



# Smuggled South

**An updated overview of mixed migration from the Horn of Africa to southern Africa with specific focus on protections risks, human smuggling and trafficking**

*This series produced by RMMS showcases key issues in mixed migration, highlights new research and discusses emerging trends.*

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**Abstract:** *Migrants from the Horn of Africa continue to travel along the southern route towards South Africa and almost all of them use smugglers to get to their final destination. This RMMS briefing paper provides an update on the volume, trends and dynamics of mixed migration and migrant smuggling along this route. It offers new estimates on the volume of migration and the value of the illicit migrant smuggling economy from Ethiopia and Somalia to southern Africa and highlights many of the protection issues migrants and refugees face while being smuggled south. The research draws upon data from the RMMS Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism initiative (4Mi), through which field monitors conducted 398 interviews in South Africa, as well as additional interviews in southern Africa and secondary research.*

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## Summary of key findings

Despite specific conditions and characteristics particular to the southern route, this paper's findings are generally consistent with the dynamics of migrant smuggling along all routes out of the Horn of Africa.

Using a combination of primary and secondary sources, as well as new data from the RMMS Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative (4Mi), the paper finds that migrant smuggling along the southern route continues to thrive and exposes migrants in mixed flows to high levels of abuse and risk.<sup>2</sup>

As an update to the International Organization of Migration's seminal 2009 study<sup>3</sup> on migrant smuggling along the southern route, it shows that the following trends and characteristics define the dynamic:

- Irregular movement between the Horn of Africa and southern Africa continues to be possible and arguably there are more routes available to smugglers and migrants than in 2008/9.
- The dynamic is dominated by smuggling as the primary criminal enterprise. Trafficking is uncommon although migrants report cases of kidnapping, extortion and exploitation, both labour and sexual. Nevertheless, as the role of the smuggler is increasingly aligned with criminal activities, the definitional difference between smuggling and trafficking is being tested and, in some cases, may appear academic.
- Consistent with the findings of the 2009 study, Ethiopians make up the majority of those being smuggled into South Africa from the Horn. Interviews with migrants and migration experts in 2015 suggested 80 percent of migrants from the Horn of Africa were Ethiopian and 20 percent Somali, with almost no evidence of flows from Eritrea.
- The flows continue to be complex with economic migrants travelling alongside refugees. Most refugees are Somalis although most Ethiopians also apply for asylum on arrival.
- Compiling accurate estimates of how many people are on the move remains difficult. Unlike in 2008/9, when a strategic bottleneck in the flow of migrants into the Republic of South Africa (RSA) allowed researchers to credibly estimate numbers, no such bottlenecks existed in 2015/16. However critical assessment of Ethiopian asylum applications in South Africa provides some indication of the numbers making the journey.
- As explained more fully below, the writers conclude that present flows into South Africa from the Horn of Africa are lower than in 2008/9. At that time, it was estimated that 17,000–20,000 Somalis and Ethiopians entered South Africa irregularly every year. This paper estimates the current rate at **13,400–14,050** per year. However, the number of people leaving the Horn via the southern route may be higher, probably **14,750–16,850**.
- The multiple reasons for this decline may include: Europe's greater attraction as a destination and perceptions of how easy it was to reach the continent from 2013–2016; the fact that Ethiopians were able to masquerade as Eritrean at a time when Eritreans were achieving very high acceptance rates as refugees in Europe; continued and vicious 'Afrophobic' attacks against migrants, and particularly Somalis engaged in business, in South Africa; policy changes that have made it harder for asylum seekers to achieve refugee status in RSA; and growing intolerance towards foreigners both within the administration and among the general public.
- The 2009 study highlighted protection risks faced by migrants, not only along the southern route but also within South Africa. Evidence suggests that significant human rights violations take place along the way and once within South Africa, migrants and refugees also commonly face violence and prejudice, discrimination and abuse.
- It appears that migrant smuggling along the southern route has become more violent and exploitative with kidnapping or holding for ransom of smuggled people by smugglers becoming more common. In IOM's 2009 study, no migrants reported being held for ransom, except by police and prison officials in certain cases. Now kidnapping and ransom demands seem to have become more prevalent and almost normalised, as is the case on the eastern route towards Yemen and Saudi Arabia. While there is still less associated violence on the southern route, it is clear that within the smuggling economy migrants are viewed as *commodities*.
- There is some evidence that the smuggling economy has begun to attract more organised criminals. Smugglers sometimes enjoy impunity from prosecution despite national laws against smuggling and trafficking in many of the countries in which they operate. Government and security officials have been said to be involved, directly and indirectly, in the trade.

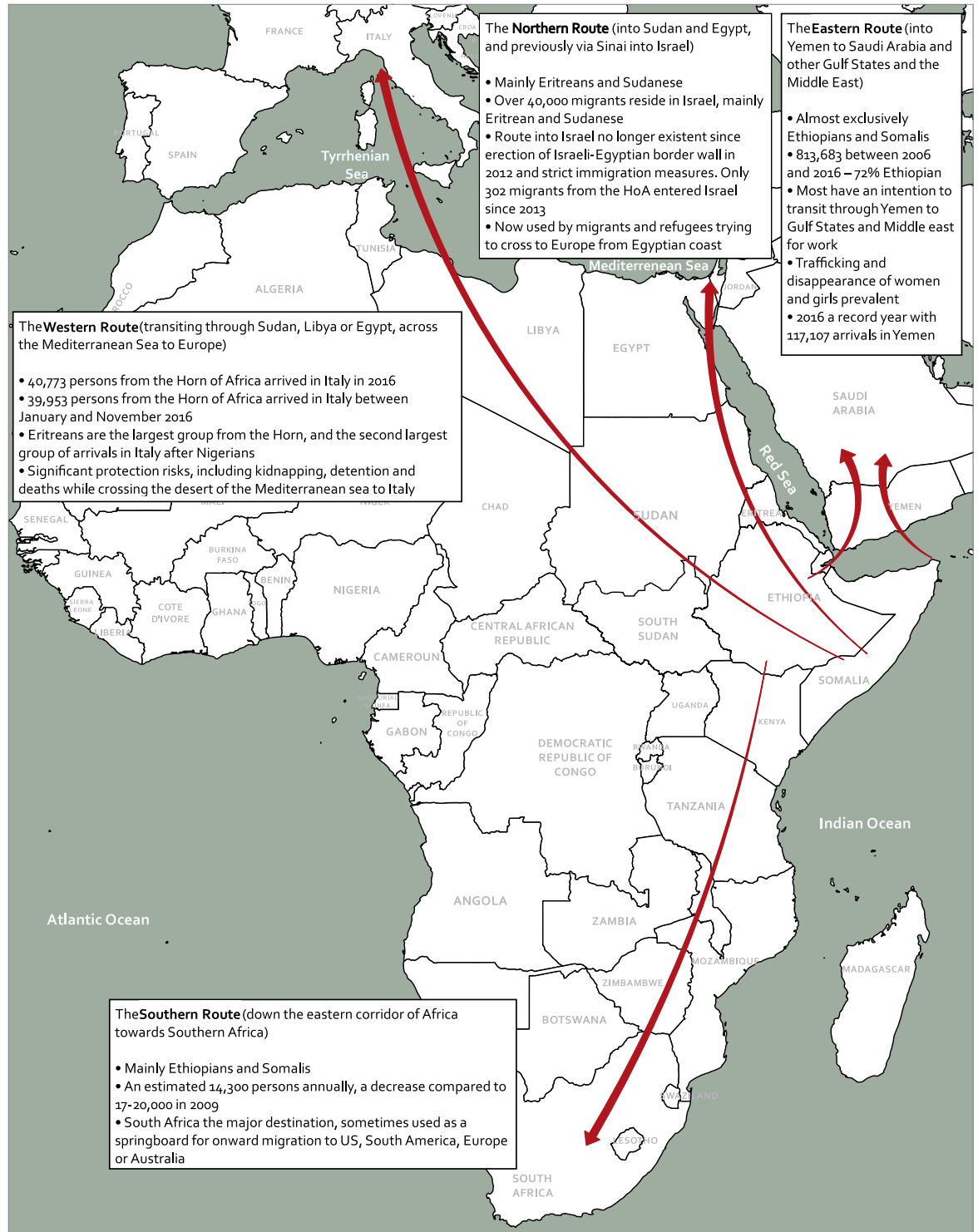
<sup>2</sup> The methodology is explained on the final page.

<sup>3</sup> Horwood, 2009. *In Pursuit of the Southern Dream: Victims of Necessity. Assessment of the irregular movement of men from East Africa and the Horn to South Africa*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration. Available at: <<http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iomresearchassessment.pdf>> (last accessed 14/11/16).

- With the average cost of the trip from the Horn of Africa to South Africa increasing by almost 69 percent from 2009–2016, the smuggling economy remains extremely lucrative for those involved, with high profits matched by low risks. Collusion and corruption, involving state officials, are essential lubricants of the smuggling machine. For migrants, the risk of failure is low with most reaching South Africa despite abuses by smugglers or officials, and other risks.
- With earnings rising faster than inflation, the profits from this illicit industry appear to be higher in 2016 than in 2008/9, despite the decline in the number of migrants. In 2008/9, the illicit migrant smuggling economy was estimated to be worth at least **USD 40 million** per year. For 2015/16, RMMS estimates it was worth up to **USD 47 million** per annum. These estimates are based on fees paid to smugglers but the rising prevalence of ransom demands means actual earnings are likely much higher.

## Introduction

Migrants and refugees leave the Horn of Africa along four major routes, heading north, south, east and west. The map below shows these routes and their key characteristics, as well as the numbers travelling along them.



Map 1: Mixed migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen: four main routes

While international attention tends to focus on migratory flows towards Europe and other Western countries and while solid data is available on numbers arriving in Yemen, the substantial flow of migrants and asylum seekers heading south from the Horn of Africa receives less attention from international media, policymakers and researchers.

This paper aims to provide a new overview of mixed migration flows from the Horn of Africa to southern Africa, including new estimates on the volume of mixed migration, the routes and destinations, smuggling and trafficking and the major protection issues. The paper is based on an extensive literature study by RMMS and field visits and draws on data collected through the RMMS Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative (4Mi) among migrants and asylum seekers who had reached South Africa from the Horn.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The RMMS 4Mi project is an innovative approach to collect and analyze data on mixed migration flows, that started in the Horn of Africa in 2014. Through a growing network of over 100 locally-recruited monitors in strategic migration hubs in Northern, Eastern, Southern and Western Africa, Europe and Central and South East Asia, the 4Mi project tracks migrants on the move. Latest finding can be accessed at <http://www.regionalmms.org/index.php/4Mi-page>. As part of the 4Mi project, 398 Ethiopian, Somali and Eritrean migrants and asylum seekers were interviewed in South Africa during 2015 and 2016.

## 1.

## Mixed migration from the Horn of Africa to southern Africa

### The southern route from the Horn of Africa

Despite protocols in different parts of Africa, free legal movement remains the exception rather than the rule. In the East and Horn of Africa, movement is restricted despite protocols within the East African Community (EAC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) that expressly endorse economic integration, including free movement of goods, capital and people. Not only do people frequently engage smugglers to move within East Africa and the Horn, they also move with smugglers from the Horn to southern Africa.

South Africa has for years held a special attraction for many migrants from the East and Horn of Africa and the southern route deserves analysis if we are to understand the degree to which migrants continue to use this route in 2017.

While the majority of economic migrants entering South Africa each year originate from neighbouring countries, mixed migration flows towards the southern African region originate to a large extent in the Horn of Africa, particularly Ethiopia and Somalia. In 2009, it was estimated that every year 17,000–20,000 refugees and migrants from these two countries travelled through the Great Lakes and southern African countries to reach South Africa. The majority were Ethiopians but there were also some 5–6,000 Somalis.<sup>5</sup> Seven years later, these figures are still the baseline used in most publications on mixed migration flows to the southern African region. This paper offers an updated estimate.

### The volume of mixed migration along the southern route

The southern African region experiences all types of population movements, including mixed and irregular migration, labour migration and displacement due to conflict and natural disasters.<sup>6</sup> Within the South African Development Community (SADC) bloc, there is considerable irregular cross-border movement of labour migrants, which is often seasonal and circular. This intra-regional movement is far larger than the flows coming in from outside the region and it is mainly directed towards South Africa, the dominant economy. In terms of mixed migration flows from outside the region, many migrants come from the Horn of Africa, particularly Ethiopia and Somalia, with significant numbers of migrants and refugees also leaving from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and, to a lesser degree, from West Africa. There are also growing irregular flows from Asia, especially Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and China.

In 2015, the top 15 'sending' African countries were ranked as follows by South Africa's Department of Home Affairs: Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Nigeria, DRC, Malawi, Somalia, Ghana, Burundi, Mozambique, Uganda, Congo-Brazzaville, Cameroon, Tanzania, Lesotho and Senegal. In 2016, the department said that cumulatively registered asylum applications over the past 10 years stood at 1,082,669.<sup>7</sup> In 2015, there was a decline in the numbers of new asylum seekers and applicants, while the top four nationalities that received recognition as refugees were from Ethiopia (1,001), Somalia (619), DRC (190) and Eritrea (44).<sup>8</sup> Most Ethiopian applications referred to the alleged political marginalisation of the Oromo people. As can be seen, very few asylum applications are accepted in South Africa. For example, from 2011–2015, 311,795 asylum applications were rejected, according to the Department of Home Affairs.

### Developing new estimates

Despite claims of increasing mixed migration flows and the prevalence of smuggling, there is little data on the actual numbers travelling from the East and Horn of Africa towards southern Africa.

In 2008/9, the limited number of routes into South Africa and the use of a transit centre in northern Malawi by most mixed migrants enabled IOM to estimate numbers. By late 2014, the transit centre was no longer in use and there were no strategic bottlenecks from which workable estimates could be gleaned. In fact, the proliferation of routes and the absence of any specific crossings into South Africa where numbers can be recorded means that estimating the number of migrants or refugees in transit is difficult.

However, one piece of information offers a critical indication of actual new arrivals into South Africa from the Horn: out of more than 62,000 asylum applications received in South Africa in 2015, Ethiopian nationals accounted for 10,176

<sup>5</sup> Horwood, 2009. *In Pursuit of the Southern Dream: Victims of Necessity. Assessment of the irregular movement of men from East Africa and the Horn to South Africa*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration. Available at: <<http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iomresearchassessment.pdf>> (last accessed 14/11/16).

<sup>6</sup> IOM, 2013. *Regional strategy for Southern Africa 2014–2016*. Pretoria: International Organization for Migration, p. 6. Available at: <<https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/country/docs/AUP00579-RO-Pretoria-Regional-Strategy.pdf>> (last accessed 15/11/2016).

<sup>7</sup> Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2016. *Asylum statistics: Department of Home Affairs briefing; Immigration Amendment Bill 2016 deliberations Home Affairs*. 8 March 2016. Available at: <<https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/22163/>> (last accessed 22/11/16).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

(approximately 16 percent) while Somalis accounted for 2,595 (approximately 4 percent).<sup>9</sup> This finding is significant because in early 2015 RMMS researchers found that virtually all irregular arrivals from Ethiopia and Somalia applied for asylum, despite knowing they would not necessarily be offered refugee status. They regarded it as a stop-gap strategy to study, work and access social services during the lengthy period of time it would take for their applications to be assessed. This legal loophole may soon be closed, not least because the government is aware that well over 90 percent of such applications are rejected.

From these government records, we can estimate that at least 12,771 Somalis and Ethiopians entered South Africa in 2015. If we amply bracket this estimate to allow for a minority of new arrivals failing to register for asylum (possibly 5–10 percent at most but actually only 1.4 percent in the 4Mi sample), the estimated number arriving irregularly in 2015 and 2016 would be between 13,400–14,050, compared with the 2009 estimate of 17,000–20,000.

There may be others who take the southern route and decide, or are forced, to remain in countries along the way. This could happen because of prolonged detention, labour exploitation, trafficking, deportation, livelihood opportunities, change of mind or death. Even if we generously estimate that as many as 10–20 percent may have started but not finished their journeys, the total number for mixed migration flows from the Horn for 2015 and 2016 is probably 14,750–16,850.

## South Africa's attraction for irregular migrants: the pull factors

Apart from offering security, escape from conflict or persecution, and the possibility of employment in a vibrant economy, one of South Africa's main attractions for irregular migrants from the Horn has been a legal loophole relating to asylum applications.

RMMS research found that most new arrivals, using contacts in migrant communities within South Africa, immediately applied for asylum through 'fixers' who charged a fee and allegedly paid state officials to expedite registration. According to a June 2016 Green Paper on International Migration, which is now being tabled as a White Paper, "this prolonging of the finalisation of asylum claims has proven to be a major pull factor because asylum seekers are allowed to earn a living and study while awaiting adjudication and if the process is lengthy then this amounts to a de facto work, business and study visa".<sup>10</sup>

The Green Paper notes that on average 90 percent of asylum claimants do not qualify as refugees but are processed without any sanction for entering or residing in the country illegally. In 2015, the rejection rate rose to 96 percent. The Paper also noted that asylum seekers are able to apply without their identities being verified – a situation "often exploited by criminal syndicates such as human smugglers and traffickers. The situation directly contributes to corruption, social instability and threats to national security. It also compromises budgeting and planning, especially for social services".

