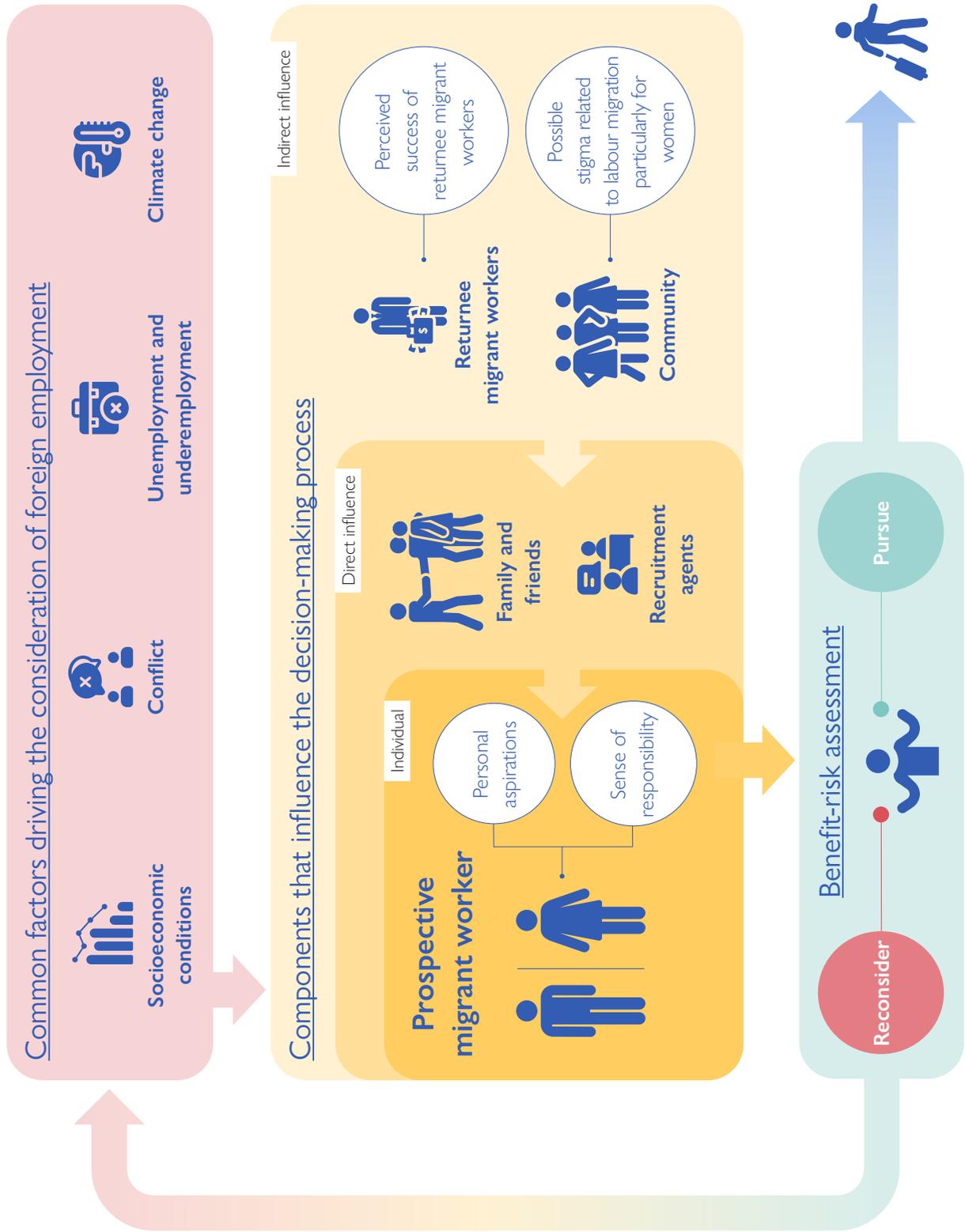


Figure 3: The pre-employment phase and factors influencing decision-making



PERCEPTIONS OF FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

In resource-limited settings, labour migration is typically seen as a positive measure to better the future of individuals, their families and communities. However, it is evident that employment in the Gulf is seen as mixed and, in many cases, understood as different for men and women migrant workers.

“

What made me decide to go for work was my personal problems... There is a sister-in-law who had already travelled. So, when she came back, she asked me if I can decide to go abroad [to deal with] what I'm going through in life. I told her... I can decide but the kids are still young to be left alone. Her reply was, 'if you have made a decision to go, don't look at how young your children are or rather your situation, just decide and go, God will be your advocate.

Woman in EHoA during pre-employment

”

This assessment has found that men often face less resistance from their families in going abroad for work than women. This is, in part, due to the prevailing sociocultural role of women in society, often associated as primary caregivers for children and elderly family members. In this sense, women embarking on labour migration are often seen as leaving their children behind, to be cared for by others.

In some countries in the EHoA, respondents shared those women who went overseas, particularly to the Gulf, were likely to face judgement from their communities. When found in these circumstances, women report that this stigma causes much more difficulty and anxiety with their decision-making process. As an interviewed recruiter shared regarding concerns: **“Women worry about where to leave their children. Out of ten women migrant workers, nine will be mothers. With whom do they leave their children? What is going to be the welfare of my children for the next two years when I am not around? My husband will probably remarry and my child will be abandoned.”**

However, in some contexts, women at the pre-employment stage are demonstrating less inclination to listen to family members against the backdrop of perceived opportunities abroad.

“

My father asked me why I'm going to Saudi. He's providing for me, but I told him that I don't care and I'm going to Saudi for work.

Woman in EHoA during pre-employment stage

”

Many women also highlighted the concerns that their families had with the prospect of them leaving, particularly with regards to their safety and well-being in countries of destination.

