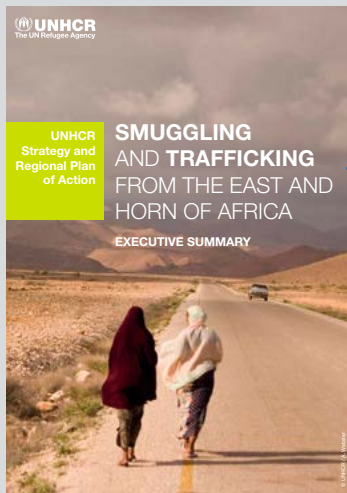


UNHCR
Strategy and
Regional Plan
of Action

SMUGGLING AND TRAFFICKING FROM THE EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA

PROGRESS REPORT





Strategy and Regional Plan of Action: Smuggling and Trafficking from the East and Horn of Africa

To document movement trends and coordinate timely responses by its country offices, UNHCR developed the 2012 **Strategy and Regional Plan of Action: Smuggling and Trafficking from the East and Horn of Africa**. UNHCR Offices in Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt have developed targeted country and cross-country approaches in line with this regional strategy.

Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/51d175314.html>

Background

In the East and Horn of Africa, people are on the move for various reasons, including the search for asylum and protection. Risks of human trafficking, abduction and abuse are widely reported along the routes taken by refugees and migrants alike. This Progress Report follows UNHCR's Strategy and Regional Plan of Action on Smuggling and Trafficking from the East and Horn of Africa developed in 2012.

In the last four months of 2013, fewer people departed from the Horn of Africa as compared to earlier in the year, however increased departures were noted during the first half of 2014. Overall, 2013 brought increased reports of refugee and migrant kidnappings and torture in some countries of the region.

Statistical Overview

Precise numbers are unknown. Estimates indicate that 25,000–30,000 people were victims of trafficking in the region between 2009 and 2013. The Sinai trafficking industry reportedly generated approximately USD \$622 million in ransoms during that time. Human Rights Watch estimated that, between 2009 and 2013, trafficking claimed the lives of 5,000–10,000 victims. The European Parliament estimated that thousands of people have been kidnapped in eastern Sudan, taken to Egypt, and tortured in the Sinai and around 4,000 have died since 2008, with around 1,000 African refugees still in captivity. Victims using smuggling networks report serious human rights abuses.

Victim Profile

Approximately 95% of trafficking victims are Eritreans, while the rest are mainly Ethiopians, Somalis or Sudanese, with slightly more men than women. Many unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) suffer human rights abuses as a result of being smuggled and/or trafficked.

Route

In 2013, the main route for mixed migration shifted away from the Sinai Peninsula. Some movements still occur from Israel through Egypt, including crossing into Libya in the Salloum area. A new route leads to Europe via Libya, and another leads to Yemen and Saudi Arabia via Djibouti.



Mold slowly creeps over a crudely drawn map of the Horn of Africa on the walls of the old fort at Siyu.

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Regional Challenges

Refugees and asylum-seekers continue to confront challenges in their search for protection:

- A Violent conflict and humanitarian crises** compel thousands of asylum-seekers and refugees from the Horn and East Africa to flee their homes every month. Lack of livelihood, education and family reunion prompt further displacement.
- B Limited state capacity to protect vulnerable people** on the move compounds the situation as state institutions struggle to contain smuggling and trafficking. This may result in reactionary measures of detention and denial of access to UNHCR and asylum procedures. In contrast, the Governments of Ethiopia and Sudan have set a positive example by establishing border transit centres to provide refugees with basic assistance, before they are transported to the main refugee reception centre.
- C Reliable age, gender and nationality segregated data is needed** on the number of people affected, detained, or abducted.
- D Particularly vulnerable groups**, such as women and children, report sexual and gender-based violence in significant numbers. Men and boys have also reported such abuses.
- E Organized criminal networks** rapidly adapt their smuggling operations to take advantage of the needs of those fleeing conflict and persecution. Criminal trafficking networks deftly adapt to government efforts to arrest and prosecute them. NGO reports indicate that connivance transnational problem.

Bossaso is not only the chief port of Puntland, a self-declared autonomous area in north-east Somalia, but also a major hub for people smuggling.