The Green Paper calls for the creation of "secure administrative detention centres" that "could be established within the processing centres to accommodate certain categories of asylum seekers while their claims are being adjudicated". It also seeks to adopt the 'safe third country' which would deny asylum to those who have transited through one or more countries considered to be safe en route to South Africa. It has not, however, been explicitly indicated which countries South Africa considers safe.<sup>11</sup>

The Paper concluded that irregular economic migrants and criminal syndicates were taking advantage of weak systems, gaps in policy and legislation, and corrupt officials.

If the Green Paper is adopted as law, only refugees will be allowed to integrate into communities while their applications for asylum are processed. Other asylum seekers, sometimes referred to as 'opportunistic illegal foreigners', will not. Under this scenario, asylum seekers would not have the automatic right to work or study since their basic needs would be catered for in processing centres near the borders. It is expected that the introduction of "secure detention centres" within processing centres could result in large numbers of migrants and asylum seekers being detained for entering the country in an irregular manner.<sup>12</sup> However, RMMS understands that these detention recommendations may be dropped in the White Paper.

As of January 2017, it is understood the Green Paper has been tabled as a White Paper, having been gazetted for the public to submit comments last year. However, it has yet to be presented to parliament or passed as a bill. If its recommendations are adopted, they will likely have a significant impact on the perception of South Africa as an 'easy' country for irregular migrants to live in.

<sup>9</sup> *Figures from the National Immigration Information System (NIIS), which records data on asylum seekers and refugees. Quoted in Government of South Africa Green Paper on International Migration. June 2016, p.30. Available at: <[http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/40088\\_gon738.pdf](http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/40088_gon738.pdf)> (last accessed 22/11/16).*

<sup>10</sup> *Government of South Africa, 2016. Green Paper on International Migration. June 2016, p.65. Available at: <[http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/40088\\_gon738.pdf](http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/40088_gon738.pdf)> (last accessed 22/11/16).*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *RMMS, 2016. Courting commotion? Changing migration dynamics on the southern route to South Africa. Available at: <<http://regionalmms.org/index.php/research-publications/feature-articles/item/48-courting-commotion-changing-migration-dynamics-on-the-s>> (last accessed 12/10/16).*

Finally, the Green Paper seeks to establish a Border Management Authority by March 2017 to manage admissions and departures and take overall control of South Africa's borders. The Paper notes the need to enforce current immigration rules, which require people entering the country illegally to return voluntarily to their countries or be deported. From April 2014–March 2015, 54,169 people were deported, of whom 82 percent were Mozambican, Zimbabwean and Lesotho nationals.<sup>13</sup> There is no data on the deportation of Ethiopian or Somali migrants. RMMS considers it is likely that due to costs and logistics Ethiopians and Somalis are not being deported but the authorities hope to address these irregular flows through the policies outlined above.

### South Africa's reduced attraction for irregular migrants

The new estimates proposed in this paper suggest that mixed flows of irregular migrants into South Africa have declined. The reasons for the reduced attraction of South Africa could include the following:

- The attraction of Europe and perceived ease of entering the continent from 2013–2016.
- The fact that Ethiopians were able to masquerade as Eritrean in Europe at a time when Eritreans were achieving very high acceptance rates as refugees.
- The continued and vicious 'Afrophobic' attacks faced by migrants, and especially Somalis, in South Africa, along with reduced tolerance among government officials and the general public for 'illegal foreigners', specifically from other African countries.
- Stepped-up border patrols by military personnel with the objective of preventing irregular migrants and cross-border criminals from entering South Africa.
- Policy changes in South Africa, which could make it harder for asylum seekers to gain refugee status, with overall rejection rates at 96 percent in 2015.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, until 2011, there were six refugee reception offices (RRO): Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, Durban and Musina. Since then, the offices in Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town have been closed. The Pretoria RRO remained the preferred destination for new asylum applicants, despite long queues and waiting periods as well as rent-seeking behaviour within the asylum system.
- The worsening of employment options. In the first quarter of 2016, unemployment rose to 26.7 percent from 24.5 percent in the fourth quarter of 2015.<sup>15</sup> Rising joblessness often has a direct impact on public perception that 'foreigners' are taking local jobs.
- Although a composite index on migration governance, commissioned by IOM, scores South Africa's protection of migrants' rights as 'developed', such gains risk being reversed if the measures proposed in the Green Paper come into effect and take away automatic access to such rights.
- As noted above, the creation of a Border Management Authority could lead to the deportation of more migrants and asylum seekers.

### Routes, transit hubs and destinations

For decades, South Africa has been the traditional destination country for migrants and refugees moving south, particularly because of its economic opportunities. Southern Africa is also used by migrants as a springboard for secondary migration to Europe, the United States or Australia.<sup>16</sup>

However, with growing labour opportunities in the mining, manufacturing and agricultural sectors in other parts of the region, countries such as Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique and Botswana are increasingly being viewed as alternative destinations.<sup>17</sup> This emerging dynamic means that higher numbers will leave the Horn of Africa than enter South Africa because some migrants will remain in countries along the southern route. Observers already report that the number of migrants remaining in these formerly transit countries is increasing. IOM said in 2013 that migrants from Somalia and

<sup>13</sup> RMMS, 2016. *Courting commotion? Changing migration dynamics on the southern route to South Africa*. Available at: <<http://regionalmms.org/index.php/research-publications/feature-articles/item/48-courting-commotion-changing-migration-dynamics-on-the-s>> (last accessed 12/10/16); RSA Department of Home Affairs, 2016. *Green Paper on International Migration*. Available at: <<http://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/notices/815-green-paper-on-international-migration>> (last accessed 16/10/16).

<sup>14</sup> All Africa News Online, 2016. *South Africa: Court Battle Over Cape Town Asylum Seekers*. By Naib Mian 10th June 2016. Available at: <<http://allafrica.com/stories/201606100814.html>> (last accessed 22/11/2016).

<sup>15</sup> News 24Wire, 2016. *1 million asylum-seekers in South Africa – report* By News24Wire June 20, 2016. Available at: <<https://businessstech.co.za/news/government/127373/1-million-asylum-seekers-in-south-africa-report/>> (last accessed 21/11/16).

<sup>16</sup> IOM, 2013. *Regional strategy for Southern Africa 2014-2016*. Pretoria: International Organization for Migration, p. 6. Available at: <<https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/country/docs/AUP00579-RO-Pretoria-Regional-Strategy.pdf>> (last accessed 15/11/2016).

<sup>17</sup> UNOCHA, 2014. *Mixed Migration in Southern Africa*. Humanitarian Bulletin Southern Africa. Issue 13, January 2014. Pretoria: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Available at: <[http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA\\_ROSA\\_Humanitarian\\_Bulletin\\_Jan\\_2014.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA_ROSA_Humanitarian_Bulletin_Jan_2014.pdf)> (last accessed 22/11/2016); IOM, 2013. *Regional strategy for Southern Africa 2014-2016*. Pretoria: International Organization for Migration, p. 6. Available at: <<https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/country/docs/AUP00579-RO-Pretoria-Regional-Strategy.pdf>> (last accessed 15/11/2016).

the DRC were increasingly staying in Mozambique and joining the growing artisanal mining sector or engaging in trade based around the lucrative mining economy, while others stayed in Malawi or Zambia.<sup>18</sup>

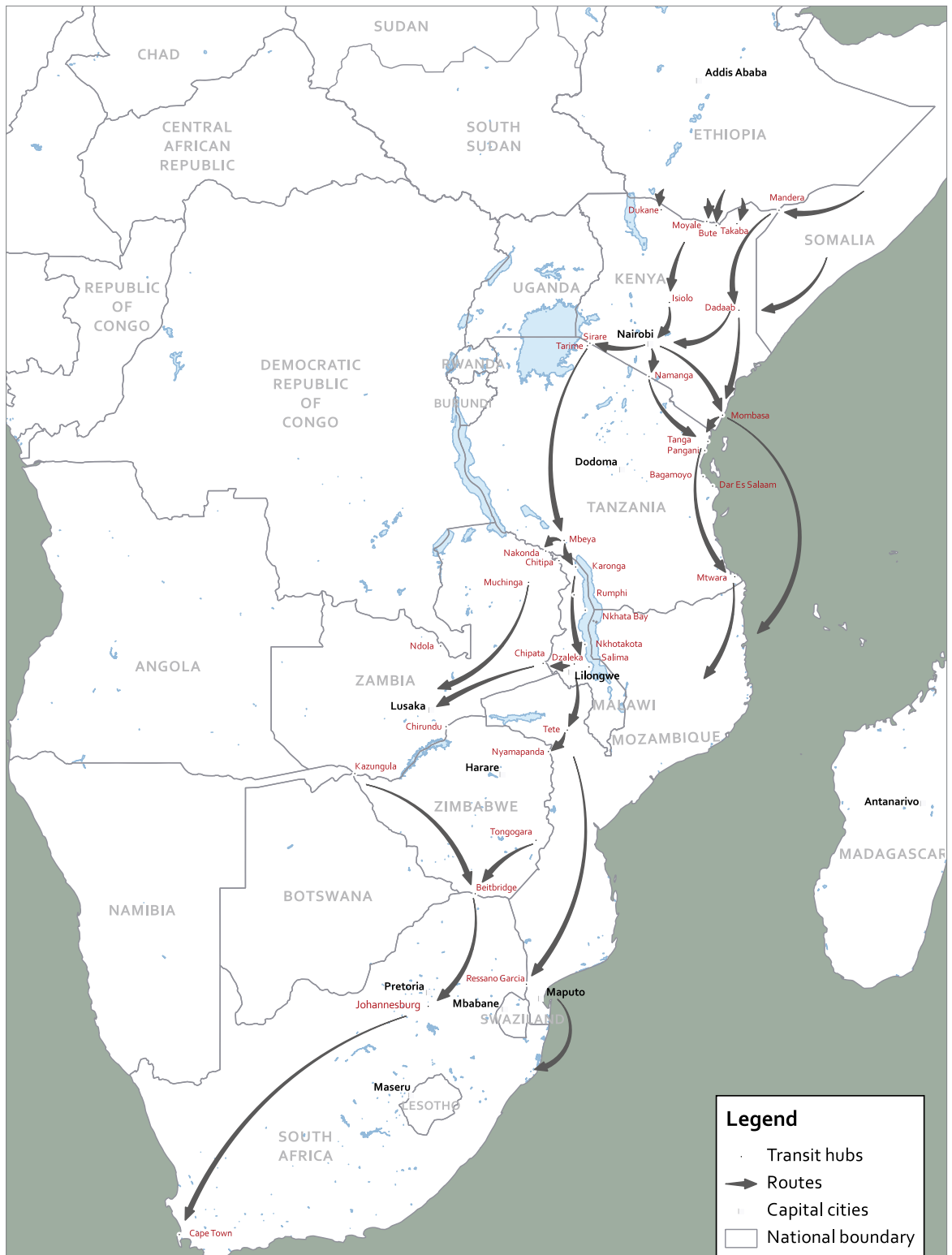
Migrants and smugglers can choose from a variety of routes to get to southern Africa with many offering low risks of detention or interference. Smugglers may also base their choice on cost. Where possible smugglers will use panya (shortcut) routes or rural tracks to avoid detection, roadblocks and major towns.<sup>19</sup> Routes and methods of transport constantly evolve to avoid police and border controls. Despite this, the direction is clear and some major transit points can be identified. Generally they are similar to the routes described in the 2009 IOM report.

The following map shows the major hubs, transit points and direction of movement from Ethiopia and Somalia towards South Africa, while the text below elaborates on some of these routes.

<sup>18</sup> IOM, 2014. *Health Vulnerabilities Study of Mixed Migration Flows from the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region to South Africa. Executive Summary Findings from the formative state*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, p. 7. Available at: <[http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration\\_health\\_study\\_finalweb.pdf](http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_health_study_finalweb.pdf)> (last accessed 12/10/16).

<sup>19</sup> Horwood, 2009. *In Pursuit of the Southern Dream: Victims of Necessity. Assessment of the irregular movement of men from East Africa and the Horn to South Africa*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, p. 50. Available at: <<http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iomresearchassessment.pdf>> (last accessed 14/11/16).





Map 2: Mixed migration along the southern route from the Horn of Africa: routes, transit hubs and destinations

In many places, migrant smuggling is important to the local economy. In Moyale, on the border between Ethiopia and **Kenya**, 60 percent of the town’s income is said to come from this illicit trade.<sup>20</sup> The Kenyan capital, Nairobi, is also a major hub where migrants easily make contact with the key smuggling organisers. Some irregular migrants make it to Nairobi on their own and then search for smugglers, often known as brokers or agents, to take them to South Africa or to another destination.<sup>21</sup> Many irregular migrants in Nairobi end up in the neighbourhood of Eastleigh, or *Islii* as the Somalis call it.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Barasa and Fernandez, 2015. Kenya’s implementation of the Smuggling Protocol in response to the irregular movement of migrants from Ethiopia and Somalia. In *Law, Democracy and Development*, Vol. 19, 2015. Available at: <[http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S2077-49072015000100002](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2077-49072015000100002)> (last accessed 12/12/16).

<sup>21</sup> Kanko, Bailey and Teller, 2013. *Irregular migration: causes and consequences of young adult migration from Southern Ethiopia to South Africa*. Paper presented at the XXVII IUSSP International Population Conference 26-31 August, 2013. Busan, South Korea, p. 24. Available at: <[http://iussp.org/sites/default/files/event\\_call\\_for\\_papers/Irregular%20Migration%20from%20south%20Ethiopia%20to%20South%20Africa%20%5BTeshome,%20Bailey,%20Teller%5D.pdf](http://iussp.org/sites/default/files/event_call_for_papers/Irregular%20Migration%20from%20south%20Ethiopia%20to%20South%20Africa%20%5BTeshome,%20Bailey,%20Teller%5D.pdf)> (last accessed 15/10/16).

<sup>22</sup> Steinberg, 2015. *A Man of Good Hope. One Man’s Extraordinary Journey from Mogadishu to Tin Can Town*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2015.

As shown on the map, there are several routes from Nairobi: either directly south towards the Tanzanian border or east to Mombasa where migrants will then travel southwards along the coast to Tanzania. Some migrants take to the Indian Ocean in boats when the overland route is perceived to be unsafe.<sup>23</sup> In 2012, police in northern Mozambique reported that large numbers of Ethiopian and Somali migrants were arriving on smugglers' boats from Mombasa.<sup>24</sup> Up-to-date information is not available but reportedly this maritime route is still being used although RMMS research suggests this would only be by a minority of irregular migrants.

Although the majority of migrants travel overland, it appears that airports are becoming increasingly popular. In 2013, it was reported that Ethiopian migrants increasingly flew directly from Addis Ababa to Maputo, Mozambique as it was relatively easy to get a tourist visa. From Maputo, the migrants took the overland route to South Africa.<sup>25</sup> RMMS research has found the border between Mozambique and South Africa to be very permeable. Even where there is a wire fence, numerous holes have been cut by migrants, offering easy entry to South Africa. IOM reported in 2014 that a growing number of Ethiopian women with children were transiting alone through Mozambique by air.<sup>26</sup>

Data from the RMMS 4Mi project shows that migrants use various means of transportation along the 4,000-km route to South Africa, although almost all board buses and walk at some point.