This assessment also highlighted interesting anecdotal insights with regards to prospective men migrant workers and their families. In some cases, it appears that families push their family members, particularly young adults, to go abroad for employment as a means of avoiding crime at home. As a representative of a private recruitment agency shared: **“For men, we're dealing with situations where a number**

of them are stubborn, and they are taken there [to the Gulf] as a rehabilitation centre – that’s why you will find a man, who’s 40 years old, comes with the parent for the application process. When put to task to explain why, they say they want them to go and work regardless of the salary.”

“

Of course, not everybody has a positive opinion about everything. There are some people who will wish you well for you to go and they feel okay about you're going, but the other people who are not feeling okay, who will not actually feel okay. Because of me going to work abroad, they are afraid that I am going to a foreign land where I don't know anybody there, and they are afraid about my safety there.

Prospective woman migrant worker in the EHoA

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RURAL – URBAN DYNAMICS

According to the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), more than half of all Africans are expected to live in cities by 2050 (AfDB, OECD & UNDP, 2016).

In the Horn of Africa, migration from rural to urban living is increasing.⁷⁶ This research noted similar pattern in the EHoA countries in focus as almost half of the interviewed respondents across all the assessment locations migrated from rural bases to urban centres. The common cited drivers were climate change, especially drought that led to food insecurity, unemployment as well as low and inconsistent wages. Additionally, there are also changing expectations of young people in rural areas, looking to urban locations as places offering better educational opportunities and access to services such as healthcare.

“

It is now people from the rural areas that mostly seek employment through us because we've exhausted Kampala. We have taken all the girls in Kampala... It is also because the school dropout rate is higher in rural areas than in urban areas and Kampala. Also, there are no job opportunities in the rural areas.

Private recruitment agency

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Few respondents stated migrating from their village was aspirational, with an aim to increase their livelihood options. However, many decided to escape economic insecurity. At the time of the research, respondents who have moved to cities for better opportunities were considering work opportunities in the Gulf, mostly after unsuccessful attempts to secure employment in cities or urban locations. This was particularly the case for those with low skill sets. These prospective migrant workers said that employment availability in low-skilled sectors were mostly temporary and precarious in nature and stated their desire for job security through long-term contracts.

PART THREE

THE INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM AT PRE-EMPLOYMENT



INTRODUCTION

Information is key to decision making on labour migration. An information search in the context of migration decision-making is both a multistage and multidimensional process. The different stages involve collection and processing of information about available migration opportunities, including information about potential destinations, possible entry routes, required preparedness and possible job opportunities and assessing possible types of risk and uncertainty related to migration journeys and outcomes.

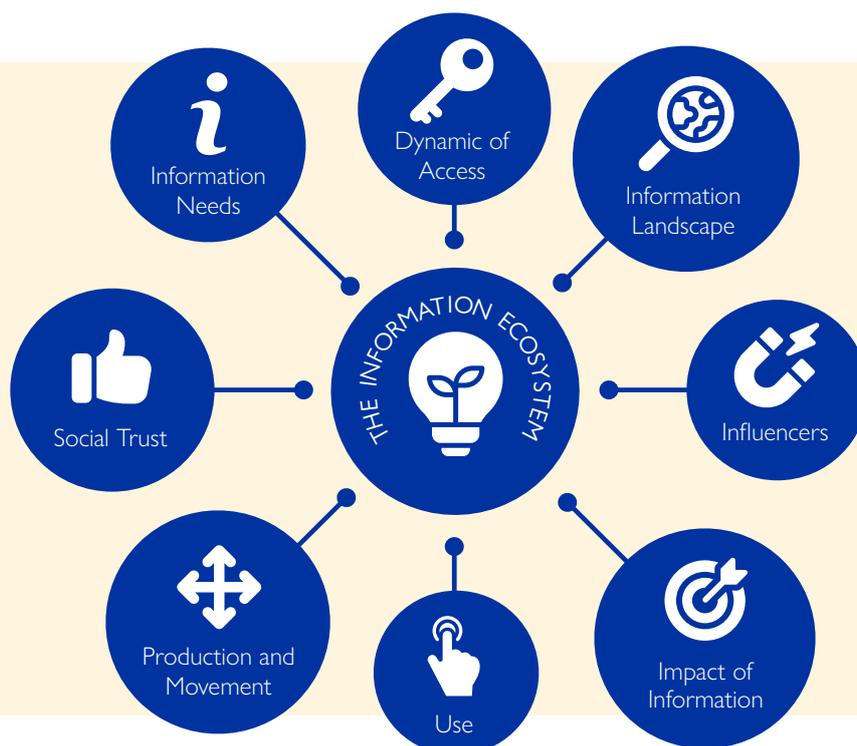
THE INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM

The information ecosystem approach seeks to better understand the range of actors, institutions, channels, policies and programmes through which information is produced, disseminated and consumed. This includes formal initiatives such as State-supported information and awareness campaigns and informal information flows, such as community and kin networks, social media and word of mouth. Adopted from fields as diverse as environmental studies, media and public health – and often referred to as ‘information ecology’ – an ‘information ecosystem’ can be defined as a **“loose, dynamic configuration of different sources, flows, producers, consumers, and sharers of information interacting within a defined community or space”** (Susman-Peña et al. 2015).

Recognizing the inherently social nature of information, the information ecosystem approach privileges the lived experience of information users; in this case, prospective migrant workers in EHoA countries. It seeks to understand the channels through which information flows, and the various ways in which information, or a lack thereof, impacts the well-being of migrant workers. As Susman-Peña et al. note, **“Without the ability to access, create, disseminate and share critical information about the world around them, individuals are incapable of understanding the challenges they confront, adapting to an evolving environment, nor ultimately, improving their lives”** (2015).

