CMFS BRIEF: SOMALI MIGRANTS (TO EUROPE)

Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) – Comprehensive Migration Flow Survey (CMFS)

Migrants sit under the trees while they wait to continue their journey, East Africa. © Photo: Olivia Headon/IOM (2018)

INTRODUCTION

For decades Somali migrants have arrived in Europe through different channels and for various reasons that have ranged from obtaining legal protection to seeking livelihood opportunities. The unique data collection exercise carried out by DTM in 2017 sought to explore the diversity of such flows by interviewing migrants at different stages of their migration journeys to help policymakers design human-centric and evidence-based solutions. The results of this study indicate that migrants' needs differ at different stages of their journeys highlighting the necessity for the provision of context specific support to ensure that migrants receive timely and relevant assistance, as well as further research on the evolving migration flows to Europe.

METHODOLOGY

The Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Comprehensive Migration Flow Survey (CMFS)[1] provides a comprehensive evidence base on migration flows from Somalia to Europe and return migration to Somalia. This was achieved by collecting data on four different Somali migrant groups: 1) potential migrants in Somalia, 2) transit migrants in Sudan, Libya, and Greece travelling to Europe; 3) migrants in a final destination country, the Netherlands; as well as 4) returnees to the origin country (Somalia). The data collection explores six key thematic areas (1) migrant profiles, (2) migration drivers and decision making, (3) migrant challenges and related vulnerabilities, (4) the role of intermediaries, (5) migrant perceptions towards Europe and (6) migration choices and options. The main outcomes of the DTM CMFS report and resulting recommendations are summarized in this policy brief.

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[1] International Organization for Migration (2018). Final CMFS Report: Enabling a Better Understanding of Migration Flows (and its root-causes) From Somalia to Europe. Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM).

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC MIGRANT PROFILE

Understanding migrant demographic characteristics, enhances targeted interventions.

Demographic profile: The DTM CMFS study found that most Somali migrants were single males without children between the ages of 25 (respondents in Greece) and 33 (Somali returnees).

Previous international migration: This study found that many Somali respondents had experienced prior international migration in the region.

MIGRATION DRIVERS AND DECISION-MAKING

Understanding drivers of migration is key to developing relevant programming and policies in the origin country.

Challenges before migration: Somali migrants faced several challenges in the six months prior to their migration to Europe like unemployment, lack of sufficient income, lack of jobs and livelihood opportunities, financial problems and debt and security reasons. Transit migrants in Libya and Greece, also reported facing pressure from their families and communities to migrate.

Migration trigger: Rather than a specific event, the migration of Somalis was triggered by a combination of economic factors (e.g. unemployment, loss of job), social influences (e.g. accompanying friends who are migrating, or family decision), and security threats (e.g. security incident).

Migration decision making: Somali migrants mostly made their migration decision independently and were less likely to discuss their migration with others. When they did discuss their migration decision with others, they mostly consulted their family and friends (who generally supported the migration decision).

Information and network: Television, social media (e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp), the Internet, as well as word of mouth with family and friends in Europe were the primary information sources used by Somali migrants to shape migration decisions. Word of mouth primarily entailed verbal contact (via phone, Viber, Facebook, and/or Skype) and written contact (via smartphone apps and/or social media) with friends and family in Europe.

Information to prepare for the journey: Before starting the migration journey, Somali respondents primarily collected information on the costs, transportation options and migration routes, and to a lesser extent, information regarding the job market and access to health care in the destination.

CHALLENGES AND RELATED VULNERABILITIES

Understanding the challenges and vulnerabilities faced by migrants en route to Europe could enhance targeted interventions to increase migrant protection.

Travel: Somali migrants most often reported travelling with a group, with friends, and/or alone.

Problems and challenges en route to Europe: Somali respondents experienced numerous challenges while en route to Europe. The most common problems faced by Somali migrants were associated with hunger and thirst, health problems, detention[2], problems at sea, physical

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[2] Detention by official authorities is legitimate part of the migration management. From the migrants' perceptive, detention may be the deprivation of liberty based on their migration status and without committing any crime as such. Since this report provides data and research on migrant perception it is presented here as a 'problem'.

abuse, biometric registration[3], forced labour and financial shortages.

Expected problems vs reported problems: The most common problems expected amongst potential migrants included hunger and thirst, problems at sea, lack of shelter and a place to sleep. However, the problems their counterparts actually reported were mostly hunger and thirst, health problems, detention, problems at sea, physical violence, biometric registration, forced labour, and financial shortages.

Smartphone usage along the route: This study found that smartphone use along the journey was high amongst Somali respondents. Respondents mainly used smartphones for communicating with their social networks in Europe and their home country. They also used smartphone for finding information about the journey. In general, the main apps used by Somalis during their journey were Facebook, WhatsApp, Viber, Skype and Internet browsers.

THE ROLE OF INTERMEDIARIES

Understanding the role migrant facilitators is key to enhancing regular, voluntary and orderly migration.

Use of migration facilitators: The majority of the Somali respondents used on average of two to six migration facilitators during their journeys to Europe.