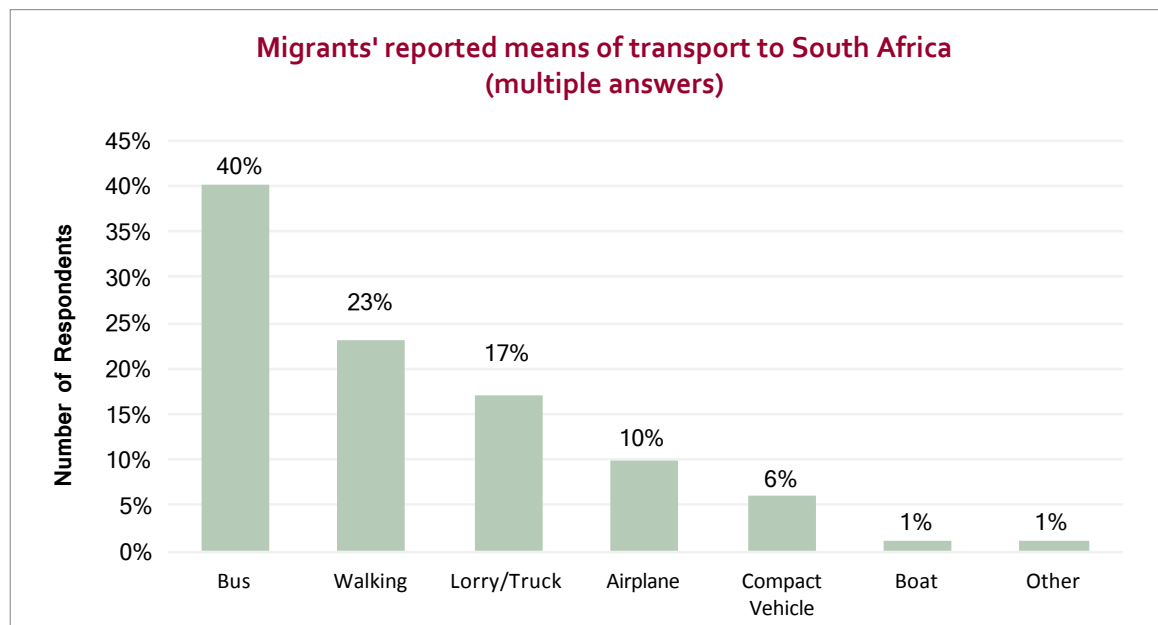


Figure 1: Migrants' reported means of transport to South Africa (multiple answers; N=398)  
Source: 4Mi (<http://4Mi.regionalmms.org/>)

In addition to travelling through coastal towns in **Tanzania** – as indicated on the map – it was reported in 2013 that some migrants had started using new routes in the Lake Victoria region. However, after drownings and accidents, it appears that lake crossings are less popular. Local authorities may also have stepped in to restrict this activity. Certainly few migrants reported using the lake or the sea in 2015 and 2016. In terms of cost, in 2012 it was estimated that smugglers in Tanzania charged between USD 100 and USD 250 per migrant to facilitate movement through the country.<sup>27</sup>

**Malawi** is also commonly used as a transit country. In 2010, one study estimated there were 279,000 irregular migrants in Malawi, with an average of 5,000 entering every year and hundreds being arrested by the authorities.<sup>28</sup> The 2009 IOM study found that, as well as using canoes, many people tried to swim at night across the Songwe river between Tanzania and Malawi, with some drowning and others disappearing. Previously, virtually all migrants entering northern Malawi spent some time at the Songwe transit camp but this is now closed and migrants tend to travel through northern

23 Kanko, Bailey and Teller, 2013. *Irregular migration: causes and consequences of young adult migration from Southern Ethiopia to South Africa. Paper presented at the XXVII IUSSP International Population Conference 26-31 August, 2013. Busan, South Korea, p. 24. Available at: <http://iussp.org/sites/default/files/event\_call\_for\_papers/Irregular%20Migration%20from%20south%20Ethiopia%20to%20South%20Africa%20%5BTeshome,%20Bailey,%20Teller%5D.pdf> (last accessed 15/10/16).*

24 IRIN, 2012. *Migration: Human smugglers profit as tragedies multiply. Available at: <http://www.irinnews.org/report/95845/migration-human-smugglers-profit-as-tragedies-multiply> (last accessed: 05/09/16).*

25 Kanko, Bailey and Teller, 2013. *Irregular migration: causes and consequences of young adult migration from Southern Ethiopia to South Africa. Paper presented at the XXVII IUSSP International Population Conference 26-31 August, 2013. Busan, South Korea, p. 25. Available at: <http://iussp.org/sites/default/files/event\_call\_for\_papers/Irregular%20Migration%20from%20south%20Ethiopia%20to%20South%20Africa%20%5BTeshome,%20Bailey,%20Teller%5D.pdf> (last accessed 15/10/16).*

26 IOM, 2014. *Health vulnerabilities study of mixed migration flows from the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region to Southern Africa. Geneva: International Organization for Migration. Available at: <http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration\_health\_study\_finalweb.pdf> (last accessed 12/10/16).*

27 RMMS, 2012. *Regional Mixed Migration Monthly Summary August 2012. Available at: <http://regionalmms.org/monthlysummary/RMMS\_monthly\_summary\_August\_2012....pdf> (last accessed: 28/10/16).*

28 Nkhoma, 2012. *Transnational threats: The problem of illegal immigration in northern Malawi. Southern African Peace and Security. Studies, Vol. 1, No 2, p. 39*

Malawi towards Dzaleka camp, just outside the capital Lilongwe. Dzaleka, which is widely used as a rest stop, remains one of the main transit hubs in mixed migration flows to South Africa.<sup>29</sup>

Findings from 4Mi in 2015 showed that some Somalis were bypassing Kenya and Tanzania on the way to South Africa, with most travelling by air or sea to Mozambique. This trend may be increasing. In 2014, 11 percent of migrants from the Horn did not pass through Kenya/Tanzania, compared to only 1.6 percent before 2013. The trip to Mozambique cost between USD 2,500 and USD 3,500, and was believed to be safer than other routes, with zero deaths reported and just 5 percent of interviewed migrants saying they knew of someone who had disappeared.

RMMS/4Mi research in early 2015 found that only 22 percent of migrants travelled from Tanzania through Malawi, with 49 percent going straight into **Zambia** and 29 percent to Mozambique. In 2008/9 the rate of those transiting through Malawi was 60 percent or more. This decline could be due to known risks associated with the route; according to RMMS/4Mi findings, 16.7 percent of migrants reported deaths in their group, 45 percent reported disappearances, 81.7 percent reported being detained, and 15 percent said they had experienced or witnessed labour or sexual exploitation.

**Mozambique** has numerous transport corridors linking landlocked countries – such as Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi – to major ports and to South Africa. There are 53 official border stations.

In 2013, IOM reported a large increase in the number of irregular migrants from Ethiopia and Somalia in Mozambique.<sup>30</sup> Although some Somalis and Ethiopians seek asylum in Mozambique, most try to move on to South Africa through Ressano Garcia, the main border town between the two countries.<sup>31</sup> Thousands of people cross the border here every day, mostly labourers from Mozambique responding to informal seasonal demand in South Africa.<sup>32</sup> Some Somalis and Ethiopians also travel through Mozambique's Tete region to get to Zimbabwe and continue to South Africa from there.<sup>33</sup>

The vast majority of irregular and smuggled migrants enter South Africa through **Zimbabwe**.<sup>34</sup> RMMS research in 2015 indicated that 100 percent of those who travelled from Tanzania to Mozambique, then entered Zimbabwe before crossing into South Africa. As with the Malawi route, this is more dangerous than the Zambia-Zimbabwe-South Africa route. On this route, 31 percent of migrants reported deaths in their group, 34 percent reported disappearances and 23 percent had experienced or witnessed some form of labour or sexual exploitation.

Within Zimbabwe, the Tongogara refugee camp and Nyamapanda reception centre are important transit points, where migrants obtain services, generate income and make arrangements for the next stage of the trip.<sup>35</sup> Most of the people who are smuggled across the Limpopo River around Beitbridge are from Zimbabwe itself, although Horn of Africa migrants use this route as well.<sup>36</sup> In 2015, 4Mi data showed this was the most travelled route, with 47 per cent coming through Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe before crossing into South Africa. Furthermore, 53 percent of the migrants who travelled in 2014 used this route, compared to 39 percent over 2012/13, suggesting the route's popularity has increased. This could be due to the fact that it is safer, with fewer migrants reporting deaths, disappearances, detention or labour/sexual exploitation, relative to other routes.

Generally, and not surprisingly, research has shown that most of the migrants travelling the southern route intend to reach **South Africa**. Recent 4Mi data confirms this. Almost all migrants interviewed in South Africa said the country was their final destination, even though some migrants use it as a springboard to the United States, Australia or Europe.

29 IOM, 2014. *Health Vulnerabilities Study of Mixed Migration Flows from the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region to South Africa. Executive Summary Findings from the formative state*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, p. 15. Available at: <[http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration\\_health\\_study\\_finalweb.pdf](http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_health_study_finalweb.pdf)> (last accessed 12/10/16).

30 IOM, 2013. *Mozambique Country Profile*. Available at: <<https://www.iom.int/cms/Mozambique-Country-Profile>> (last accessed: 05/11/16).

31 Ibid.; IOM, 2014. *Health Vulnerabilities Study of Mixed Migration Flows from the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region to South Africa. Executive Summary Findings from the formative state*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, p. 16. Available at: <[http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration\\_health\\_study\\_finalweb.pdf](http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_health_study_finalweb.pdf)> (last accessed 12/10/16).

32 Verdasco, 2013. *Strengthening Child Protection Systems for Unaccompanied Migrant Children in Mozambique. A case study of the border town of Ressano Garcia, Innocenti Worker Paper, No.2013-13*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research, p. 19.

33 IOM, 2014. *Health Vulnerabilities Study of Mixed Migration Flows from the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region to South Africa. Executive Summary Findings from the formative state*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, p. 16. Available at: <[http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration\\_health\\_study\\_finalweb.pdf](http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_health_study_finalweb.pdf)> (last accessed 12/10/16).

34 Araia and Monson, 2009. *South Africa's smugglers' Borderland*. In *Forced Migration Review*, 44, September 2013. Protracted displacement. Oxford: University of Oxford, Refugee Studies Centre, p. 68.

35 IOM, 2014. *Health Vulnerabilities Study of Mixed Migration Flows from the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region to South Africa. Executive Summary Findings from the formative state*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, p. 11. Available at: <[http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration\\_health\\_study\\_finalweb.pdf](http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_health_study_finalweb.pdf)> (last accessed 12/10/16).

36 FMSP, 2009. *Report on Human Smuggling across the South Africa/Zimbabwe Border*. MRMP Occasional Report March 2009. Johannesburg: Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand, p. 49. Available at: <<http://www.lhr.org.za/sites/lhr.org.za/files/FMSP%20Smuggling%20Report%202009.pdf>> (last accessed 11/12/16).

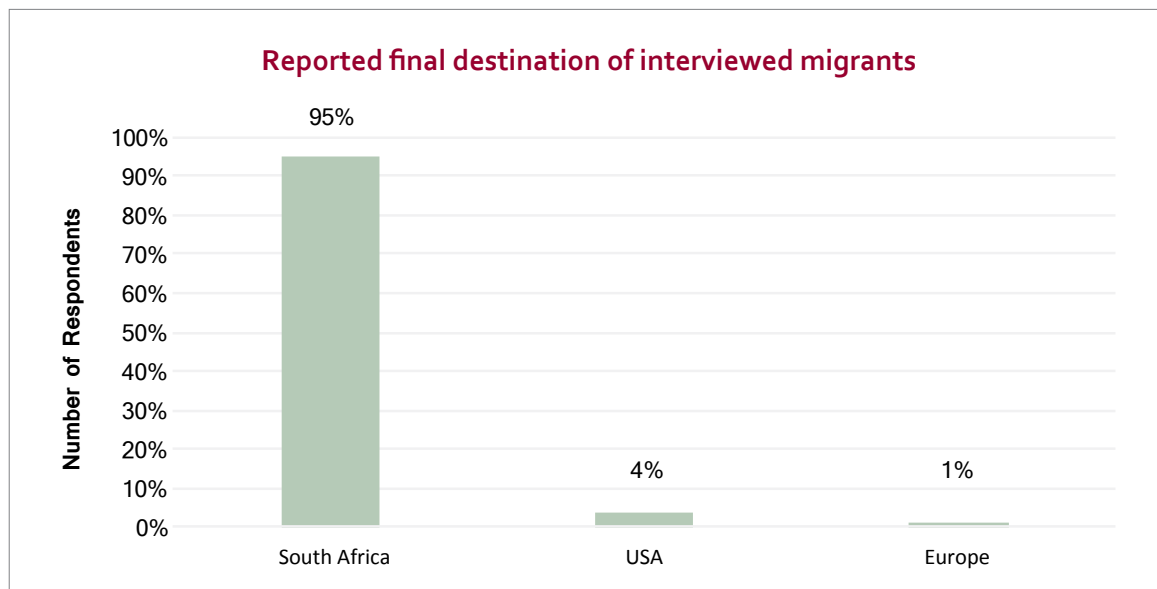


Figure 2: Reported final destination of interviewed migrants (N=398)  
 Source: 4Mi (<http://4mi.regionalmms.org/>)

It is estimated that 2–5 million immigrants live in South Africa, with the majority coming from neighbouring countries, particularly Zimbabwe and Mozambique.<sup>37</sup> However, it has become increasingly difficult to enter South Africa in recent years. South Africa has one of the most advanced border security capabilities in Africa. The country deploys military personnel along its frontiers, with a special focus on the borders with Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland, to keep irregular migrants and cross-border criminals out. Units are deployed to Limpopo (Pont Drift, Musina and Madimbo), Mpumalanga (Sand River, Macadamia and Zonstraal), KwaZulu-Natal (Ndumaland, Pongola), the Free State (Ladybrand and Fouriesburg) and the Eastern Cape (Maluti). According to South Africa’s Defence Department, 20,613 irregular migrants were prevented from entering South Africa in 2010/11, more than 21,244 were apprehended in 2012/2013, while 12,151 foreigners were apprehended in 2014/15.<sup>38</sup>

In most cases those prevented from entering are citizens of other southern African countries. Apart from those detained and deported along the southern route, RMMS has not been informed of groups of Ethiopians or Somalis being actively prevented from entering South Africa. If they are apprehended, it appears there are few situations that informal payments cannot resolve, particularly if the migrants are with smugglers who know how to work the system.

Once in South Africa, a large number of migrants claim asylum. In 2015, South Africa received 62,200 asylum applications, of which over 10,000 were from Ethiopians.<sup>39</sup> As discussed above, the government is seeking to revamp its asylum regime, citing the need to better manage regional migration and curb abuse by ‘economic migrants’ who use the system to regularise their stay in the country.<sup>40</sup> The proposed new policies mainly target irregular labour migration and the use of the legal loophole associated with asylum applications.

37 RMMS, 2015. *A Certain Catalyst: An overview of the (mixed) migration and development debate with special focus on the Horn of Africa region*. Nairobi: Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat. Available at: <[http://regionalmms.org/images/ResearchInitiatives/A\\_Certain\\_Catalyst\\_S9\\_Nov\\_2015.pdf](http://regionalmms.org/images/ResearchInitiatives/A_Certain_Catalyst_S9_Nov_2015.pdf)> (last accessed 11/10/16).

38 RSA Department of Defence, 2014. *Annual Report FY 2012/2013*. Pretoria: Republic of South Africa, Department of Defence. Available at: <<http://www.dod.mil.za/documents/annualreports/DoD%20Annual%20Report%202014.pdf>> (last accessed 11/10/16). RSA Department of Defence, 2015. *Annual Report FY 2014/2015*. Pretoria: Republic of South Africa, Department of Defence. Available at: <<http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/DoD-annual-report-2014-15.pdf>> (last accessed 11/10/16).

39 UNHCR, 2016. *Global forced displacement hits record high*. Available at: <<http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>> (last accessed: 12/10/16).

40 RMMS, 2016. *Courting commotion? Changing migration dynamics on the southern route to South Africa*. Available at: <<http://regionalmms.org/index.php/research-publications/feature-articles/item/48-courting-commotion-changing-migration-dynamics-on-the-s>> (last accessed 12/10/16).

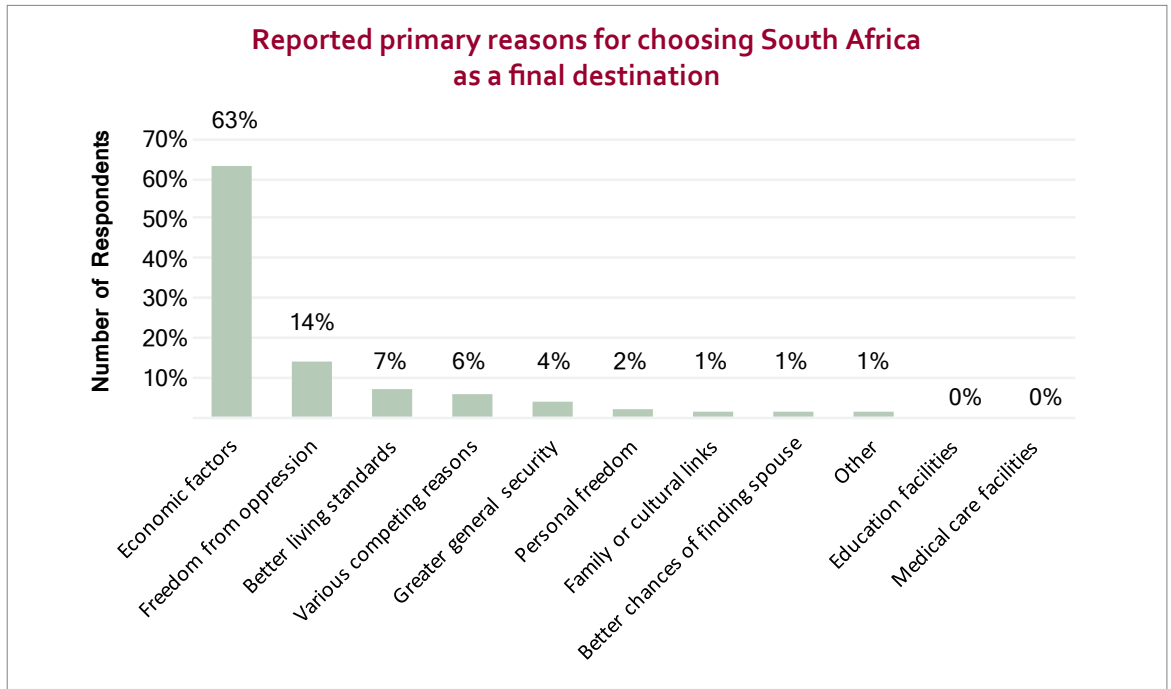


Figure 3: Reported primary reasons for choosing South Africa as a final destination (N=398)  
 Source: 4Mi (<http://4Mi.regionalmms.org/>)

4Mi data shows that, even though migrants cite several reasons for choosing South Africa, economic factors dominate. The data also suggests that many migrants do indeed use the asylum system to regularise their stay. Just over 98 percent of those interviewed had applied for asylum or were planning to do so.