This report uses the information ecosystem approach to understand the pre-employment landscape, across eight critical dimensions (see Figure 4). There are interconnected, non-static and non-hierarchical in nature.

Figure 4:
Information ecosystem



- **Information Needs**
Information needs of the target community
- **Information Landscape**
The organizations and infrastructures that underpin information production and flow
- **Impact of Information**
The effect of information on individual and community well-being and its potential to foster positive change
- **Dynamic of Access**
The range of power structures and dynamics that inform migrant workers' access to critical information
- **Production and Movement**
The variety of types and sources of information available
- **Use**
The factors that inform how relevant information is and how information is applied
- **Social Trust**
Influence of social dynamics and trust networks on the flow and use of information
- **Influencers**
The range of actors and institutions that influence how information is circulated and used



1. Information Needs

The information needs of populations are diverse and evolving, taking into account varying subgroups within a community having vastly different information needs. In the context of this assessment, prospective migrant workers at the pre-employment stage were asked about their information needs and preferences.

Ensuring a migrant-centric approach, this report has found that that the common and priority information needs expressed by EHOA prospective migrant workers (see Figure 5) includes the following:

- Life and work in countries of destination, including working conditions as well as cultural and religious differences.
- Information on jobs abroad, particularly the kind of work they would do and salary.
- Means of reaching target countries of destination catered for their specific country contexts, including requirements related to financing and documents.
- Skills for being able to secure foreign employment, including communication and language requirements.
- Avenues of assistance and support in case of problems.



I do not care about recruiting agencies because I believe I have all the information I need [from people] that I trust more than any of the recruitment agencies.

Man prospective migrant worker





I really want to go and work abroad but I don't know where to start. Who do I go to first? Which recruitment agencies are genuine? How much do I have to pay? What is the age limit? Which is the best country of destination? I don't know where to obtain answers to these kinds of questions. Meanwhile, I don't trust information on Facebook and posters because they could be the work of fraudsters and traffickers. They may take you to a different place other than the workstation they advertise.

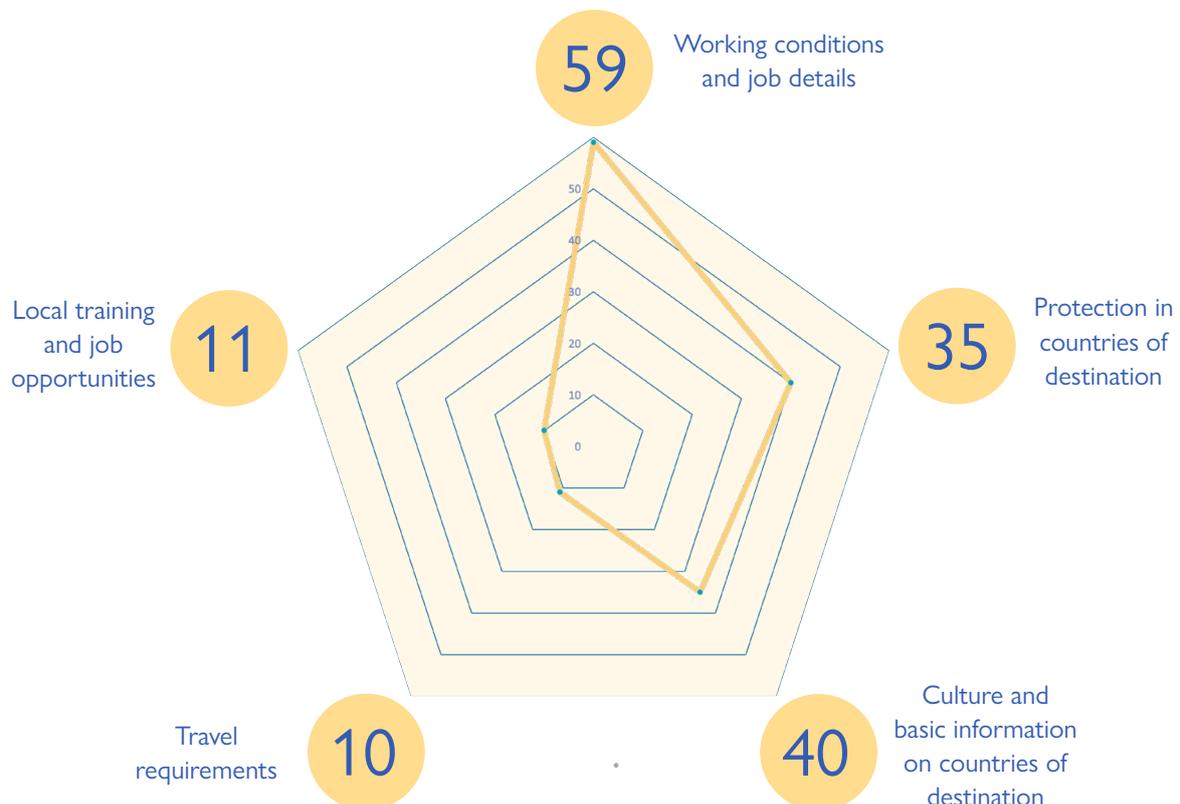
EHoA woman during the pre-employment stage



Interviewed prospective migrant workers who had engaged with recruiters reported feeling that many lacked transparency and the information they provided was insufficient. They noted that recruiters provided information geared primarily towards linking prospective migrant workers with employers, rather than helping them be fully aware of what to expect when living and working abroad in the Gulf.

In some locations where labour migration is common in society, many respondents highlighted their reliance on returnee migrant workers in order to get accurate and practical information. There appears to be cognizance of the disjuncture between how recruiters present the image of working in the Gulf and how informal social networks of friends, family and associates experience it in reality.