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Specific Challenges and Solutions

Djibouti

Djibouti serves as a transit point for the majority of Ethiopians and Somalis smuggled from Horn of Africa to the Arabian peninsula by sea. This transit role is one of the most important smuggling networks in the Horn of Africa. In 2012, 75% of the 107,500 migrants and refugees registered by UNHCR on Yemeni shores had crossed from Djibouti.

Given that there are many individuals in need of international protection within these migratory flows, UNHCR has initiated various actions in collaboration with its partners. These include the construction in 2008 of a transit centre at Loyada border where refugees and asylum-seekers from Somalia are identified and registered; as well as a reception centre for migrants (MRC) in Obock three years later, which aims to identify persons of concern within the movements and address the issue of secondary movement. UNHCR also builds the capacity of law enforcement officials to identify and protect persons of concern. A total of 17 training sessions and six photo exhibition information campaigns were conducted between 2012 and June 2014. The main challenge in Djibouti remains the current legal framework on human trafficking, which does not provide for the effective prosecution of smugglers.

Egypt

Since mid-2013, Egypt has increased security operations in the Sinai in response to a series of attacks by non-state actors. Civil society has called for such operations to include tools to identify and prosecute traffickers. Joint responses are vital in this context. UNHCR is collaborating with IOM and other partners to respond to mixed migration, including through detention- and border-monitoring, as well as targeted support services for the most vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees such as victims of trafficking. 350 such victims are currently benefiting from assistance. In Egypt, the majority of trafficked persons from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan are of concern to UNHCR.

With heightened efforts to curtail irregular departures from Egypt, especially towards Europe, there are increased reports of detention of asylum-seekers and refugees. Since January 2014, 1,782 persons (47% are Syrians) have been detained for attempting to depart Egypt by sea. Those detained, including women and children, are accommodated at 19 different police stations. In order to address protection concerns relating to the treatment of asylum-seekers and refugees, UNHCR has launched an advocacy strategy including 52 workshops and trainings for Egyptian authorities, judiciary and civil society since early 2013. More recently, UASC have been specifically targeted, in addition to adults, with tailored counselling on the risks of smuggling, trafficking and irregular movement by sea.

Ethiopia

Eritrean refugees have been arriving at an average monthly rate of 2,000 persons, with numbers reaching as high as 2,500 in mid-2014. Unaccompanied Eritrean minors are reported to be arriving at the rate of 150-200 per month. UNHCR is finalizing a national strategy to address trafficking and onward movements, which are of particular concern amongst Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia. Along with the Government and child protection partners (including IRC, NRC UNICEF, IOM, WFP and ICRC), UNHCR has established a Task Force for UASC for the northern camps.

The Office has begun to collaborate with the Ethiopian Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) and other partners to enhance sensitization campaigns in the camps on the risks of onward movements as well as to train local authorities on refugee protection and treatment. UNHCR also supports the development of a UN Country Team strategy to address trafficking and smuggling in Ethiopia, as well as the Government's National Action Plan to mitigate irregular movements of Ethiopian nationals. Given the deportation of more than 161,000 Ethiopians from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and from Yemen, the Ethiopian Government is leading information sessions on the perils of irregular movements.

Eritrea

UNHCR, in cooperation with the Resident Coordinator's Office, initiated discussions with the Government of Eritrea on responses to trafficking and collaborated on a well-received workshop in September 2014. The consultation addressed trafficking and smuggling in a multi-disciplinary setting. Such efforts are essential as more Eritreans attempt to reach Europe via Ethiopia, Sudan and Libya, exposing themselves to treacherous desert and Mediterranean crossings. 28,557 Eritreans arrived in Italy between January and August 2014, compared to nearly 10,000 in 2013 and approximately 2,500 in 2012. An estimated 3,000 people have died in 2014 trying to reach Europe via the Mediterranean, over 2,500 since the beginning of June. An estimated 650-850 people are believed to have perished during sea crossings in the first half of September 2014. The Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS) estimates that at least 400-700, and possibly many times more, Eritreans flee their country of origin each month. Some are kidnapped by tribesmen in the desert and sold to trafficking or extortion gangs in Sudan, Libya, Egypt and the Sinai region. Government of Eritrea, which acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in September 2014, has become increasingly engaged in international efforts to combat human trafficking.