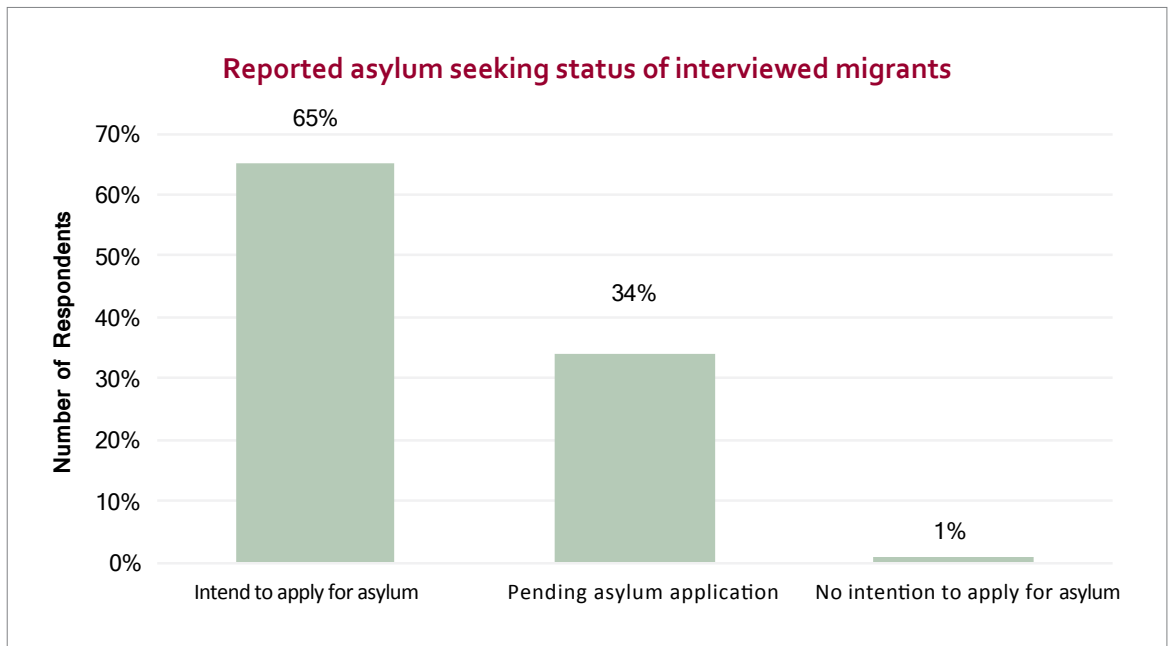


Figure 4: Reported asylum seeking status of interviewed migrants (N=398)  
 Source: 4Mi (<http://4Mi.regionalmms.org/>)

As mentioned previously, the measures proposed in the Green Paper on International Migration will likely reduce the attraction of South Africa as a destination, particularly among Ethiopian migrants and asylum seekers.<sup>41</sup>

**The profile of Ethiopians and Somalis in mixed migration flows along the southern route**

Previous research concluded that the migrating population of Ethiopia and Somalia mainly comprises young men aged 18–35. Although the sample of migrants interviewed through 4Mi in South Africa is not representative, the profile of those interviewed corresponds with these general findings. Within the sample, the average age was 27, with 285 males and 112 females.

<sup>41</sup> RSA Department of Home Affairs, 2016. Green Paper on International Migration. Available at: <<http://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/notices/815-green-paper-on-international-migration>> (last accessed 16/10/16).

In 2014, IOM reported that a growing number of female migrants were travelling among groups of Somali migrants and that some Ethiopian women with children were transiting alone through Mozambique by air. Evidence also suggested that unaccompanied minors were increasingly undertaking this journey.<sup>42</sup> In 2013, IOM had already noted a rise in children making these perilous journeys without adult companionship.<sup>43</sup>

The primary reasons for leaving are political and economic.

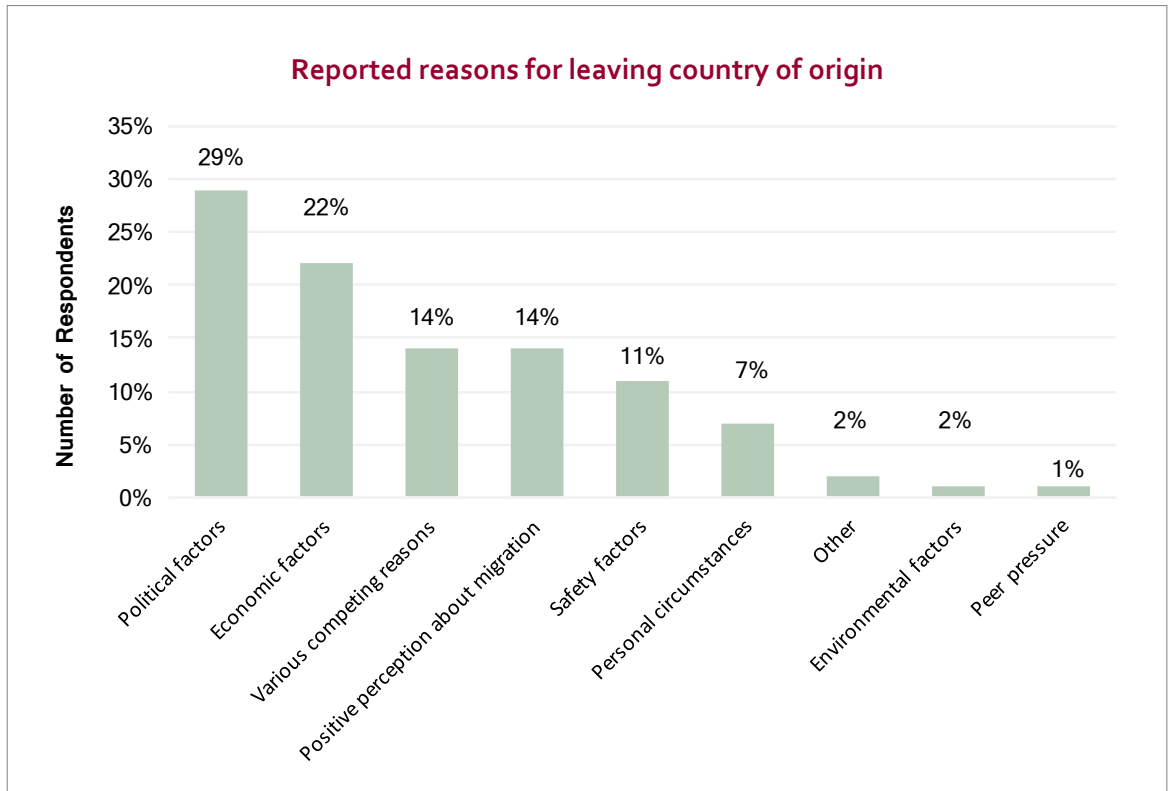


Figure 5: Reported reasons for leaving country of origin (N=398)  
 Source: 4Mi (<http://4mi.regionalmms.org/>)

<sup>42</sup> IOM, 2014. Health vulnerabilities study of mixed migration flows from the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region to Southern Africa. Geneva: International Organization for Migration. Available at: <[http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration\\_health\\_study\\_finalweb.pdf](http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_health_study_finalweb.pdf)> (last accessed 12/10/16).

<sup>43</sup> IOM, 2013. Regional strategy for Southern Africa 2014-2016. Pretoria: International Organization for Migration, p. 6. Available at: <<https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/country/docs/AUP00579-RO-Pretoria-Regional-Strategy.pdf>> (last accessed 15/11/2016).

# 2.

## Smuggling and trafficking along the southern route

### Migrant smuggling along the southern route

Two IOM studies in 2014, as well as more recent data from the RMMS 4Mi project, show that the majority of Ethiopian and Somali migrants in mixed flows use a smuggler or broker to facilitate parts of their journey along the southern route.<sup>44</sup> While the first leg of the journey is mostly facilitated by friends or family, smugglers are crucial on subsequent stretches. As illustrated below, 97 percent of migrants said they had used a smuggler along the route, and in interviews conducted in early 2015, all migrants interviewed in several areas in South Africa said they had used smugglers for part or all of their journeys.

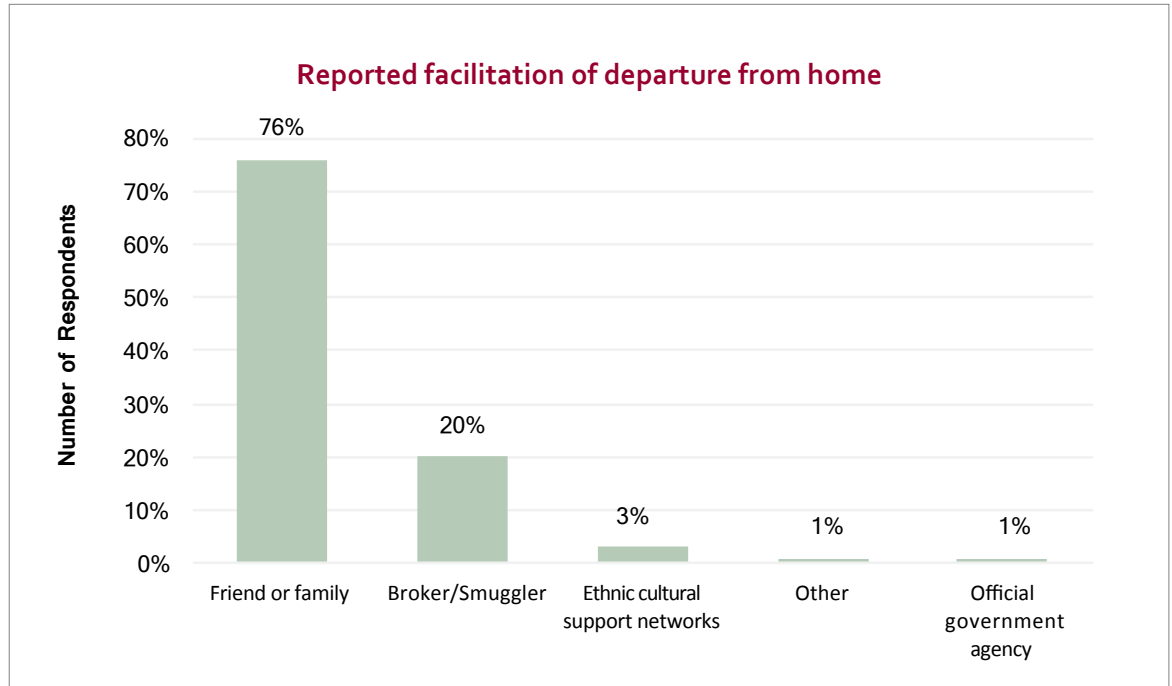


Figure 6: Reported facilitation of departure from home (N=398)  
 Source: 4Mi (<http://4Mi.regionalmms.org/>)

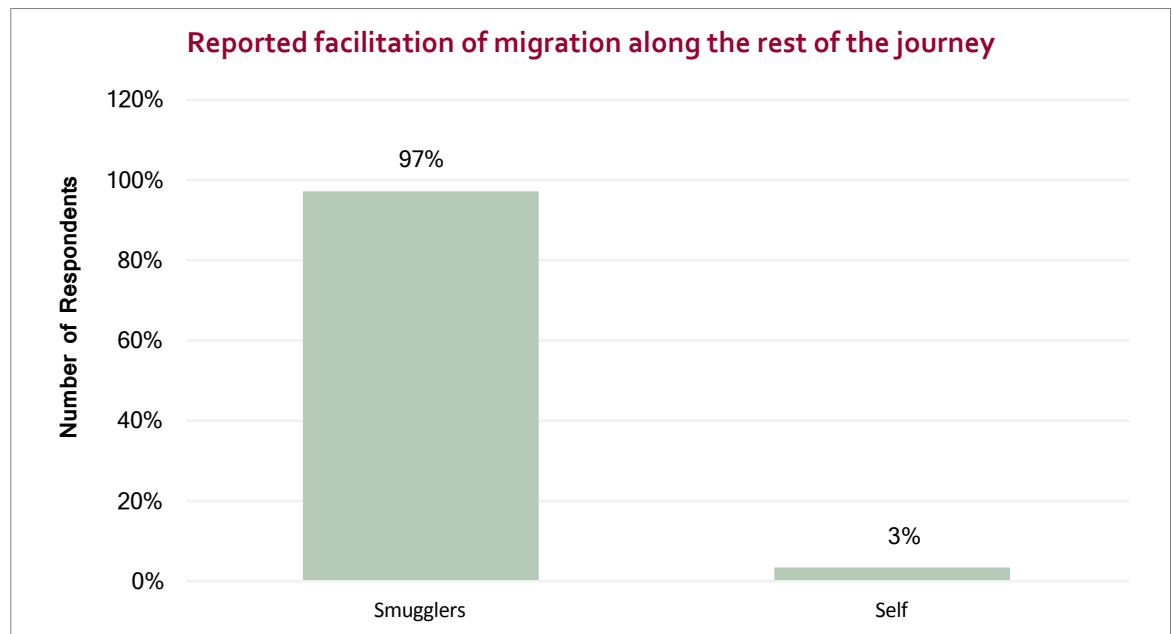


Figure 7: Reported Facilitation of Migration along the Rest of the Journey (N=398)  
 Source: 4Mi (<http://4Mi.regionalmms.org/>)

<sup>44</sup> IOM, 2014. Health vulnerabilities study of mixed migration flows from the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region to Southern Africa. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, p. 53. Available at: <[http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration\\_health\\_study\\_finalweb.pdf](http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_health_study_finalweb.pdf)> (last accessed 12/10/16); RMMS 4Mi (<http://4Mi.regionalmms.org/>).

The fact that most of the 20,000 migrants and asylum seekers from the Horn of Africa in 2008/2009 and the estimated 14-16,000 for 2015 and 2016 used a smuggler to get to South Africa illustrates the scale of migrant smuggling. However, many of the migrants from countries within the southern African region most likely make their own way into South Africa, without depending on smugglers. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), South Africa investigated more than 4,500 criminal cases related to migrant smuggling between 2012 and 2016. In the same period, 350,000 migrants were deported from South Africa but only 7,000 of those were from outside the region. According to the UNODC, it is unknown how many of the 350,000 were smuggled into South Africa.<sup>45</sup>

**Costs and duration**

In the 2009 IOM study, migrants reported paying between USD 1,000 and USD 3,000 per person for the journey from the Horn of Africa to South Africa. It was noted, however, that many migrants were also robbed en route, or incurred extraneous costs through bribing police, prison officials and immigration officers. The final cost was thus much higher than the price originally agreed.<sup>46</sup> More recent estimates of the smuggling costs for the journey south differ but overall they seem to be higher than in 2009.<sup>47</sup> In 2013 IOM estimated the average cost at USD 2,500, rising sometimes to as much as USD 5,000 for the route through Zambia and Mozambique.<sup>48</sup>

Compared to figures from 2009 and 2013, 4Mi data indicates that costs have risen again. In 2015 and 2016, migrants in South Africa reported paying an average of USD 3,372, or a median of USD 3,000, for the journey from the Horn of Africa, an increase in line with the rise in costs seen between 2009 and 2013 (from an average of USD 2,000 to USD 2,500). If these figures are correct, the average costs of the trip from the Horn of Africa to South Africa increased by almost 69 percent between 2009 and 2016.