Figure 5: Information needs of respondents (by number of times mentioned)



Pre-employment information needs therefore centres around what life will be like living and working as a migrant worker in the Gulf, what vacancies are available, what skills are required for these vacancies and financial expectations. If such information is provided via official means, available at the community-level, prospective migrants workers would be less susceptible to informal scrupulous brokers and traffickers who take advantage of misinformation and confusion.

A key component of any effective pre-employment information should therefore be guidance on how to identify reliable and ethical recruitment agencies as well as how to distinguish between those operating legally and actors operating illegally without good intentions.

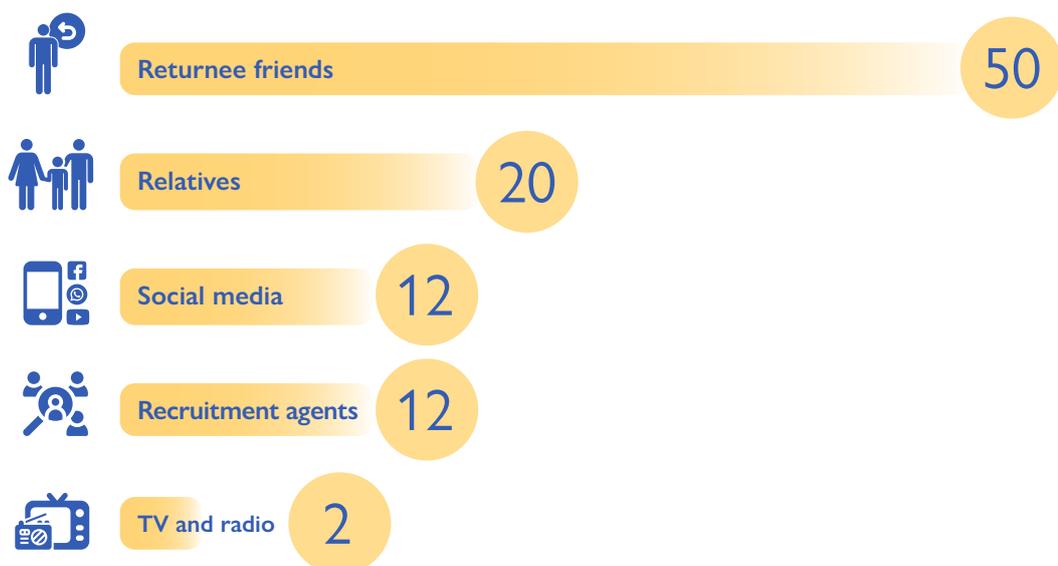


2. Information landscape

Information landscape involves the physical and institutional infrastructures that support information production and flow, including but not limited to media outlets, distributions systems production units and so forth. In the context of this research, the information landscape of pre-employment centres on the community and grassroots-level. At the time of carrying out this mapping, no formal and standardized programmes offering pre-employment orientation or information were found across the EHOA countries in focus.

Against this backdrop, it was found that prospective migrant workers rely primarily on their family members, friends and network who are either working or have worked abroad in the Gulf (see Figure 6). This is especially the case with women prospective migrant workers who have limited access to electronic devices and Internet connectivity, particularly in rural areas. Another common feature in the information landscape are private brokers. This is especially in countries with strict measures controlling outwards labour migration as well as places where the presence of the diaspora is limited and where nationals do not typically return.

Figure 6: Sources of information cited by respondents



“

When I saw the people returning from Saudi Arabia, I was convinced that there were many job opportunities there. I also knew this from a disabled friend who was going there. When I asked him why he had to go, given his physical condition, he replied that the chances of finding a job were greater there. And then I kept in touch with him... I only had the disabled friend as a reliable source of information. And I also saw people of different nationalities passing through Djibouti and coming back from Saudi Arabia.

A returnee EHoA migrant worker

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Social media, for those residing in areas with access to the Internet, was also seen to be a common medium for prospective migrant workers and their families to seek relevant information. However, available information on social media is not comprehensive in nature, is often misleading and can also act as a source of misinformation when users are not able to verify sources properly. While effective in making accessible and animating the real-life experiences of migrant workers, for many, it is a one-way communication channel with little to no scope of interactions that can effectively clarify queries a prospective migrant worker may have.



3. Production and Movement

The production and movement of information includes variety of types and sources of information available. This report found at the time of the mapping, there were limited sporadic information resources available to prospective migrant workers.

While no formal dedicated pre-employment information programmes exist yet in countries of focus, relevant initiatives run by CSOs and governments were found to be key points of reference of information during pre-employment.

In **Ethiopia**, the Government is providing information at the pre-employment stage, with a particular focus on helping Ethiopians engage in safe labour migration and minimize risks of human trafficking. It is also using technology and applications.

While focused on domestic employment, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, with support from ILO, developed an application called *Sira* with the aim of connecting jobseekers with potential employers in the country. These resources are

Screenshot of Sira app as of March 2022



key in helping prospective migrant workers who prefer to find a job in the country rather than go abroad. An interviewed Government official shared information on an application called *YeGuzo Sinq* that provides useful information for migrants, particularly related to recruitment, return and reintegration. It includes details on documents required for the process as well as risks in engaging in irregular migration.



Screenshot of *YeGuzo Sinq* app as of March 2022

Along with this, the Government has developed guidebooks, brochures, flyers and billboards in Amharic, Oromo and Tigrinya, including with illustrations targeting illiterate audiences.