Israel

Before the introduction of various deterrent measures by the end of 2011 to stem the flow of migrants, an estimated 7,000, mainly Eritreans and Sudanese, entered Israel via Sinai. Pursuant to a decision by the Government, victims of trafficking who are identified by the Ministry of Justice's Legal Aid and recognized by the police unit are entitled to a one-year stay in a shelter, along with rehabilitation services



Global Initiative on Protection at Sea

UNHCR launched its Protection at Sea Initiative which intends to cover the various dimensions of protection on the seas including drivers of movement, onward movement, conditions in transit, rescue at sea, predictable disembarkation and responsibility sharing. Issues of trafficking and smuggling including abuse and exploitation also fall within the ambit of the initiative. The 2014 High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges at Sea to be held in December will provide a forum for bringing together diverse stakeholders to address the complex challenges giving rise to such movements.

and a work permit (some 200 at this stage). UNHCR, together with partners, advocate for the extension of the one-year period as well as of the work permit, and the establishment of additional shelters. For those who still need to be placed in a shelter, the Government has meanwhile arranged for a day-care centre to meet the needs of the male and female victims of trafficking. To combat smuggling and trafficking, the Government initiated criminal proceedings against identified facilitators living in Israel.

However, there are many others who live today in Israel and were exposed to different levels of atrocities, including torture. Currently, the Government employs a policy of automatic detention for new asylum-seekers entering irregularly as well as mandatory residence of Eritrean and Sudanese men in a detention-like facility (“Holot”). The legal framework, the “Anti Infiltration” law, has been struck down twice by the Supreme Court, but the Government has declared it would re-enact similar legislation.

There is currently no policy to systematically identify victims of torture and trafficking and exclude them from detention or mandatory residence. Given the majority’s tolerated stay in Israel, they are not entitled to health and social services unless employed. To increase awareness among the Israeli Government on the need for mental health services, UNHCR organized a three-day workshop in December 2013 on the mental health and psycho-social treatment for victims of trafficking, torture and rape. As a direct follow up on the workshop, UNHCR and the Israeli Ministry of Health initiated a pilot project to run such services at the Yaffo Community Mental Health Centre. UNHCR is supporting partners to provide the necessary legal and psycho-social support, including support to the women empowerment project Kuchinate which provides a healing environment where ex-Sinai victims can receive individual and group therapy, but also earn an income through the sale of their hand-made baskets. The SGBV Forum, established and chaired by UNHCR, serves as a forum for identification of gaps, development of solutions and coordination, with a heavy focus on victims of trafficking and torture.

Libya

The deteriorating security situation continues to limit the available protection space and is having dramatic displacement implications for Libyans, as well as for the large numbers of migrants and refugees reportedly present in Libya. Refugee and asylum-seeker movements from Libyan shores to Europe have increased dramatically. In 2013, UNHCR commissioned a study on the migration route from the East and Horn of Africa to Libya based on extensive field work in Libya, Niger, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somaliland, Malta and Italy. This study provides vital information on travel routes; costs; entry points and conditions of the journey; the dynamics and economics of the smuggling business; as well as the myriad protection problems migrants, and particularly asylum-seekers, face during their journey.

UNHCR has also conducted community focus groups which indicate that onward movement from refugee camps in Ethiopia and Sudan could be effectively addressed through expanded livelihood and educational opportunities both within and outside of the camps. Notably, mixed migration movements have shifted towards Libya and beyond as the historical route ending in Israel became extremely difficult to access. In response to what it sees as a growing emergency of unsafe irregular travel by sea to Europe, UNHCR had started the **Know before You Go** information campaign before it was put on hold due to the security situation. The awareness raising campaign, organized in partnership with the Coast Guard, DRC, UN partners and asylum-seekers, aimed at providing accurate information about the potential risks.