Consequently, if in 2015 and 2016 the estimated number of smuggled migrants from the Horn making it to South Africa was in the estimated range of 13,400–14,050, then the smuggling business was worth at least between USD 45-47 million. Although these estimates are based on a number of assumptions, this sum gives an indication of the amount of money that is potentially being made along the southern route, not including additional money extracted through detention, kidnapping and other means. Over half of those interviewed in the last two years through 4Mi said they had to make “additional payments” mainly to police, immigration officials and smugglers (see Figure 10 below). Most migrants finance their journeys with help from family/friends, by using personal savings or by selling property.<sup>49</sup>

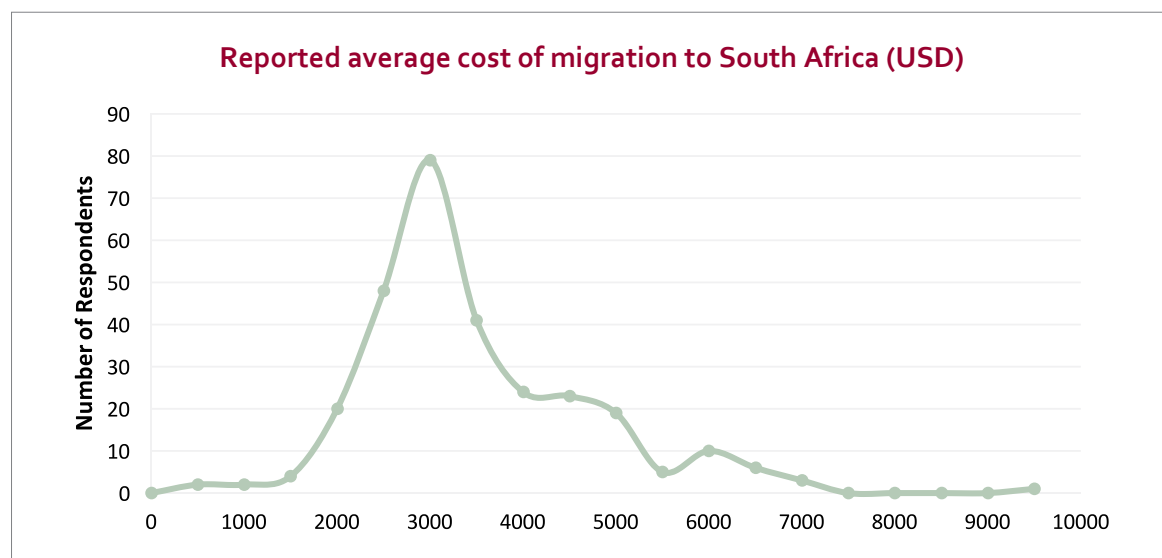


Figure 8: Reported average cost of migration to South Africa (USD) (N=398)  
 Source: 4Mi (<http://4mi.regionalmms.org/>)

45 UNODC, 2016. *Southern Africa: a regional response to migrant smuggling*. Available at: <[https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2016/June/southern-africa\\_a-regional-response-to-migrant-smuggling.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2016/June/southern-africa_a-regional-response-to-migrant-smuggling.html)> (last accessed 17/10/16).

46 Horwood, 2009. In *Pursuit of the Southern Dream: Victims of Necessity. Assessment of the irregular movement of men from East Africa and the Horn to South Africa*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, p. 115. Available at: <<http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iomresearchassessment.pdf>> (last accessed 14/11/16).

47 Kanko, Bailey and Teller, 2013. *Irregular migration: causes and consequences of young adult migration from Southern Ethiopia to South Africa*. Paper presented at the XXVII IUSSP International Population Conference 26-31 August, 2013. Busan, South Korea, p. 26. Available at: <[http://iussp.org/sites/default/files/event\\_call\\_for\\_papers/Irregular%20Migration%20from%20south%20Ethiopia%20to%20South%20Africa%20%5BTeshome,%20Bailey,%20Teller%5D.pdf](http://iussp.org/sites/default/files/event_call_for_papers/Irregular%20Migration%20from%20south%20Ethiopia%20to%20South%20Africa%20%5BTeshome,%20Bailey,%20Teller%5D.pdf)> (last accessed 15/10/16).

48 UNOCHA, 2014. *Mixed Migration in Southern Africa. Humanitarian Bulletin Southern Africa. Issue 13, January 2014*. Pretoria: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Available at: <[http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA\\_ROSA\\_Humanitarian\\_Bulletin\\_Jan\\_2014.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA_ROSA_Humanitarian_Bulletin_Jan_2014.pdf)> (last accessed 22/11/2016).

49 RMMS, 2016. *Courting commotion? Changing migration dynamics on the southern route to South Africa*. Available at: <<http://regionalmms.org/index.php/research-publications/feature-articles/item/48-courting-commotion-changing-migration-dynamics-on-the-s>> (last accessed 05/11/16).



In 2013, IOM concluded that the process of facilitating migrant journeys had become more efficient and organised. Transit time in 2013 was estimated at approximately six weeks, on average, compared to eight weeks in 2009.<sup>50</sup>

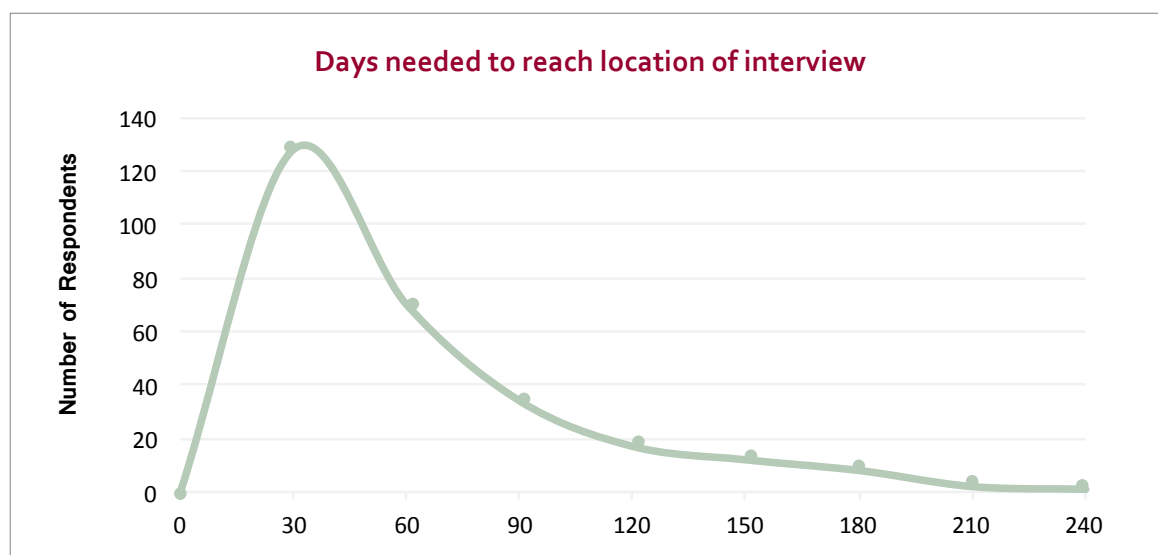


Figure 9: Days needed to reach location of interview (N=398)  
Source: 4Mi (<http://4Mi.regionalmms.org/>)

The average duration of the journey to South Africa, reported by 4Mi respondents in 2015 and 2016, was 48 days, or just under 7 weeks, within the range of previous findings.

### Smuggling routes, networks and operations

Migrants have little influence over which routes they take, with smugglers choosing the route based on perceptions of safety, levels of violence, ease of transfer to the next stop and levels of corruption likely to be encountered.<sup>51</sup> Smugglers are adaptive and flexible and frequently change their routes and methods in response to, for example, changing border protocols. In 2012, tighter border controls in Malawi drove migrants onto Lake Malawi to cross from Tanzania.<sup>52</sup> However, after 47 migrants from the Horn of Africa drowned on Lake Malawi in 2012,<sup>53</sup> smugglers altered their routes and the United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, noted that the number of those arriving in Mozambique via Lake Malawi had decreased. Meanwhile the number of Horn of Africa migrants transiting through Malawi overland increased, illustrating the ability of smugglers to react quickly to prevailing conditions as they seek to evade detection and reduce their costs, mainly relating to bribes and additional logistics.<sup>54</sup> In 2013, it was reported that smuggled migrants, who previously used boats along Lake Malawi, started crossing through Nyika National Park and then transiting through Zambia, Mozambique or Zimbabwe on their way to South Africa.<sup>55</sup>

IOM and RMMS findings suggest there are no large-scale, multinational smuggling organisations operating along the whole route from the Horn of Africa to South Africa, although seasoned gangs and criminals in individual countries may now be getting involved. The smuggling networks along this route are characterized by multiple actors, who behave independently or in loose affiliation, without a strong hierarchy.<sup>56</sup> Migrants generally only know the smugglers who take them on the first leg of their journey. Thereafter, they may travel alone for part of the way or be passed from one smuggler to another along networks described as "informal chains" or "loose alliances". These differ from the more organised networks typical of human trafficking.<sup>57</sup> For example, in Ethiopia there are smugglers specifically operating the southern route into Kenya. Between mid-2014 and mid-2015, the Federal Police in Ethiopia reportedly arrested more than 200 people for alleged involvement in smuggling and trafficking of Ethiopians into Kenya.<sup>58</sup>

50 UNOCHA, 2014. *Mixed Migration in Southern Africa. Humanitarian Bulletin Southern Africa. Issue 13, January 2014.* Pretoria: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Available at: <[http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA\\_ROSA\\_Humanitarian\\_Bulletin\\_Jan\\_2014.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA_ROSA_Humanitarian_Bulletin_Jan_2014.pdf)> (last accessed 22/11/2016).

51 *Ibid.*

52 Nkhoma, 2012. *Transnational threats: The problem of illegal immigration in northern Malawi.* *Southern African Peace and Security. Studies, Vol. 1, No 2, p. 39.*

53 BBC, 2012. *Migrants drown in Lake Malawi in Karonga district.* Available at: <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-18531470>> (last accessed 17/11/16).

54 IRIN, 2012. *Migration: Human smugglers profit as tragedies multiply.* Available at: <<http://www.irinnews.org/report/95845/migration-human-smugglers-profit-as-tragedies-multiply>> (last accessed 18/11/16).

55 RMMS, 2013. *Regional Mixed Migration Monthly Summary January 2013.* Available at: <[http://regionalmms.org/monthlysummary/RMMS\\_Monthly\\_Summary\\_January\\_2013\\_final.pdf](http://regionalmms.org/monthlysummary/RMMS_Monthly_Summary_January_2013_final.pdf)> (last accessed 19/11/16).

56 Kanko, Bailey and Teller, 2013. *Irregular migration: causes and consequences of young adult migration from Southern Ethiopia to South Africa. Paper presented at the XXVII IUSSP International Population Conference 26-31 August, 2013. Busan, South Korea, p. 21.* Available at: <[http://iussp.org/sites/default/files/event\\_call\\_for\\_papers/Irregular%20Migration%20from%20south%20Ethiopia%20to%20South%20Africa%20%5BTeshome,%20Bailey,%20Teller%5D.pdf](http://iussp.org/sites/default/files/event_call_for_papers/Irregular%20Migration%20from%20south%20Ethiopia%20to%20South%20Africa%20%5BTeshome,%20Bailey,%20Teller%5D.pdf)> (last accessed 15/10/16).

57 IRIN, 2014. *On the trail of migrant smugglers.* Available at: <<http://www.irinnews.org/report/99430/on-the-trail-of-migrant-smugglers>> (last accessed 19/11/16).

58 Sahan Foundation and IGAD Security Sector Program (ISSP), 2016. *Human Trafficking and Smuggling on the Horn of Africa – Central Mediterranean Route.* Nairobi: Sahan, p. 13. Available at: <[https://www.igad.int/attachments/1284\\_ISSP%20Sahan%20HST%20Report%20%2018ii2016%20FINAL%20FINAL.pdf](https://www.igad.int/attachments/1284_ISSP%20Sahan%20HST%20Report%20%2018ii2016%20FINAL%20FINAL.pdf)> (last accessed 13/12/16).

Typically brokers and smugglers arrange the logistics, procure guides, assist with bribing officials and organize 'safe houses' in cities, towns and refugee camps.<sup>59</sup> In 2014, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reported that some smugglers provide migrants with a 'code book' containing the phone numbers of other smugglers or the location of meeting points with other facilitators. Brokers and smugglers in one country often collaborate with other smugglers in the same country or in the next country. But relations are not always smooth. The 2009 IOM report described fights between smugglers competing for migrants.

IOM research in 2014 concluded that corruption along transit routes was institutionalised and considered part of the smuggling enterprise. Border guards and police at checkpoints are routinely bribed to facilitate the passage of undocumented migrants.<sup>60</sup> In 2013, Kenyan authorities reportedly investigated the alleged involvement of a senior police officer in a smuggling racket along the Nairobi-Arusha (Tanzania) highway in the south. Somali migrants reportedly had to pay between USD 800 and USD 1,200 for safe passage in lorries across the border.<sup>61</sup>

Smugglers are also hired for the last stretch of the journey into South Africa. Research by the University of the Witwatersrand in 2009 found that a lack of clear information about South African immigration policy and border procedures, together with misinformation spread by smugglers, encouraged many migrants – including those with legitimate claims for asylum – to enter South Africa informally or to pay to obtain asylum permits, to which they were entitled free of charge.<sup>62</sup> The same research estimated that of those who crossed the Zimbabwe border into South Africa, over a fifth were smuggled.<sup>63</sup> Smuggling across this border has been described as a relatively sophisticated industry with a network of service providers and officials, organised primarily by a small number of key players operating with distinct tactics, routines and schedules.<sup>64</sup> Given the intensified border controls and the proposed measures to make it more difficult to apply for asylum, it could be expected that more migrants will resort to paying smugglers to get into South Africa.

### Human trafficking along the southern route

According to the UNODC's 2014 Global Trafficking in Persons report, domestic trafficking is much more common than international trafficking in sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for more than three quarters of detected victims. Cross-border trafficking usually covers a relatively small distance inside a particular region, so that, for example, East African trafficking victims are mainly detected in other East African countries.<sup>65</sup>

Within South Africa and beyond, the debate concerning the prevalence of human trafficking continues. Several researchers and academics question the notion – advocated by some international organisations and donors – that trafficking to and from South Africa is a major problem. Over the years, they have questioned the resources devoted to this issue by donor states, arguing that the attention the issue receives in policy prioritisation and media reporting is disproportionate to the scale of the problem.<sup>66</sup>

Researchers point out that IOM assisted only 306 victims of trafficking in southern Africa from January 2004–January 2010 or, on average, 51 cases per year for the whole of the region.<sup>67</sup> This is despite extensive publicity and a dedicated hotline, as well as training and research carried out as part of IOM's Southern African Counter-Trafficking Assistance Programme (SACTAP). It may be noted that the 2009 IOM paper was originally proposed as an analysis of trafficking from the Horn to southern Africa but ultimately focused on smuggling as no evidence of human trafficking was found along the southern route. The study noted, however, that smuggling and trafficking share many of the same abusive characteristics and there is often a fine line between activities defined as smuggling and those defined as trafficking.<sup>68</sup>

59 UNOCHA, 2014. *Mixed Migration in Southern Africa. Humanitarian Bulletin Southern Africa. Issue 13, January 2014.* Pretoria: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Available at: <[http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA\\_ROSA\\_Humanitarian\\_Bulletin\\_Jan\\_2014.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA_ROSA_Humanitarian_Bulletin_Jan_2014.pdf)> (last accessed 22/11/2016).

60 IOM, 2014. *Health vulnerabilities study of mixed migration flows from the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region to Southern Africa.* Geneva: International Organization for Migration, p. 54. Available at: <[http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration\\_health\\_study\\_finalweb.pdf](http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_health_study_finalweb.pdf)> (last accessed 12/10/16).

61 RMMS, 2013. *Regional Mixed Migration Monthly Summary December 2013.* Available at: <[http://regionalmms.org/monthlysummary/December\\_2013\\_RMMS\\_Monthly\\_Summary.pdf](http://regionalmms.org/monthlysummary/December_2013_RMMS_Monthly_Summary.pdf)> (last accessed 20/11/16).

62 FMSP, 2009. *Report on Human Smuggling across the South Africa/Zimbabwe Border. MRMP Occasional Report March 2009.* Johannesburg: Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand, p. 5. Available at: <<http://www.lhr.org.za/sites/lhr.org.za/files/FMSP%20Smuggling%20Report%202009.pdf>> (last accessed 11/12/16).

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 UNODC, 2014. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014.* Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, p. 83. Available at: [http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/GLOTIP\\_2014\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/GLOTIP_2014_full_report.pdf) (last accessed 29/11/16).

66 ACMS, 2014. *Understanding human trafficking. Issue Brief Nr. 10, May 2014.* University of the Witwatersrand. Johannesburg: African Centre for Migration and Society. Available at: <<http://www.migration.org.za/uploads/docs/issue-brief-10.pdf>> (last accessed 29/11/16). Long and Crisp, 2011. *In harms way: the irregular movement of migrants to Southern Africa from the Horn and Great Lakes regions. New issues in refugee research, research paper no. 200.* Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, p. 20.

67 Richter and Monson, 2010. *Human Trafficking & Migration. Migration Issue Brief 4. Forced Migration Studies Programme (FMSP).* Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand. However, according to an interview with an IOM expert for this paper, assistance to victims of trafficking was not the focus of their work in RSA at that time so judging their success or failure by these figures would be unrepresentative of their work and the scale of the problem. Vigneswaran, 2012. *Methodological Debates in Human Rights Research: A Case Study of Human Trafficking in South Africa. MMG Working Paper 12-07.* Göttingen: Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, p. 18.

68 Horwood, 2009. *In Pursuit of the Southern Dream: Victims of Necessity. Assessment of the irregular movement of men from East Africa and the Horn to South Africa.* Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2009, p. 5. Available at: <<http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iomresearchassessment.pdf>> (last accessed 14/11/16).