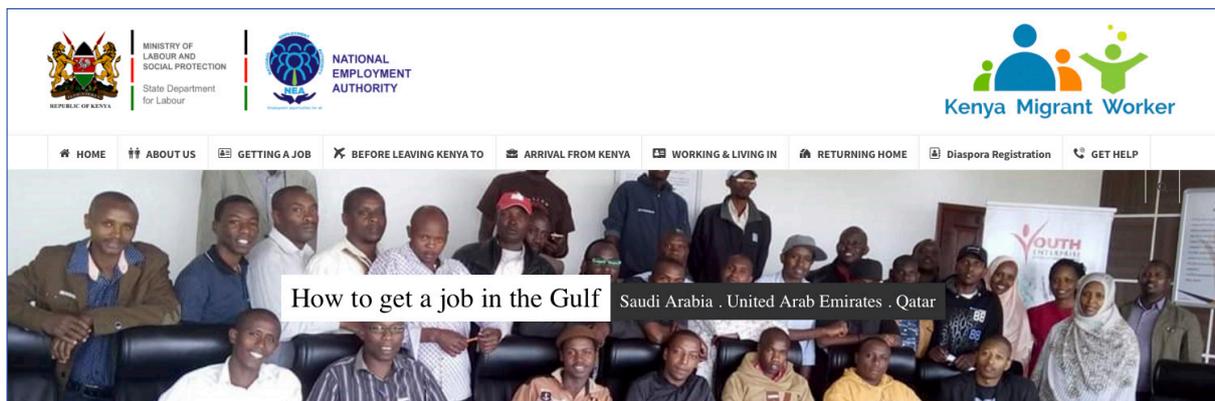
A growing CSO ecosystem provides key support during the pre-employment phase. Agar Ethiopia Charitable Society is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that runs a number of programmes on rehabilitation and reintegration, anti-trafficking and skills development. Particularly relevant for the pre-employment phase, they run school-based awareness-raising activities on human trafficking, run basic business skills (BBS) and vocational training courses as well as train members of a survivors' alliance to share their experiences of irregular migration – not just to deter people from choosing irregular routes but also to paint a more positive image of regular migration. With the importance of prospective migrant workers investing in their skill sets, organizations that offer these opportunities are crucial. Eshururu is one of many organizations that provide vocational training on caregiving, housekeeping and cleaning, particularly targeting Ethiopian women.

The **Djibouti** Diaspora Association (DDA) based in Doha assists with disseminating vacancy information by forwarding details of vacancies in Qatar to the Djiboutian Embassy in the country. The Ministry of Labour, Formulation and Social Protection in Djibouti in turn publishes these vacancies and returns the CVs and files of interested applicants to the DDA, who subsequently present them to the PRAs in Qatar. PRAs in Qatar will often approach the DDA specifically for assistance with vacancy publication.

In **Eritrea**, the most important source of information for prospective domestic workers, is information provided by friends and relatives who have been to the Gulf. This assertion is evidenced in both the literature and interview responses, which point to the well-established nature of both the Eritrean diaspora and corresponding networks of information. In the Gulf specifically, there is a firmly established Eritrean diaspora community in Jeddah and Riyadh which can disseminate information pertaining to labour conditions and employment opportunities in Saudi Arabia, likely alongside information advising transit routes and mechanisms.

In **Kenya**, the Government runs a website known as the National Employment Authority Integrated Management System that provides information on foreign employment opportunities and lists all registered employment agencies to inform which agencies are licensed to carry out recruitment. A system is available to enable jobseekers to examine the authenticity of jobs advertised and apply online, thus eliminating the risks associated with online job scams. Importantly for Kenyans, during the pre-employment phase, the Government has also

Figure 7: A screenshot of the Kenya Labour Migration Information website



launched a website, Kenya Labour Migration Information (see Figure 7), which provides a wealth of information on recruitment to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE on, what to avoid as well as tailored information on the aforementioned countries of destination, including embassy locations and contact details.

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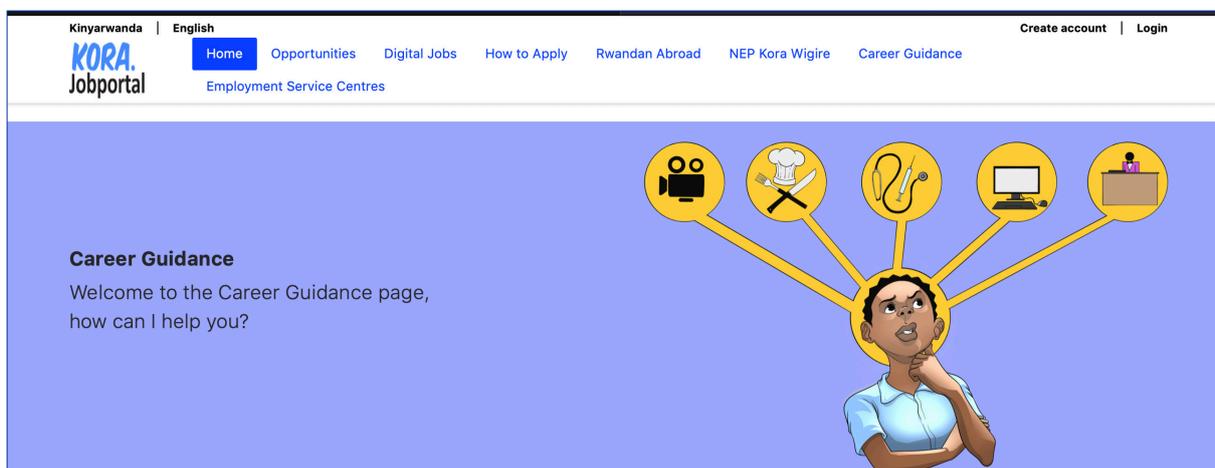
For any jobseeker, it's always prudent [that] they go to the NEA [National Employment Authority] website and do a quick search about the agents and on whether they are registered and compliant validity of their certificate.