Costs of migration: In general, there was great variance in the expected and actual costs of migration. Somali potential migrants who had not left their country yet, expected an average cost of more than 20,000 USD to reach Europe. On the other hand, Somalis respondents

surveyed in the final destination country (the Netherlands), and returnees reported that the actual total cost to reach their final destination was around 6,500 USD. Respondents commonly reported relying on savings, borrowing money and selling land to finance their migration to Europe.

MIGRANT PERCEPTIONS OF EUROPE

Understanding perceptions of migrants towards Europe could address information and communication gaps, and better address migrant needs across different migratory stages

Intended destination countries: Somali migrants reported a diverse range of countries of intended destination, including Sweden, Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands. Reasons for choosing an intended destination country differed, though the main reason for Somalis in all stages of migration was having social networks in that country. Other factors included safety of the country, livelihood opportunities (e.g. perceived availability of jobs), and the perceived ease of asylum procedures.

Perceptions of Europe: Somalis primarily based their perceptions of Europe on word of mouth, Facebook, WhatsApp, the internet and television. The main channels of word of mouth were verbal and written contact with family and friends in Europe.

Advising other potential migrants: Many respondents would advise other to migrate, primarily because of a lack of hope for a future in Somalia, the perception of safety and security in Europe, and livelihood opportunities.

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[3] The collection of biometric information and registration is part of the Dublin Agreement whereby biometric information is collected at the first port of entry. However, from the perspective of Somali migrants it may be viewed as coercive because Somali migrants are aware that registering their biometric information in transit, (but

technically their first port of entry to Europe) may hinder the asylum processes in their preferred destination country. Hence, from the migrants' perspective it was reported as a problem encountered in the journey.

Priorities and expectations upon arrival: In general, the main priorities of Somali respondents included seeking legal status, employment, learning the local language, and reuniting with family and friends. The most commonly reported forms of expected support included the legal permit to stay in the country and support with family reunification.

MIGRATION CHOICES AND LEGAL OPTIONS

Understanding migrant choices and legal options could enhance global, regional, and national policy development and further strengthen migrant opportunities and rights.

Regional migration: The main reasons for Somali migrants to choose migration to Europe over regional migration were economic such as the lack of jobs and livelihood in region, perception of better access to jobs in Europe with higher incomes and safety and respect for human rights. Other reasons included perceptions of better quality of life and social services in Europe and social networks.

Awareness of EU migration options: Close to fifty per cent of the Somali respondents (potential-transit-final) were generally aware of options for regular migration to Europe. Of those that reported to be aware of legal migration options, most commonly reported legal option to migrate to Europe among Somalis was the Schengen visa. Somali respondents mainly planned to obtain official permission to stay in Europe by claiming asylum. The importance of asylum as a legal method to stay in Europe was emphasised by Iraqi migrants. Yet, the knowledge about asylum procedures amongst respondents was rather low.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on the results of the DTM CMFS report highlighted in the previous sections, it is possible to suggest of the following recommendations.

Information tailored to the different migration stages:

This study found that the role of information is central in shaping migrant decisions and perceptions. Hence, the variety of information channels used, and the relevance of television, social media and the internet should be acknowledged when designing information campaigns.

The following information is of importance during the different stages of the migration journey to further enhance safe, orderly, and regular migration:

Somali potential migrants: primary information should focus on i) safe and regular migration pathways (incl. asylum procedures), ii) potential challenges and vulnerabilities related to the migration journey, and iii) realistic expectation of life in Europe.

Somali transit migrants: primary information should focus on i) available referral mechanisms, ii) available support and services (temporary shelter, food, [emergency] health care, protection etc.), iii) safe and regular migration pathways (incl. asylum procedures), and iv) migrant rights in transit and final destination.

Somalis in final destination: upon arrival in the final destination country, primary information should focus on i) migrant rights (incl. asylum procedures), ii) available referral mechanisms, iii) available support and services (temporary shelter, food, [emergency] health care, protection etc.),

Somali returnees: upon return in home-country primary information should focus on i) available

referral mechanism, ii) livelihood opportunities, iii) housing market and iii) access to relevant national services such as health care and education.

For developing targeted information for migrants during the different stages of the journey, it is important to address:

1. The socio-demographic characteristics of Somali (potential) migrants to ensure that the right beneficiaries are identified.
2. The diverse sources of information (e.g. social media, intermediaries, religious centres) used by Iraqi migrants at different stages of the journey.
3. The usage of smart-phones and the importance of (social media) apps at the different stages of the journey for Somali respondents.
4. The different types of information that Somali migrants investigate during the different stages of their migration journey.
5. Somali migrants are often not visible and can be difficult (e.g. along informal transit routes).
6. The potential role transnational networks.

Stability and peace in Somalia: Given the intersectionality of conflict, livelihoods and economic opportunities, relevant stakeholders in Somalia should continue to work on providing long term stabilization measures that address economic challenges.

Additional research: Migration flows continuously evolve, and further research into the drivers of migration and decision-making processes among Somali migrants would allow researchers to identify patterns over time that could be utilized to better inform interventions and assistance. Challenges faced among other specific sub-populations – namely, females, children and unaccompanied minors, and elderly persons – during transit, at their destination, and upon return should also be considered in more depth. While the Netherlands is the only destination country of focus within this research study, similar studies should be conducted to understand the differences and similarities between the experiences of Somali migrants in other European destination countries.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

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