Researchers also cite the widely reported claim that 40,000–100,000 sex workers would be trafficked into South Africa during the 2010 World Cup as another example of the exaggeration of the scale of the trafficking problem. No increase in the supply of, or demand for, sex work during the World Cup was registered, and the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development did not find one case of trafficking during the tournament.<sup>69</sup>

Despite the absence of systematic research into the prevalence or patterns of trafficking into South Africa or the surrounding region, it is unlikely that there are extensive cross-border human trafficking networks from the Horn of Africa along the route to southern Africa.<sup>70</sup> A study by the University of the Witwatersrand concluded in 2009 that migrant smuggling on the Zimbabwean-South African border was not connected to human trafficking.<sup>71</sup>

Cross-border human trafficking in southern Africa mainly involves trafficking within the region, for example the trafficking of girls and boys from Malawi and Mozambique to South Africa. The 2016 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report by the US Department of State includes few references to trafficking of East Africans along the southern route. We have listed some of these examples, all taken from the US State Department report unless otherwise referenced, of people being trafficked on the southern route:<sup>72</sup>

- Ethiopians attempting irregular migration to South Africa, via **Kenya** and **Tanzania**, are vulnerable to trafficking in onward destinations. During 2015, the Ethiopian government, in partnership with international organisations and NGOs, identified 3,163 victims of trafficking, the majority of whom were intercepted before departing for South Africa and the Gulf States. A March 2015 investigation of two Ethiopian smugglers, suspected of moving 38,000 Ethiopians, potentially including trafficking victims, to South Africa and the Middle East, remains open.<sup>73</sup>
- Migrants from countries neighbouring **Tanzania** transited voluntarily through Tanzania before being forced into domestic service or prostitution in South Africa, Europe and the Middle East. Tanzanian officials detained a large number of African migrants for immigration offences during 2015, but they did not screen for trafficking.
- **Malawi** is a source country for men, women and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. To a lesser extent, it is also a destination country for men, women and children from Zambia, Mozambique, the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa, who are subjected to labour and sex trafficking, and a transit country for people from these countries who are subsequently exploited in South Africa.
- The TIP report noted that during 2014 an increasing number of Ethiopians, Somalis and Egyptians arrived in **Zambia** for unknown purposes. Ugandan, Somali and Zambian nationals, including children, were intercepted while being smuggled through Zambia; it was believed that some might become victims of trafficking upon reaching South Africa.<sup>74</sup> In 2016, the State Department reported that potential trafficking victims from Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Syria were identified in Zambia and that some migrants who transited Zambia were subjected to forced labour in the construction industry in South Africa by local criminal groups.
- Men, women and children, predominantly from East Africa, are transported through **Zimbabwe** to South Africa and some of these migrants are trafficking victims. Refugees from Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo reportedly travel from Zimbabwe's Tongogara refugee camp to the capital Harare, where they are exploited and, in some cases, forced into prostitution. Some migrants are transferred to criminal gangs and subjected to abuse, including forced prostitution in Musina, Pretoria, Johannesburg or Durban. Some Zimbabwean men, women, and children in South Africa are forced to work without pay for months on farms, on construction sites, in factories, mines and other businesses. According to the 2014 TIP report, trafficking cartels operate at the Nyamapanda border post in northern Zimbabwe and in the Tongogara camp, where they lure refugees to pay upwards of USD 200 with promises of jobs in Harare. Upon arrival in the Zimbabwean capital, the refugees are either dumped or tricked into working in shops or brothels.<sup>75</sup>

69 Africa Check, 2014. Factsheet: Understanding human trafficking. Available at: <<http://africacheck.org/factsheets/factsheet-understanding-human-trafficking/>> (last accessed: 05/09/16).

70 ACMS, 2014. Understanding human trafficking. Issue Brief No. 10, May 2014. University of the Witwatersrand. Johannesburg: African Centre for Migration and Society. Available at: <<http://www.migration.org.za/uploads/docs/issue-brief-10.pdf>> (last accessed 29/11/16).

71 FMSP, 2009. Report on Human Smuggling across the South Africa/Zimbabwe Border. MRMP Occasional Report March 2009. Johannesburg: Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand, p. 5. Available at: <<http://www.lhr.org.za/sites/lhr.org.za/files/FMSP%20Smuggling%20Report%202009.pdf>> (last accessed 11/12/16).

72 US Department of State, 2016. Trafficking in Persons Report 2016. Washington: US Department of State. Available at: <<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2016/index.htm>> (last accessed 17/08/16).

73 A breakdown of how many of these people were transported to South Africa versus the Middle East is not available.

74 US Department of State, 2014. Trafficking in Persons Report 2014. Washington: US Department of State, p. 412. Available at: <<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/226844.pdf>> (last accessed 12/10/16).

75 Nehando Radio, 2014. Zimbabwe remains transit point for human trafficking. Available at: <<http://nehandaradio.com/2014/05/09/zimbabwe-remains-transit-point-human-trafficking/>> (last accessed 05/09/16).

- Women and girls from neighbouring countries are recruited for legitimate work in **South Africa** but then forced into sex work, domestic servitude or forced labour in the service sector. Some are also taken to Europe for similar purposes. Men and boys from neighbouring countries migrate to South Africa for farm work and then some are subjected to forced labour and subsequently arrested and deported as illegal immigrants.

As noted, there is often a fine line between activities that are defined as smuggling and those defined as trafficking. People might be smuggled voluntarily into South Africa but they could face violence on the way, or end up in exploitative situations upon arrival. Of those interviewed by RMMS in early 2015, 10 percent said they themselves had been forced to work or subjected to sexual exploitation in South Africa, or they knew of another person who had been. However it should be noted that this finding may be entirely unrelated to smuggling or trafficking practices.

## 3.

## Protection risks

Research shows that migrants and asylum seekers travelling the 4,000-km route from the Horn of Africa to South Africa face many serious rights and protection risks. These include extortion, abandonment and physical and sexual violence.<sup>76</sup>

Smuggling and trafficking of people is a rising phenomenon of international crime. Increased globalisation facilitates the growth of transnational crime and, sometimes, irregular migrants get caught in a cycle of organized crime, clandestine travel, migrant smuggling and high vulnerability to abuse and rights violations. Refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants all face these risks. Smugglers, traffickers and corrupt state officials do not respect or acknowledge differences between migrants. Nonetheless, interviews conducted as part of this research indicated that Ethiopian migrants along the routes south often face greater risks as they are viewed as economic migrants rather than refugees; unlike, for example, Somalis. The following sections outline RMMS's most recent findings on specific vulnerabilities along the southern route. The findings suggest that migrants in some categories are less exposed to violations along this route than those using the eastern route to Yemen or the western route through Sudan and Libya towards Europe.

## Conditions of travel

The conditions of travel are harsh on the southern route and the journey can take weeks or even months. In interviews collected in 2013, migrants described how they often travelled at night and were sometimes forced into cramped spaces or compelled to travel in sealed, airless containers and overcrowded boats. They described hiding in safe houses, and spoke of being robbed, beaten and arrested. They also described having to bribe officials. Provision of basic requirements – such as food, water and health and sanitation amenities – is often minimal. Migrants are frequently forced to travel by foot,<sup>77</sup> sometimes through forests and national parks as they try cross borders undetected. These journeys are exhausting and risky, particularly given the lack of water, food and shelter.<sup>78</sup>

In 2014, IOM reported that many migrants are transported in container trucks through Tanzania, Mozambique and Zambia, risking suffocation, malnutrition and abuse.<sup>79</sup> In June 2016, Congolese authorities discovered the bodies of 19 Somali migrants who had suffocated in a Zambian-registered truck. Guards at the border between the DRC and Zambia said they had been alerted by the smell. The truck was carrying 100 migrants and asylum seekers.<sup>80</sup>

## Detention, harassment and corruption

Towards the end of 2015, Kenya launched a joint military and police initiative to crack down on smuggling cartels operating between the northern border with Ethiopia and the southern frontier with Tanzania.<sup>81</sup> Arrests of Ethiopian migrants were reported on an almost weekly basis in 2016<sup>82</sup>, indicating either an increase in the number of Ethiopian migrants travelling south through Kenya and/or enhanced efforts by Kenyan authorities to crack down on irregular migration.<sup>83</sup> In the absence of comprehensive official numbers, data collated from media reports showed that more than 1,000 Ethiopian migrants were arrested between November 2015 and May 2016 in various urban areas in Kenya. However, the true number could be higher.

<sup>76</sup> IOM, 2013. *Regional strategy for Southern Africa 2014-2016*. Pretoria: International Organization for Migration, p. 6. Available at: < <https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/country/docs/AUP00579-RO-Pretoria-Regional-Strategy.pdf> > (last accessed 15/11/2016); Long and Crisp, 2011. *In harms way: the irregular movement of migrants to Southern Africa from the Horn and Great Lakes regions. New issues in refugee research, research paper no. 200*. Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, p. 1.

<sup>77</sup> Kanko, Bailey and Teller, 2013. *Irregular migration: causes and consequences of young adult migration from Southern Ethiopia to South Africa*. Paper presented at the XXVII IUSSP International Population Conference 26-31 August, 2013. Busan, South Korea, p. 8. Available at: < [http://iussp.org/sites/default/files/event\\_call\\_for\\_papers/Irregular%20Migration%20from%20south%20Ethiopia%20to%20South%20Africa%20%5BTeshome,%20Bailey,%20Teller%5D.pdf](http://iussp.org/sites/default/files/event_call_for_papers/Irregular%20Migration%20from%20south%20Ethiopia%20to%20South%20Africa%20%5BTeshome,%20Bailey,%20Teller%5D.pdf) > (last accessed 15/10/16).

<sup>78</sup> IOM, 2014. *Health vulnerabilities study of mixed migration flows from the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region to Southern Africa*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, p. 10-11. Available at: < [http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration\\_health\\_study\\_finalweb.pdf](http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_health_study_finalweb.pdf) > (last accessed 12/10/16).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> DW, 2016. *Nineteen migrants found suffocated in truck at DRC-Zambia border*. Available at: < <http://www.dw.com/en/nineteen-migrants-found-suffocated-in-truck-at-drc-zambia-border/a-19340406> > (last accessed 05/09/16).

<sup>81</sup> Standard Digital, 2015. *Kenyan military begins search for human traffickers from Ethiopia border*. Available at: < [http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000184264/kenyan-military-begins-search-for-human-traffickers-from-ethiopia-border/?articleID=2000184264&story\\_title=kenyan-military-begins-search-for-human-traffickers-from-ethiopia-border&pageNo=1](http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000184264/kenyan-military-begins-search-for-human-traffickers-from-ethiopia-border/?articleID=2000184264&story_title=kenyan-military-begins-search-for-human-traffickers-from-ethiopia-border&pageNo=1) > (last accessed 05/09/16).

<sup>82</sup> IRIN, 2016. *Go South young man: migration in the developing world*. Available at: < <https://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2016/04/22/go-south-young-man-migration-developing-world> > (last accessed 05/09/16).

<sup>83</sup> RMMS, 2016. *Courting commotion? Changing migration dynamics on the southern route to South Africa*. Available at: < <http://regionalmms.org/index.php/research-publications/feature-articles/item/48-courting-commotion-changing-migration-dynamics-on-the-s> > (last accessed 12/08/16).

Interviews conducted by observers in Nairobi’s Eastleigh neighbourhood reveal that some Ethiopian migrants and asylum seekers felt their rights were under threat due to alleged police harassment and extortion, as well attacks on migrants.<sup>84</sup>

In many countries along the southern route, migrants are treated under criminal law as illegal aliens, undocumented foreigners or criminals. In a bid to exercise greater control over migration, some countries have tightened laws on immigration infringement and increased fines or jail terms. In many countries – including Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Zambia – large numbers of migrants are being held in prisons and long-stay detention centres. Typically, migrants say they have been detained several times by police or military personnel. In interviews conducted by RMMS in early 2015, 68 percent of migrants said they or someone in their group had been detained or imprisoned by police on their journey south from the Horn.

Migrants from certain countries are sometimes also viewed as potential terrorists and may be subjected to interrogation by anti-terrorist security forces. In the Horn of Africa, migrants who are not deported will normally serve their sentences alongside other criminals.<sup>85</sup> In July 2016, IOM and the United Nations children’s agency UNICEF said they had assisted 39 Ethiopian migrants, including 15 unaccompanied minors, to return home from Zambia. The migrants, who were on their way to South Africa, were detained in Zambia for illegal entry. The Ethiopians told IOM that prison cells were congested and squalid and that they were frequently insulted.<sup>86</sup>

Another risk involves corrupt officials. Migrants interviewed by 4Mi reported 1,298 incidents in which they had to make additional payments. The figure below shows that in 66 percent of the cases, these payments were made to police and immigration officials.

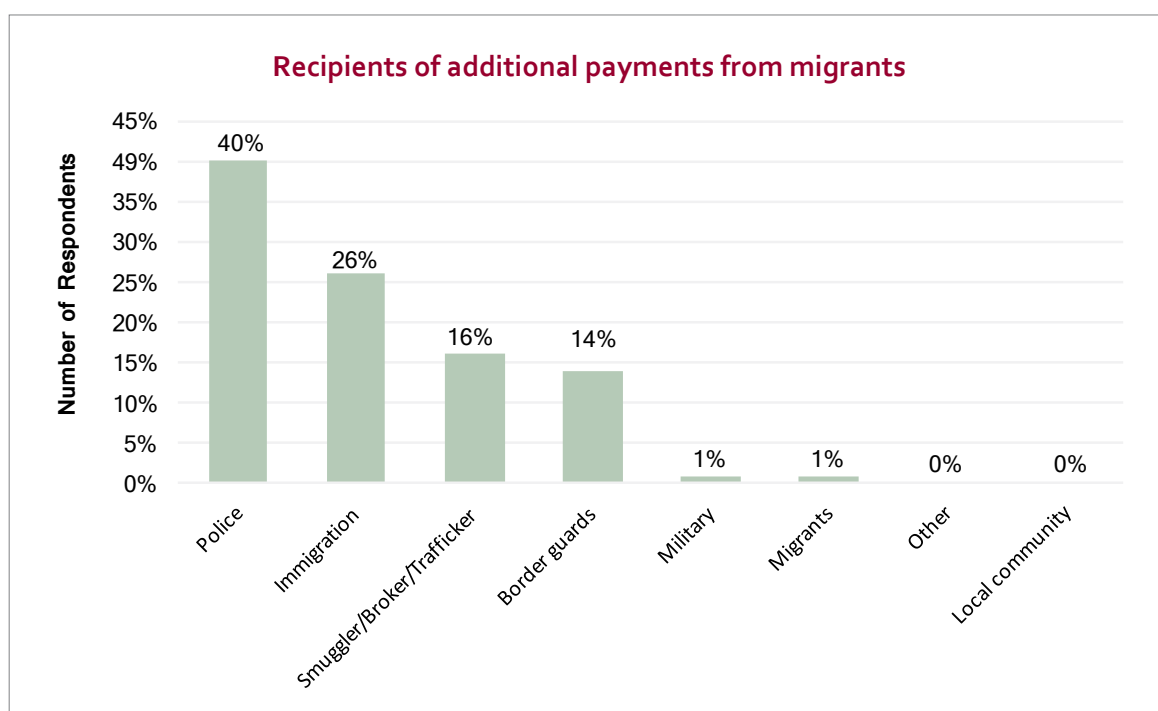


Figure 10: Recipients of additional payments from migrants (N=398)  
 Source: 4Mi (<http://4mi.regionalmms.org/>)

Corruption and police harassment are prevalent along the southern route. Figure 11 shows the various ways in which government officials were unofficially involved in the movement of migrants. In 80 percent of the 1,041 reported incidents, government officials received bribes to turn a blind eye to smuggling, while smaller numbers of migrants said some officials were directly involved in smuggling and trafficking. The number of reported bribes is much larger than the number of respondents in the 4Mi sample, which means that most migrants had to pay several times on the way to South Africa.

<sup>84</sup> RMMS, 2016. *Courting commotion? Changing migration dynamics on the southern route to South Africa*. Available at: <<http://regionalmms.org/index.php/research-publications/feature-articles/item/48-courting-commotion-changing-migration-dynamics-on-the-s>> (last accessed 12/08/16); Nation, 2016. *23 Ethiopian immigrants arrested in Nairobi as angry residents accuse them of crime*. Available at: <<http://www.nation.co.ke/news/23-illegal-Ethiopian-immigrants-arrested-in-Nairobi/-/1056/3109062/-/152xeulz/-/index.html>> (last accessed 05/09/16).

<sup>85</sup> RMMS, 2015. *Behind Bars. The detention of migrants in and from the East & Horn of Africa*. Available at: <[http://www.regionalmms.org/images/ResearchInitiatives/Behind\\_Bars\\_the\\_detention\\_of\\_migrants\\_in\\_and\\_from\\_the\\_East\\_Horn\\_of\\_Africa\\_2.pdf](http://www.regionalmms.org/images/ResearchInitiatives/Behind_Bars_the_detention_of_migrants_in_and_from_the_East_Horn_of_Africa_2.pdf)> (last accessed 20/12/2016).

<sup>86</sup> IOM, 2016. *Detained Ethiopian Migrants Return Home from Zambia*. Available at: <<https://www.iom.int/news/detained-ethiopian-migrants-return-home-zambia>> (last accessed 05/09/16).