A private recruitment agency

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In **Rwanda**, some public service centres exist that supply recruitment-related information and attempts to raise awareness for safe labour migration. The Rwanda Development Board runs the *Kora* portal (see Figure 8), which is a job matching portal, aiming to link Rwandan jobseekers with potential employers. Importantly for pre-employment, it contains information on career guidance and details on the National Employment Programme, giving opportunities for young people to acquire vocational skills in trades such as carpentry and tailoring, free of charge. Additionally, the Rwandan Workers' Trade Union Federation, provide useful information via their website as well as through radio programmes, television talk shows and recently a comic book.

Figure 8: A screenshot of the Kora website



In **Somalia**, prospective migrant workers predominantly rely on informal information channels. Their informal information channels include family, friends and members of the Gulf-based Somali diaspora. Sometimes, those who supply information are not close relatives of migrants but rather those in their communities and social circles. They collect and exchange information over social media platforms. Another interesting source of information regarding job opportunities is people who travel for work. Somalis in the diaspora are keen to hire from home, and those who travel internationally become de facto recruiters, sharing information about jobs they find abroad with those in their personal or professional networks back home.

The Government of **South Sudan** is currently developing a job portal. While at first the portal is being created for domestic employment opportunities, the Government hopes that in the future, it could be developed further for use by foreign companies and overseas recruitment agencies as a centralized recruitment platform. The few registered overseas recruitment agencies in the country occasionally advertise their services through TV and radio stations.

In the **United Republic of Tanzania**, the Government, in partnership with CSOs, have carried out campaigns, capacity-building activities and awareness programme through radio in an attempt to make prospective migrant workers aware of the risks associated with informal recruitment processes and the potential risks they carry for prospective migrant workers to become victims of human trafficking.

The Government of **Uganda** has, since 2005, consistently sought to equip migrant workers travelling to the Middle East with the information they require to avoid exploitation and abuse. As such, the Government utilizes media as a crucial tool to make Ugandans aware of the hazards associated with irregular migration, alongside the rights they have when using legal private recruitment agencies. To this end, the National Coordinator for Prevention of Trafficking in Persons gives a media brief every Monday, with this being disseminated via media broadcasts, press and social media.



4. Dynamics of Access

Information access is the ability to identify, retrieve and use information effectively. In the context of this research, information access and its dynamics includes the range of power structures and dynamics that inform access to critical information.

The research across all EHoA locations identified that prospective migrant workers living in urban areas typically have better access to information available on social media like Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Instagram and YouTube, due to presence of better Internet services. However, access to such services in rural areas, particularly for women prospective migrant workers, is a challenge. This is largely due to slow Internet speed or coverage, with many who also cannot



I had no ability to buy a smartphone and get information from social media, however, I solely relied on the information I got from my friends. They were all female and I decided to go through what they have gone through.

EHoA woman migrant worker after her return from working overseas



afford access to such services. In case of women, it was noted that many do not possess devices, like cell phones, to be able to connect to the Internet; often, they must rely on their male family members to access information available on the Internet. This indicates women's status in patriarchal and resource limited settings.



5. Use of Information

Once information reaches its intended audience, it is important to understand the many factors that influence the way information is used. The research noted that the most used source of information of prospective migrant workers are their own networks of family and friends. Gathered information from these sources became the basis of migration decisions for many. However, it was interesting to note that context significantly influences how prospective migrant workers are able to comprehend, interpret and use information that has been gathered. For instance, many respondents, prominently women in rural areas, with minimum education levels, described challenges in comprehending information received. This difficulty to understand written documents with migration related information, is seen to contribute to the over dependency on anecdotes. This, many times, is found to lead to unrealistic labour migration expectation and can hinder access to complete and realistic information.



Mostly [rural women] get information from returnees and brokers which is biased in many instances. Moreover, their understanding of the Internet and social media is influenced by their educational level, local information sources, and Internet and social media knowledge. As I previously stated, most women come from remote locations where there is no access to the Internet or social media.

Representative of a private recruitment agency in the EHoA



6. Impact of Information

Relevant, compelling and accessible information has a positive impact on people's well-being. The impact of information may vary depending on individual's context. The impact of available pre-employment information at the time of this assessment cannot be evaluated wholly as prospective migrant workers who participated were still in the process of decision-making. However, it appears that a standardized and accessible pre-employment information would support more informed decision-making.



It wasn't the right decision [to migrate to Qatar] because I didn't have enough information about what to expect there. I feel betrayed!

Man migrant worker after his return reflecting on his pre-employment phase



The findings demonstrate that while experiences portrayed on social media and diaspora interventions play a significant role of influence at the pre-employment phase, they are not necessarily the dominant factors that would lead prospective migrant workers to make a decision on labour migration.

“

I don't know much about the risks involved in working in the Gulf. But I do worry about the actual amount of money they pay. You see people holding contracts that say they will earn USD 1,250 per month but when they come back at the end of their first year, they just return as they went [without much to show for all the income earned] and I don't understand why this happens.

Woman migrant worker after her return home in the EHoA

”

The exposure to the lived experience of returnee migrant workers from their communities and countries is also interlinked with the impact of information. The returnee migrant workers reflected on the experience of gathering relevant information when they were making decision to migrate. Many informed that the primary information gap was a realistic portrayal of working conditions in the Gulf, specification of job to be done and required skills.

“

I think the biggest problem is that there is no clear specification of what kind of labour [skilled or semi-skilled] is needed in the Gulf countries.

Woman migrant worker reflecting on her pre-employment phase

”

The above insights of returnee migrant workers indicate that information received by them at pre-employment stage was not adequate, which subsequently impacted their labour migration experience, often negatively. Many returnee migrant workers said that the lack of adequate and accurate information available to them before they went abroad was one of the major reasons for their negative or unsuccessful labour migration experience.