Yemen

Yemen military and security officials launched campaigns against smuggling and trafficking in early 2013, resulting in a notable decrease in smuggling. Security forces reportedly rescued 1,987 kidnapped Africans and over 50 perpetrators were arrested. RMMS reported that many victims allegedly showed evidence of torture, mistreatment, and inhumane detention conditions. UNHCR continues to work with the Government of Yemen and supports the establishment of a national committee to combat trafficking in persons and to draft legislation on the subject. A joint assessment of protection conditions and identification of persons in need of protection was undertaken with the National Refugee Commission in Southern Yemen. UNHCR is also engaged in inter-agency efforts to identify refugees and asylum-seekers amongst the large numbers of Ethiopian migrants who have been freed from smugglers in Yemen.

The Government of **Yemen** was supported by UNHCR and IOM in hosting the second *Regional Conference on Migration and Asylum* in November 2013, which culminated in a joint **Sana’a Declaration** to better manage mixed migration and enhance support for countries of origin and destination. The Declaration includes recommendations to address the root causes of irregular movement, strengthen the capacity of law enforcement to prosecute traffickers and smugglers, increase international support

towards enhancing search and rescue capacities, increase support to Assisted Voluntary Return programs, and promote awareness of and adherence to refugee protection principles. Further follow-up for national implementation is underway and supported by the joint appointment of a liaison officer to work with the Government and interested states.

Somalia

In 2013, authorities, especially in Somaliland and Puntland, proposed plans to stiffen penalties for human trafficking and smuggling to stem the irregular movement of youth. It has been reported that some of the asylum-seekers and refugees, frustrated by the conditions in Somalia, resort to onward movement, despite the UNHCR's efforts to advise on the dangers. Somalia is also confronting the dire situation of the many Somali deportees, mostly from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, returning to families or communities in settlements for internally displaced persons. Many have reported pre-deportation maltreatment, lack of access to asylum procedures, filial separation and inability to collect wages and belongings. During their profiling in Mogadishu, most deportees indicated interest in making renewed attempts to migrate. As lead of the Somalia Protection Cluster, UNHCR is also concerned with reports of an unverified number of children being abducted in Puntland.

In Somaliland and Puntland, robust cluster activities include projects on WASH, Education, Livelihood, Food, Health and Nutrition for people of concern to UNHCR. UNHCR and partners are currently engaged in mapping service providers outside of UNHCR programmes to which migrants and other populations not of concern to UNHCR may be referred. The strategy developed by the Mixed Migration Task Force (MMTF) in Somalia also foresees engagement with, and capacity building of, national and regional authorities to address the causes and results of mixed migratory flows albeit these activities aimed at addressing mixed migration flows in Somalia suffer due to limited resources.

Sudan

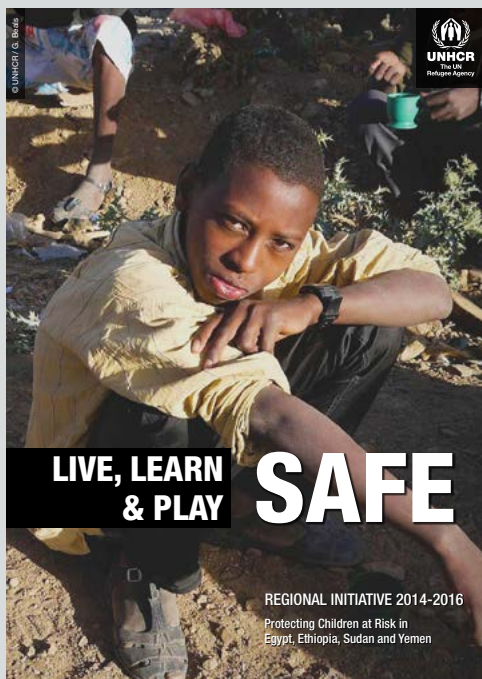
Sudan has seen a sharp drop in reported trafficking incidents since early 2013, with 100 cases verified by UNHCR from January to December 2013 in comparison to 338 verified in 2012. As at the end of June 2014, only 30 cases have been verified by UNHCR. Sudan has traditionally seen a much higher number of male victims (around 75:25). A joint strategy to combat trafficking in persons was implemented with IOM in close collaboration with the Sudanese Commissioner for Refugees and Ministry of the Interior. The joint project focuses on reducing kidnapping, trafficking and smuggling by strengthening the Government's response; enhancing security of refugee camps; ensuring rehabilitative care and psycho-social support to survivors; and awareness-raising on the risks of smuggling and trafficking amongst host and refugee communities alike.