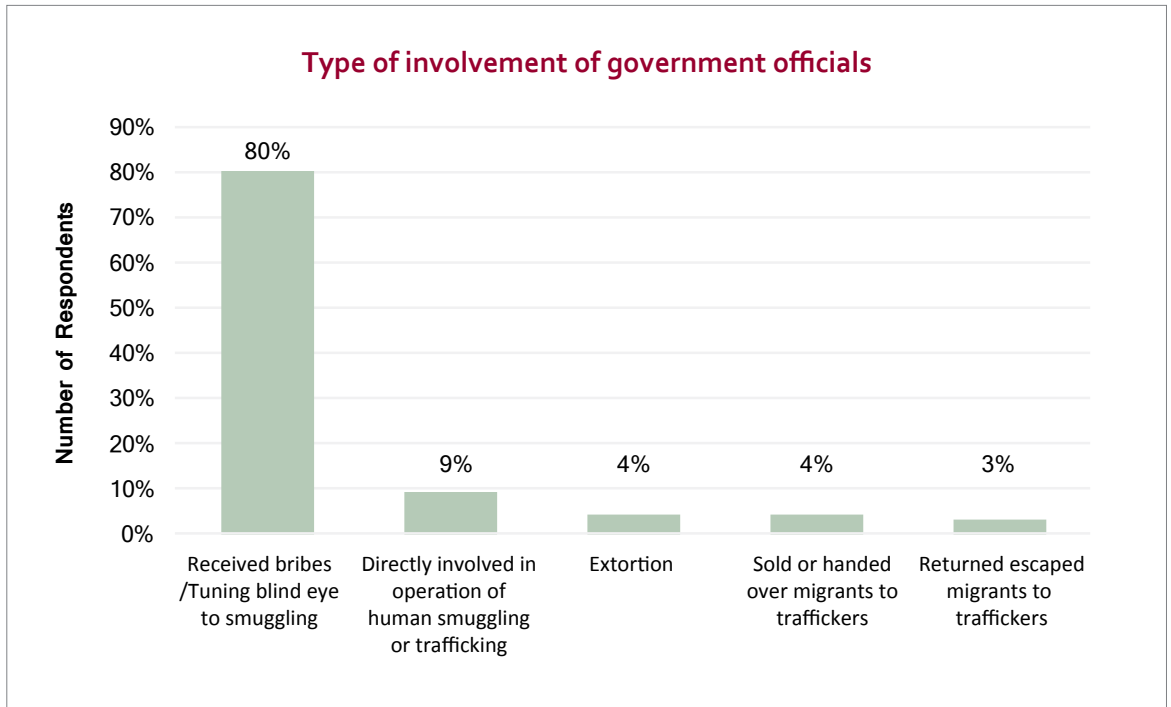


Figure 11: Type of involvement of government officials (N=398)  
 Source: 4Mi (<http://4mi.regionalmms.org/>)

**Violence, kidnappings and migrant deaths**

Deaths, disappearances, kidnappings and sexual violence were all reported by migrants travelling on the southern route, although such incidents seem less common than along the northern route towards Egypt and Israel, the western route through Sudan, Libya and Egypt to Italy, and the eastern route via Yemen. In one study in 2013, 2.5 percent of Ethiopian migrants travelling south reported sexual violence and 29.5 percent said they observed deaths.<sup>87</sup>

Reported abuses include torture, shootings and muggings, which are, in some cases, fatal. In interviews with IOM in 2014, migrants said smugglers, prisoners, police and travelling companions were responsible for sexual violence and rape (of both men and women) along the route.<sup>88</sup>

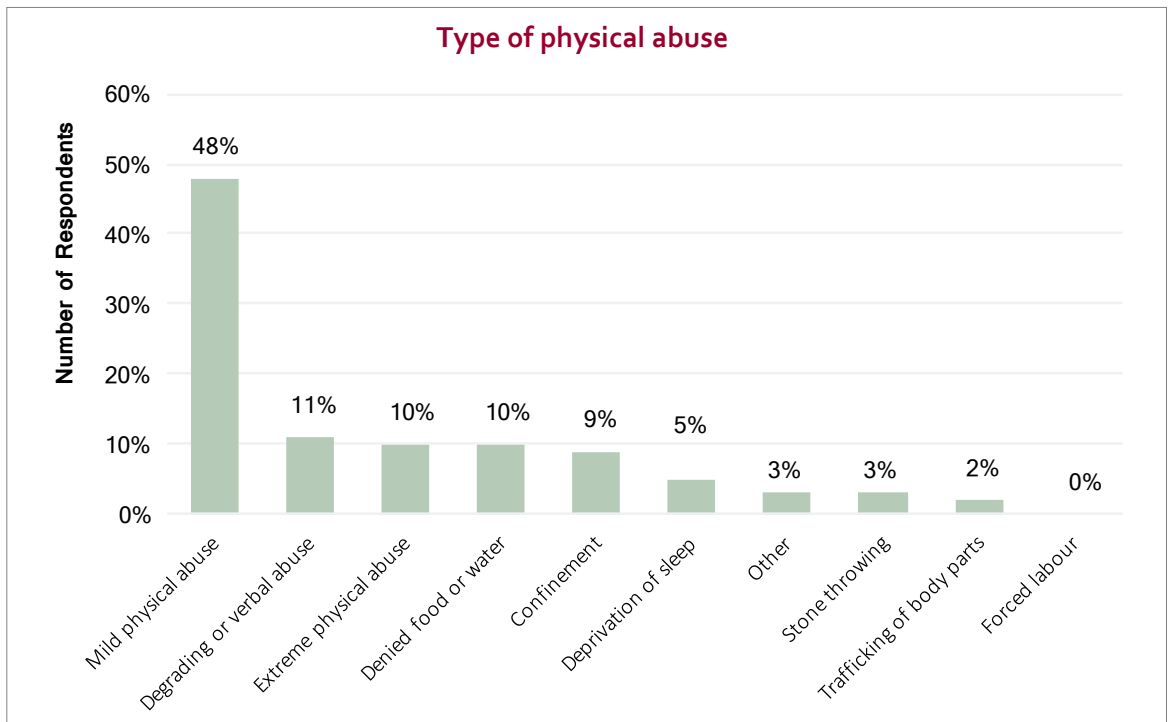


Figure 12: Type of physical abuse (N=398)  
 Source: 4Mi (<http://4mi.regionalmms.org/>)

87 Kanko, Bailey and Teller, 2013. Irregular migration: causes and consequences of young adult migration from Southern Ethiopia to South Africa. Paper presented at the XXVII IUSSP International Population Conference 26-31 August, 2013. Busan, South Korea, p. 8. Available at: <[http://iussp.org/sites/default/files/event\\_call\\_for\\_papers/Irregular%20Migration%20from%20south%20Ethiopia%20to%20South%20Africa%20%5BTeshome,%20Bailey,%20Teller%5D.pdf](http://iussp.org/sites/default/files/event_call_for_papers/Irregular%20Migration%20from%20south%20Ethiopia%20to%20South%20Africa%20%5BTeshome,%20Bailey,%20Teller%5D.pdf)> (last accessed 15/10/16).

88 IOM, 2014. Health vulnerabilities study of mixed migration flows from the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region to Southern Africa. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, p. 10-11. Available at: <[http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration\\_health\\_study\\_finalweb.pdf](http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_health_study_finalweb.pdf)> (last accessed 12/10/16).

4Mi research reveals that many migrants experience physical abuse along the southern route. Respondents reported 146 incidents where they directly experienced physical abuse and 98 instances in which they witnessed physical abuse. As shown in the graph above, most cases involve 'mild physical abuse', but migrants also told of more extreme abuse.<sup>89</sup> In most cases, smugglers or brokers were responsible, although there were also some reports of abuse by police and the military. These incidents are rarely reported to the authorities. Just four migrants reported physical abuse to the police; most thought it would be pointless or said they feared the security forces.

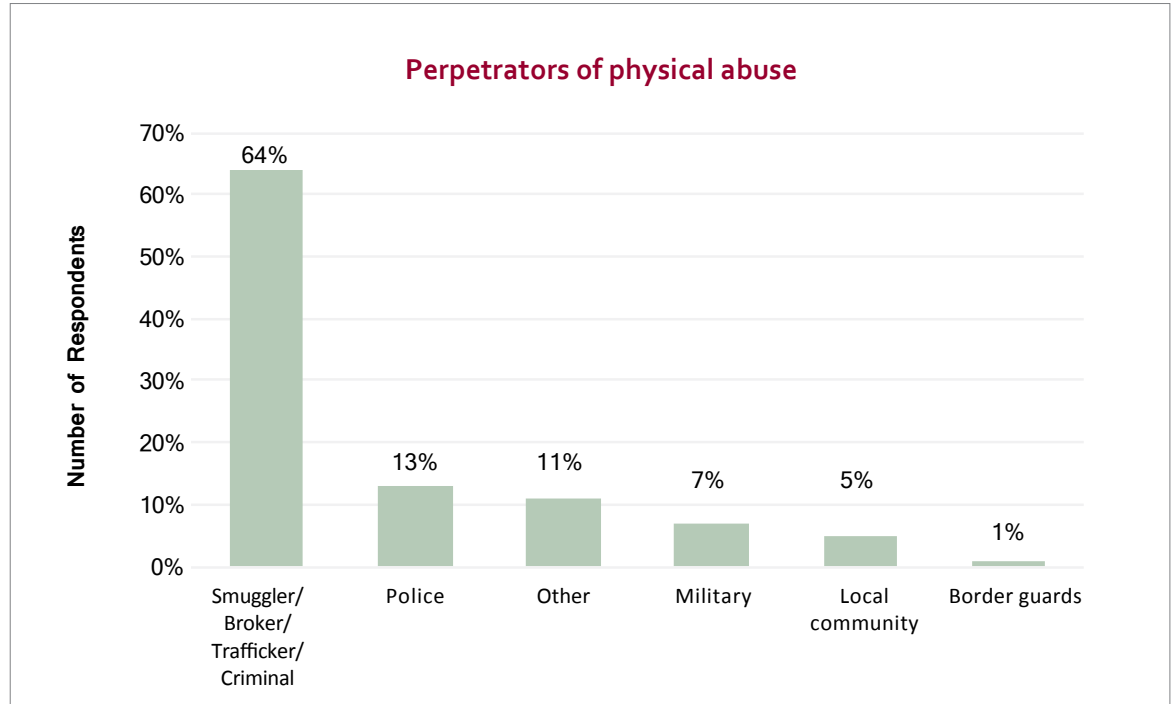


Figure 13: Perpetrators of physical abuse (N=398)  
 Source: 4Mi (<http://4Mi.regionalmms.org/>)

Robberies and extortion are also common along the southern route. Respondents reported 248 incidents in which they directly experienced robbery and 50 instances in which they witnessed it. In 51 percent of cases personal belongings were stolen, and in 48 percent it was money. Again, the perpetrators were found to be mostly smugglers and brokers and, to a lesser extent, the police, military and host communities.

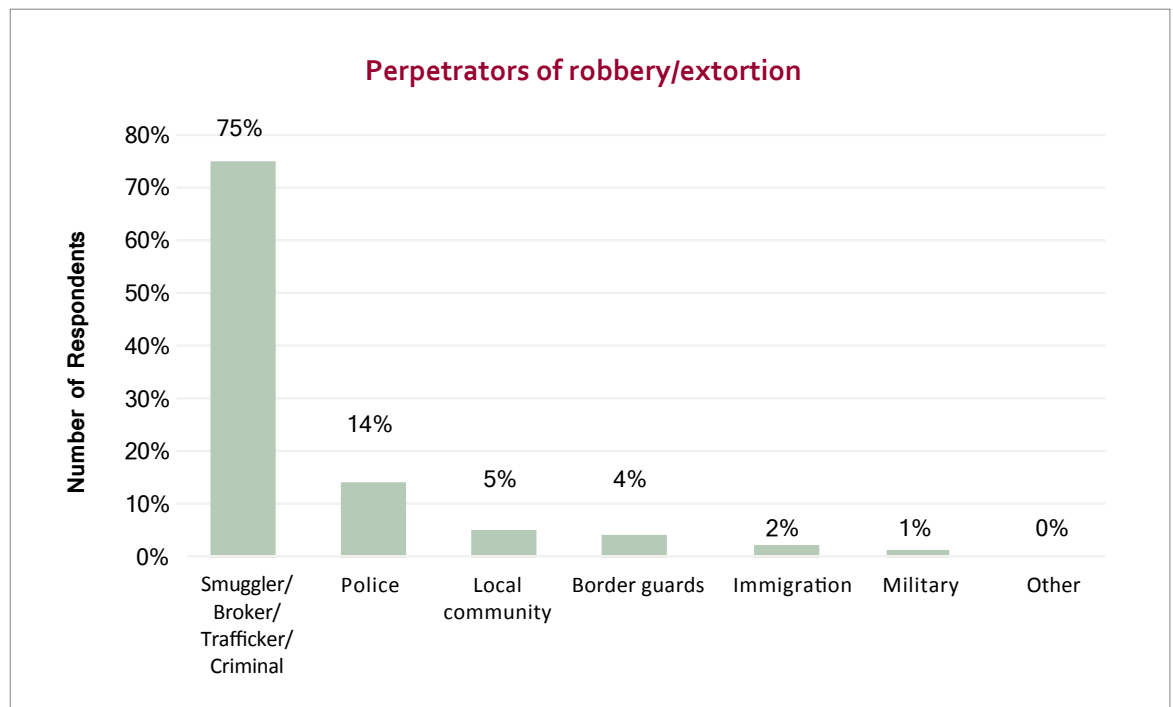


Figure 14: Perpetrators of robbery/extortion (N=398)  
 Source: 4Mi (<http://4Mi.regionalmms.org/>)

<sup>89</sup> Note that sexual abuse is not included in this graph. Data on incidents of sexual abuse are presented in a separate section in this paper.



A large number of respondents said they had been held against their will at least once during their journey. In total, 867 such incidents were reported. As shown in the graph below, in 88 percent of all reported cases, smugglers were accused of detaining migrants against their will. The means of control included blackmail (478 reports), threats of violence (173), keeping passports or other identification documents (82), use of force (74) and physical restraints (60). Research conducted for RMMS in early 2015 already suggested the new practice of holding migrants to extort money from their relatives and friends had become common. As mentioned, in 2009 there were very few reported incidents of this nature. In particular, smugglers have become more predatory and exploitative towards Ethiopian migrants, who are seen as economic migrants and not refugees. Smugglers are also more prone to use violence to punish those who do not cooperate.

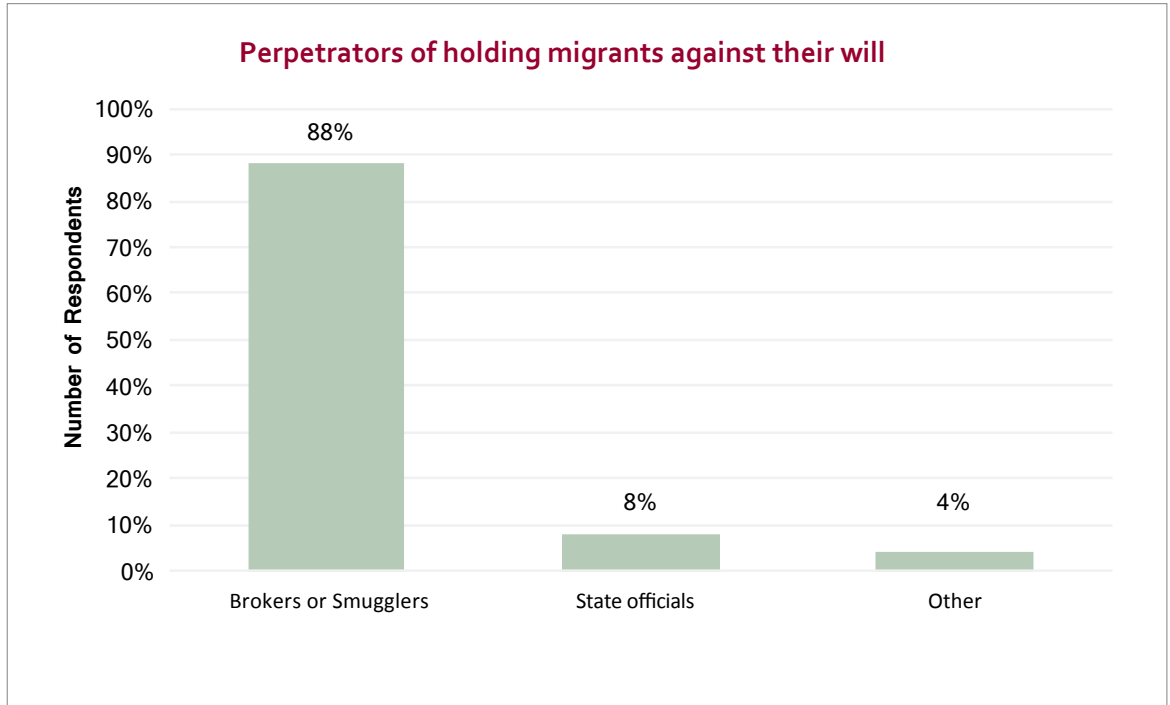


Figure 15: Perpetrators of holding migrants against their will (N=398)  
 Source: 4Mi (<http://4mi.regionalmms.org>)

Even though kidnappings are not being reported on the scale seen in Yemen, there are infrequent reports of Ethiopians being kidnapped upon arrival in South Africa. In 2012, South African police rescued 47 Ethiopians who had been kidnapped for ransom from the Musina refugee centre in Limpopo. The kidnappers reportedly demanded approximately USD 175 per person as ransom. Five of the six kidnappers were Ethiopians themselves.<sup>90</sup>

There is no systematic data on the numbers who die while moving along the southern route but interviews with migrants and government officials show deaths and disappearances are not uncommon.