7. Social Trust

A healthy information ecosystem can only exist when information sources are trusted, and individuals have the ability to verify and validate information through their established trust networks. This report has found that prospective migrant workers and their families typically place the highest degree of trust on their network of families, friends and diaspora in relation to pre-employment information and foreign employment opportunities. This appears to be accentuated in cases of women.

“

It's difficult to believe what is being spread on social media, but we still don't have another source of information, so we must rely on what they say.

Man prospective migrant worker during a focus group discussion

”

Information provided by recruiters, social media, CSOs or government-run initiatives are usually referred by the prospective migrants. Ultimately, information received from these sources are validated and triangulated with their network of families, friends and diaspora.

“

Most people know about getting a job abroad, as many people have experienced labour migration. I have friends – some of them still working abroad and some returnees. These friends tell me about job opportunities.

Man prospective migrant worker during a focus group discussion

”



8. Influencers

Influencers are the various actors and institutions that influence how information is circulated and used. The pre-employment phase in the EHoA lacks a structured and formal information flow system. The most significant influencers are family, friends and the diaspora that act as portals of information and bridges connecting prospective migrant workers that have weak or nonexistent ties.

“

The agency doesn't have the right information. So, you wouldn't have any guarantee unless you find a person that you're very close to and who knows your family and who thinks will be responsible if anything happens to you there.

Returnee EHoA woman migrant worker

”

Additionally, the research noted that those with access to Internet and capacity to navigate the Internet and social media, are viewed as important reference points in their communities. This is typically those from the youth population. Their ability to filter relevant information from social media, follow topical developments related to pre-employment and provide further sources of validation makes them a key point of influence at a community-level.

GAPS IN THE INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM

Through this mapping and needs assessment, it is evident that adequate information at the pre-employment phase is currently limited in the EHoA. Governments in partnership with CSOs have initiated efforts to provide information on various topics related to migration. However, the findings of this research suggest

“

To my knowledge, there are no awareness or information campaigns [on working abroad].

EHoA woman prospective migrant worker

”

that there is limited knowledge about these initiatives among the prospective migrant workers and their families, consolidating their reliance on various other sources that many times provide inadequate and incorrect information.

“

They are supposed to be getting the information from the public service centres, but you find that many of them are not aware of this, so they usually get the information from social media, friends, and family, [or] sometimes the agencies approach them, [and] sometimes the job alert is posted on different websites.

A representative of a civil society organization in the EHoA

”

PART FOUR

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From current and future population and unemployment trends in the EHoA, it is expected that labour migration from the EHoA will continue to increase. Based on a deeper understanding of the experiences and decision-making processes of prospective migrant workers, this report underlines the benefits and value in strengthening the pre-employment information landscape. Efforts in building harmonized and tailored pre-employment orientation programmes, embedded at the grassroots and community level, would provide timely and accurate information to prospective migrant workers, helping to inform their decisions. These decentralized delivery mechanisms and channels of information, including in rural areas, would ensure maximum outreach and accessibility, particularly for women who are considering foreign employment. This would not only enrich the information available at the pre-employment phase but reduce the vulnerability of EHoA prospective migrant workers to risks and exploitation.

This section takes the liberty to propose a series of key findings and recommendations for the consideration of EHoA Governments and other stakeholders with regards to addressing pre-employment information needs:

Key finding: There is an absence of formal and institutionalized information programmes aimed to provide specific information to prospective migrant workers to support during the pre-employment phase.



Recommendation: Relevant EHoA countries should consider the development of PEO programmes.

These programmes can be key reference points and can be designed to help nationals make informed decisions on whether foreign employment is the right decision for them at that particular point. PEO should be informed by global good practices, based on the principles of accessibility, relevance and impact.

Key finding: In contexts where labour migration is not wholly accommodated within legislative frameworks, prospective migrant workers appear to continue to explore options of foreign employment, along with associated means.



Recommendation: EHoA countries should continue to strengthen legislative frameworks related to employment, recruitment and labour migration.

In appreciating the relationship between labour migration and development, governments should continue strengthening legislative frameworks to cultivate an enabling environment for safe, orderly and regular migration. Migrant protection and empowerment should be at the heart of these initiatives, with a particular focus on promoting and institutionalizing ethical recruitment as the norm.

Key finding: Prospective migrant workers who live in rural and remote areas have more difficulty in accessing accurate and relevant information on labour migration. As a result, there is a tendency to rely on informal sources who do not necessarily provide adequate and/or correct information.



Recommendations: EHoA governments and partners should ensure nationals across the country have access to pre-employment information by embracing a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to information programming. This would maximize outreach and ensure beneficiaries in remote and rural areas are not left behind.

- **Whole-of-government:** Adopting a whole-of-government approach could help integrate pre-employment information, including on labour migration, into existing relevant strategies and programming run by the government. For example, relevant information could be included in education and training curricula, materials could be available in government-run health clinics around the country and online messaging can be highlighted on government websites and portals. Importantly, local administration, with their day-to-day exposure to communities and prospective migrant workers, plays a key role in the dissemination of information but also to provide feedback to different levels of governments. Established coordination mechanisms embedded within the government system would allow regular communication and feedback among all government actors engaged.
- **Whole-of-society:** As pre-employment decisions are made at a grass-root and community level, embracing a whole-of-society approach is crucial in being able to meaningfully engage with prospective migrant workers. Stakeholders, including but not limited to, civil society organizations, private sector, community leaders, returnee migrant workers, recruitment agencies and faith-based organizations, must play a part in the design and implementation of PEO or related initiatives. Integrating information channels into a community-based structure and network, would contribute to ensuring accessibility to remote or rural areas and that no one is left behind. Women-only spaces or points where tend to congregate should also be included in this infrastructure.