UNHCR has also facilitated workshops for partners on refugee law and protection needs of trafficking victims and vulnerable migrants. Where possible, UNHCR provides direct psycho-social support and legal assistance to victims of trafficking and conducts information sessions on the risks of irregular onward movement from the camps for over 500 newly arriving refugees each month. UNHCR operates a reception center at Hamdayet and Gergef to ensure the safe transportation of asylum-seekers arriving from Eritrea to Shagarab refugee camp. A safe house has been created for the extremely vulnerable, including those in need of witness protection. In March 2014, the Sudanese President signed a new law to combat human trafficking in persons that largely conforms with the Palermo Protocol. Moreover, following a ban of overseas recruitment in October 2013 by Ethiopia, irregular labour migration through Sudan is believed to have increased.

Further Regional Responses

UNHCR is part of a Regional Task Force to address mixed migration in the region and is working closely with the African Union (AU) for a region-wide response to trafficking. A Regional AU Conference supported by UNHCR and IOM will be held in October 2014. Further cooperation and coordination between governments, NGOs and humanitarian agencies is necessary to address root causes of displacement and to demolish the criminal networks exploiting vulnerable populations on the move.

In countries where arrests and detention of asylum-seekers are not uncommon, UNHCR has put in place a network of detention monitors and community protection committees.



Child Protection

The child protection regional initiative **Live, Learn, Play Safe 2014-2016** (implemented in Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen) aims to improve the condition and well-being of children in these operations and as a result, to prevent or reduce their engagement in onwards movement.

After the first six months of implementation of this project, UNHCR has improved the care and protection of over 4,500 children with the help of 19 new staff members focused on child protection. Some highlights of achievements and progress are as follows:

- In Shire, Northern Ethiopia progress has been made on shifting from group care to community based care for unaccompanied children. The building of new shelters (and kitchens) ensured a smooth flow of the high rates of new arrivals from Endabaguna reception centre to the camps. Most UASC spend now less than a week in the reception centre.
- In Egypt, there is increased focus on improving the quality and the coverage of best interests procedures.
- The Kassala operation in Eastern Sudan was able to support the 2014 record high numbers of unaccompanied children in residential care at the Children's Centre in Shagarab camp.
- Yemen has rented additional shelters for UASC group care arrangements and has enrolled

unaccompanied children and other children at risk in comprehensive programmes, including psychosocial counselling, identification of foster families, regular home and school visits, distribution of NFI and supplementary food, referral to health clinics, safe shelters and educational, sport and recreational activities.

- Family tracing and reunification is the most appropriate solution for UASC where there are no protection concerns. As part of the Central Mediterranean Sea Initiative, UNHCR is planning a pilot project to facilitate family reunification of refugees in Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan with family members in Europe.

While progress is encouraging in all four operations, there are also challenges mainly related to the capacity of offices to deal with the record numbers of new arrivals in 2014:

- In Shire, Ethiopia, it is increasingly difficult to secure adequate shelters for the high numbers of UASC. Establishing family-based care arrangements for UAC (where families are integrated within the UAC living arrangements) is also challenging due to the high level of mobility amongst the Eritrean refugee population and families leaving the camps.
- Even though many children have expressed their desire to return to Eritrea, this is not feasible in the case of Eritrean UASC in Shire due to the political tension between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Discussions are ongoing with ICRC to explore the possibility for return, especially of children below the age of 14.
- In Cairo, Egypt, due to the high number of children registered in 2013, there is currently a backlog of 358 UASC which require best interests assessments (BIAs). Of these cases, children who are under 15, or will age out by the end of this year (76) have been prioritized for a BIA.
- In Kassala, Sudan, secondary movement of the UAC from the UAC Centre remains high, with 50% leaving within 1 month and at least 80% expected to leave throughout the year.
- The unrest situation in Sana'a, Yemen makes it difficult to provide services and assistance.

The four operations will meet during a workshop in Geneva in the month of November (2014) to discuss their progress and challenges encountered so far, to exchange best practices and identify solutions, and to plan the activities for 2015 with an increased focus on the regional aspects of the project.