Over the years, reported fatalities on the southern route have included: death in forests; death in road accidents or from being locked in containers; death on seas and lakes; death from illnesses, general debilitation or suicide; death resulting from being stranded; death through malicious neglect when smuggled; murder by smugglers, criminals and traffickers; death from action by state officials and in detention; death from wild animals; death as a result of banditry; death while working.

In *Fatal Journeys*, a report released in late 2014,<sup>91</sup> IOM looked at migrant deaths across the world and identified large gaps in terms of data concerning the number of deaths and the identities of those who die. The sole context where data is collated in a systematic, albeit incomplete, manner seems to relate to migrant deaths at sea. The report suggested that the true number of deaths may be three times higher than figures currently used. Along the southern route, the same imprecision pertains. People die in remote and clandestine contexts. Smugglers and traffickers know deaths would bring unwelcome attention from authorities and so they do not report fatalities.

Migrant deaths recorded through 4Mi on the southern route throughout 2014–2016 indicate deaths are less common than on the western route through Sudan, Libya and Egypt. In interviews with 2,932 migrants on all routes out of the Horn of Africa from November 2014–December 2016, 4Mi recorded 2,748 deaths. The migrants were interviewed in 4Mi migration hotspots and had witnessed these deaths during their travels. The table below shows that the majority of these deaths happened on the western route towards Europe.

<sup>90</sup> Daily Maverick, 2012. *Human trafficking: South Africa gets a little wake-up call*. Available at: <<http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-05-08-human-trafficking-south-africa-gets-a-little-wake-up-call/#.VJQ2jDodJA>> (last accessed 05/10/16).

<sup>91</sup> IOM, 2014. *Fatal Journeys: Tracking Lives Lost during Migration*. Available at: <<https://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/pbn/docs/Fatal-Journeys-Tracking-Lives-Lost-during-Migration-2014.pdf>> (last accessed 13/01/17).

Country	Reported deaths
Kenya	14
Tanzania	27
Malawi	2
Mozambique	8
Zimbabwe	5
Ethiopia, Sudan, S. Sudan, Libya, Egypt, Yemen	2,672
Other countries/routes	20

Table 1: Comparison of reported deaths on migration routes out of the Horn of Africa  
 Source: 4Mi (<http://4mi.regionalmms.org/>)

The 398 migrants and asylum seekers, interviewed in South Africa from 2014–2016, reported a total of 56 deaths on the southern route.

### Limitations to data on migrant deaths

There are a number of limitations to this data. First, the figures are based on migrants reporting the deaths of other migrants and there is no system in place to verify their accounts. Furthermore, some deaths may be reported twice if migrants who were travelling in the same group refer to the same incident separately. However, given the relatively limited number of monitors in the 4Mi project, it is likely that these numbers – both in terms of the western route and the southern route – are underestimates.

The difference in the number of reported deaths along the two routes can be explained, in part, by the fact that there are more monitors on the western route, which means more interviews can be carried out. This fact, however, is not sufficient to rationalise the substantial difference between the two routes but neither is it compelling enough to indicate conclusively that the western route is more dangerous.

The most likely explanation for the disparity could be related to the terrain migrants have to cross, with the western route traversing the Sahara desert. Another likely explanation may relate to the fact that migrants on the western route report more incidents of abuse and serious violence. Some of the reported deaths on the western route are the result of violence towards migrants. The most commonly reported causes of death, in order, are: sickness and lack of access to medicines; starvation; vehicle accidents; shooting or stabbing; harsh weather or lack of adequate shelter; dehydration; suffocation; excessive physical abuse and sexual abuse.

### Sexual and gender-based violence

In terms of reported incidents of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), a similar picture arises. While the 4Mi project recorded 1,189 cases of SGBV, including 701 incidents of rape on all routes, the bulk of these incidents were reported on the western route, with just 28 incidents reported on the southern route. The two graphs below show the reported perpetrators of sexual abuse and the nature of sexual abuse incidents along the southern route.

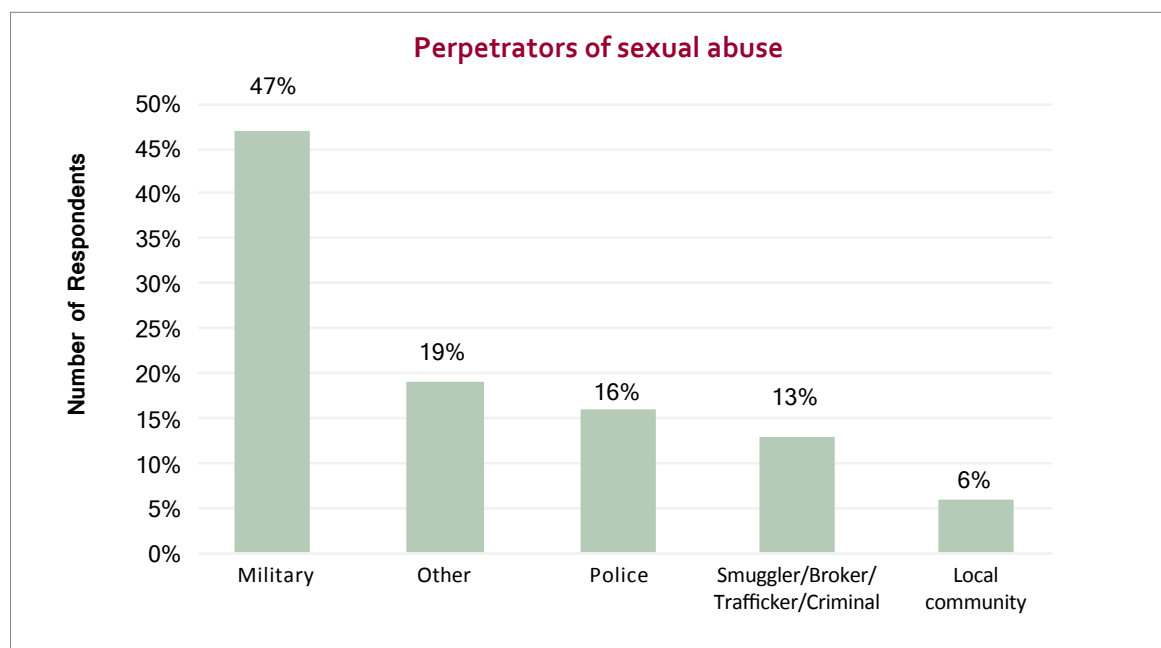


Figure 16: Perpetrators of sexual abuse (N=398)  
 Source: 4Mi (<http://4mi.regionalmms.org/>)

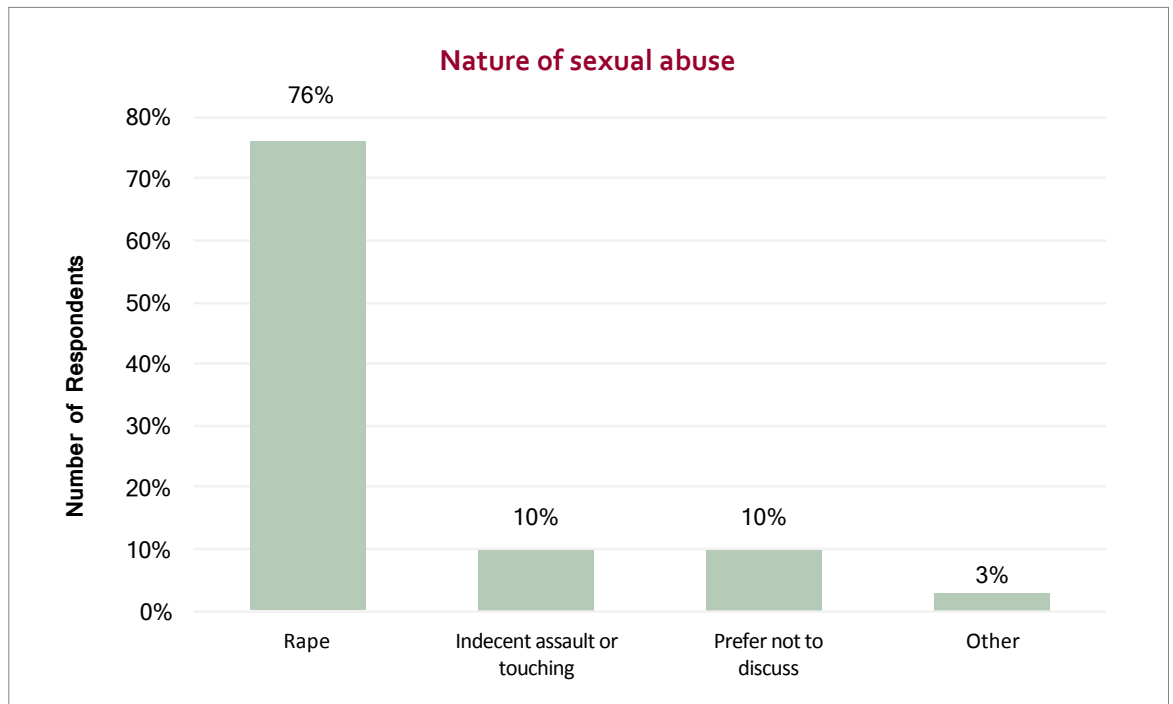


Figure 17: Nature of sexual abuse (N=398)  
 Source: 4Mi (<http://4Mi.regionalmms.org/>)

Again, there are some limitations to the data. Given the relatively small number of monitors in the 4Mi project, which affects how many migrants they can interview, the reported cases are likely to be an underestimate of the actual number of SGBV incidents on the southern route. Moreover, the disparity in reported incidents may be partly due to the fact that 4Mi monitors are exclusively male on the southern route while there are some female monitors on the western route. This may affect the willingness of female SGBV victims to recount their experiences.

Nevertheless, SGBV is clearly a major risk for migrants and asylum seekers travelling the southern route. In 2009, Médecins sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) reported on the risks facing women and girls when crossing the border between Zimbabwe and South Africa. MSF reported that 75 percent of the approximately 2,000 patients they saw during one month that year had been raped, and nearly 60 percent were raped by more than one perpetrator. Seventy percent of the rapes involved an armed threat, such as a gun or knife, and almost 50 percent of the patients had injuries due to associated violence.<sup>92</sup>

The University of the Witwatersrand said migrants crossing the border between Zimbabwe and South Africa risked rape, abduction and murder at the hands of criminal elements who are difficult to distinguish from smugglers.<sup>93</sup> These criminal groups, known as *amagumaguma* or *guma guma*, are notorious for extortion and abuse. According to the University, the *amagumaguma* may be smugglers or independent criminals who lurk in the bushes near the border, waiting to prey on unsuspecting migrants.<sup>94</sup>

### Protection issues in South Africa

Although this paper focuses on the route to South Africa, migrant and refugees also face risks when they get to their destination. As described above, one of the major risks is that migrants may end up in an exploitative situation that resembles trafficking. According to a 2008 study by Save the Children, smugglers or *mareyanes*, who operate between Mozambique and South Africa, have been known to forcibly take money and possessions from migrants, rape girls and women and even kill children. According to IOM, these gangs, consisting of Mozambican and Swazi men, are also involved in human trafficking and actively recruit in the districts of Moamba and Magude and in Gaza province in Mozambique. They lure girls and women aged 15–45 across the border to South Africa with promises of jobs, money, education, or marriage. Once in South Africa, the girls and women are sold to local and Mozambican men, who treat them as servants, exposing them to forced labour, physical abuse and sexual violence.<sup>95</sup>

92 MSF, 2009. *No Refuge. Access denied: medical and humanitarian needs of Zimbabweans in South Africa*. Cape Town/Johannesburg/Musina: Médecins Sans Frontières, p. 14. Available at: <http://www.msf.org/sites/msf.org/files/msf-no-refuge-access-denied.pdf> (last accessed 8/11/16).

93 FMSP, 2009. *Report on Human Smuggling across the South Africa/Zimbabwe Border*. MRMP Occasional Report March 2009. Johannesburg: Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand, p. 5. Available at: <http://www.lhr.org.za/sites/lhr.org.za/files/FMSP%20Smuggling%20Report%202009.pdf> (last accessed 11/12/16).

94 *Ibid.*

95 Save the Children, 2008. *Our broken dreams. Child migration in southern Africa*. Maputo, Mozambique: Save the Children UK and Save the Children Norway, p. 32. Available at: [http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Our\\_Broken\\_Dreams\\_English\\_version\\_1.pdf](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Our_Broken_Dreams_English_version_1.pdf) (last accessed 8/11/16).

Another risk relates to the frequent eruptions of xenophobic violence in South Africa. This violence has been labelled 'Afrophobic' as it targets migrants from other African countries.<sup>96</sup> South Africa is one of the most unequal societies in the world and has an estimated unemployment rate of one in three. In 2008, 62 people, including 21 South Africans, were killed and more than 150,000 displaced in a wave of xenophobic violence. In April 2015, the Zulu king, Goodwill Zwelithini, reportedly incited followers to take action by calling for foreigners to pack their bags and leave.<sup>97</sup> This sparked one of the worst outbreaks of xenophobic violence in recent years, starting in Durban but spreading swiftly to other urban areas. At least five people were killed, hundreds were forced to flee their homes and shops run by foreigners were looted or burned down.<sup>98</sup>

### Methodology

This research report offers the most recent trend analysis, informed by primary and secondary data, concerning irregular migrants and those smuggled and trafficked along the southern route from the East and Horn of Africa. In terms of primary research, the researcher visited South Africa, Mozambique and Malawi between late January and the end of February 2015, meeting with key agencies and conducting two sets of interviews with 676 migrants in total. The first set of 278 interviews with irregular migrants from Ethiopia and Somalia took place between late January and the end of February 2015 and were conducted by trained field monitors using smartphone technology to transmit the completed questionnaires to the researcher as part of a rapid initiative of 4Mi.<sup>99</sup> This research was done in collaboration with the UNODC (see below). The second data set consists of 398 in-depth interviews by the 4Mi's active monitors with Ethiopian, Somali and Eritrean migrants and asylum seekers between January 2015 and December 2016 in South Africa. The graphs in this report are based on the second set of 4Mi interviews only.

In terms of secondary research, the writers drew on multiple referenced sources, including the accumulated data and analysis of four years of Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS) resources.

This report also frequently draws on the findings of a 2009 study by the IOM, which was written by one of the authors of this paper. Some of the findings are little changed but this study seeks to offer more up-to-date information while building on, and contrasting its findings with, the previous report. There are sections of this report that also draw on an unpublished UNODC paper, written by Christopher Horwood as coordinator of the RMMS in mid-2015. The paper is titled, *Southern Route: from Horn and East Africa: Prevalence of human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, main migration routes and analysis*. It was compiled as part of the UNODC's Global Maritime Crime Programme Conference. Some literature-based sections in this report are used with kind permission from the UNODC.

<sup>96</sup> *The Guardian*, 2015. *Xenophobia in South Africa: They beat my husband with sticks and took everything*. Available at: <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/17/xenophobia-south-africa-brothers-violence-foreigners>> (last accessed 01/09/16).

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *The RMMS 4Mi project is an innovative approach to collect and analyse data on mixed migration flows, which started in the Horn of Africa in 2014. Through a growing network of over 100 locally-recruited monitors in strategic migration hubs in Northern, Eastern, Southern and Western Africa, Europe and Central and South East Asia, the 4Mi project tracks migrants on the move. Latest finding can be accessed at <http://www.regionalmms.org/index.php/4Mi-page>. As part of the 4Mi project, 398 Ethiopian, Somali and Eritrean migrants and asylum seekers were interviewed in South Africa during 2015 and 2016.*

# RMMS Briefing Paper 2: Smuggled South



**The Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS):** Formed in 2011 and based in Nairobi, the overall objective of the RMMS is to support agencies, institutions and fora in the Horn of Africa and Yemen sub-region to improve the management of protection and assistance to people in mixed migration flows in the Horn of Africa and across the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea in Yemen. The Steering Committee members for the RMMS include UNHCR, IOM, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), INTERSOS, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, IGAD, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Union. The RMMS is a regional hub aiming to provide information and data management; analysis and research; support and coordination; and support to policy development and dialogue. It acts as an independent agency, hosted by the DRC, to stimulate forward thinking and policy development in relation to mixed migration. Its overarching focus and emphasis is on human rights, protection and assistance.

See our websites [www.regionalmms.org](http://www.regionalmms.org) and <http://4mi.regionalmms.org>

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