Key finding: There is an increasing number of women-led households in the EHoA, resulting in growing numbers of women considering foreign employment. Issues of accessibility to information as well as lack of relevant gender-responsiveness resources was noted, particularly on safety, assistance and family management and care.



Recommendation: PEO programmes and initiatives should prioritize and employ gender considerations in the design, implementation and evaluation of PEO programmes and policies.

PEO programmes should fully cater to the information needs of all genders, recognizing that gender roles, relations and dynamics are constantly evolving and

have a significant impact on decision-making processes and risk-benefit assessments seen at the pre-employment stage. These considerations should be reflected throughout the full cycle of programming, ensuring that the conceptualization, design, implementation and evaluation of PEO have gender as a cross-cutting theme. This will ensure that PEO is seen as a resource for all.

Key finding: Returnee migrant workers directly and indirectly influence the decision-making of prospective migrant workers, particularly in how (un)successful their labour migration experience is perceived to have been.



Recommendation: Returnee migrant workers can play an important role in PEO.

EHoA stakeholders who are investing in initiatives to support prospective migrant workers, are strongly recommended to consider meaningful roles for returnee migrant workers. They should be involved in the design and development of any programming as well as a key component of dissemination. Their lived experiences would equip beneficiaries and their families with information to help form realistic and healthy expectations as well as hear from first-hand accounts on benefits and risks associated with foreign employment.

Key finding: Comprehending complex pre-employment information, particularly on foreign employment, can be a challenge for prospective migrant workers who have low education attainment or literacy skills. This results in difficulties in accessing accurate information along with an overdependency on anecdotes; this can often lead to unrealistic expectations with regards to foreign employment as well as increasing risks of vulnerability.



Recommendation: Ensure that PEO or related initiatives is responsive to all learning needs.

PEO and related material should be designed to be inclusive and accessible to all, including those with lower levels of literacy. This is critical to ensure that no one is left behind. All resources should be in languages and dialects understood by the target prospective migrant workers, their families and their communities. For those who would have difficulty with written products, audio-visual aids are beneficial in highlighting key messages. Folk media, through visual, verbal and aural forms, is one of the most effective mediums at a community-level. This can include poetry, songs and dramas, to name a few.

Key finding: While each EHoA country in focus have different pre-employment landscapes with different information ecosystems, it is anticipated that labour migration will continue to increase from the subregion.



Recommendation: To support the information needs of prospective migrant workers, EHoA governments and partners are invited to consider different interventions when conceptualizing PEO to ensure relevance and responsiveness to national contexts and resources available.

- **Mass awareness campaigns:** Mass awareness campaigns can be effective in highlighting key messages relevant to the pre-employment stage. This can include information on national and foreign employment opportunities, guidance on engaging with recruitment, national laws and regulations as well as considerations to protect and empower prospective migrant workers. Such a campaign should use different networks and mediums to ensure maximize outreach.
- **Community-based information interventions:** Acknowledging the significant role of communities at pre-employment, community-based information interventions are essential. This is particularly the case in considering dissemination to rural and remote areas. For PEO to be sustainable and accessible, communities should not just feel that they are just recipients of information but should actively participate and feel ownership of such programmes. Key resource persons, such as community leaders, should be mobilized to become trusted reference points. Their involvement will be instrumental in reducing the vulnerability of prospective migrant workers, particularly with regards to human trafficking and engaging with unscrupulous and dangerous recruiters. The more embedded these information channels and roles are within the very structure of communities, the more accessible and effective these interventions can be for prospective migrant workers. For example, many respondents suggested youth clubs and community-based organizations as accessible spaces to disseminate information.
- **Hotspot focused information activities:** In resource-limited settings and contexts where fully fledged PEO programmes may not be currently possible, information interventions targeting specific geographical locations would be beneficial. Data suggest that these hotspot locations contain a higher concentration of nationals who have gone abroad. This could be an effective starting point in implementing knowledge-building activities which could support the information needs of prospective migrant workers in these hotspots. Importantly, it would allow EHoA stakeholders to learn from these initial activities and understand how they could be scaled up to other geographical locations in the country.

Key finding: Many prospective migrant workers still consider embarking on irregular migration, despite having a level of awareness of risks involved. A risk-benefit assessment is a key component of the decision-making process at the pre-employment phase.



Recommendation: Behaviour change communication interventions should be recognized as key to assist prospective migrant workers in their consideration of risks associated with irregular migration.

While information programming at pre-employment will be pivotal in ensuring that all have a robust understanding of risks in engaging with irregular migration, EHoA stakeholders may consider initiating behaviour change communication interventions. These can help in promoting positive behaviours of prospective migrant workers and their families in their engagement with safe and ethical recruitment channels, with the desired outcome of lowering exposure to exploitation and danger in embarking on irregular migration. EHoA stakeholders could consider first implementing these interventions in geographical locations where these vulnerabilities are most evident and/or linking with hotspot focused information activities.

Key finding: In response to changing contexts and personal considerations of prospective migrant workers, pre-employment information needs are dynamic and constantly evolving.



Recommendation: In considering the development of PEO, it is critical to establish participatory monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure responsiveness and sustainability.

As the pre-employment stage is centred on prospective migrant workers and their communities, it is essential that participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) is used to understand how effective PEO and related initiatives are in supporting them. This approach would involve pre-employment stakeholders, ensuring their perspectives and aspirations feed directly into strengthening information programming. This PM&E approach, prioritizing inclusiveness and participation, would allow a meaningful assessment of the impacts, use of resources and effectiveness of PEO. Furthermore, it would enable the identification of challenges and opportunities, which would subsequently inform the design of pre-employment orientation and related initiatives.

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12. To ensure harmonization of methodology with the accompanying mapping and information needs assessments at pre-departure and post-arrival, primary data collection took place in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.
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