

Youth Migration in Somalia

Causes, Consequences and Possible Remedies



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Cover: Migrants on a capsizing boat off the coast of Libya. Photo: @Reuters

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Introduction	2
Research Methods	4
Limitations.....	5
Operational Definition of Migration	6
Migration Trends.....	6
Causes of Migration	8
Unemployment and Economic Difficulties.....	8
Clan Dominance.....	9
Dual Nationals Versus Locals	10
Unwillingness to Utilize Available Job Opportunities.....	12
Lack of Access to Quality Education.....	12
Technology and Peer Influence.....	14
Security.....	15
Smuggling Networks.....	16
Lack of Hope and Fragile Administrations	16
Miscellaneous Factors	17
Destinations and Roots.....	17
Facilitators and Costs	19
Challenges During the Trip.....	22
Experiences After Arrival	23
Contributions to Families Left Behind	24
Limited Opportunities at Home	25
Filling the Gap	26
Conclusion.....	27
Policy Considerations.....	28

Executive Summary

One of the consequences of the Somali civil war is the unprecedented large-scale displacement of its population. Since 1990, hundreds of thousands of migrants have crossed Somalia's borders and fled into the neighboring countries and across Africa, the Middle East, Europe and North America. Despite considerable fluctuations, hardly a year has passed without Somali asylum seekers trekking dangerously to one region of the world or the other over the course of the last twenty five years. Somali youth, and particularly men, have been, unfortunately, at the center of this mass migration.

A survey of 2,685 individuals, 31 in-depth key informant interviews and 14 focus group discussions were conducted across seven cities: Kismaayo, Baydhabo, Mogadishu, Gaalkacyo (south), Beledweyne, Bosaso and Burco. Our study found that the main driver of illicit migration is the lack of employment opportunities for the youth. Other causes of mass and forced migration, otherwise known as tahriib in Somali, that came out of our study included:

- Poor economic conditions
- Unregulated and low quality education
- Peer pressure
- Insecurity in some parts of the country
- Strong smuggling networks

- Lack of hope triggered by the dysfunctional and fragile national and regional administrations

More than half of those surveyed (68 percent) responded that migration is either very high (34 percent) or high (34 percent) in their respective cities. Europe is the most favored destination for Somali immigrants. More than half (54 percent) of those surveyed said at least one member of their family had migrated to Europe. In Baydhabo, close to one third (32 percent) said that family members migrated to Saudi Arabia because – in the words one focus group participant – “it is cheap, less risky and can be reached in a short period of time.” Many youth in Beledweyne, Mogadishu and Kismaayo, however, favor South Africa and other African countries with America being their final destination. The study also found that the majority of Somali migrants are male. The geographic location of the surveyed cities had a considerable impact on the migration route.

Strong smuggling networks, both inside and outside the country, facilitate migration, but parents and family take on the burden of paying the costs of migration, which in some instances include ransom. Trying to reach Europe and America requires significant investment. Most of those interviewed estimated that reaching Europe requires \$10,000-\$20,000. After Somali youth reach transit countries such as Libya or Yemen, smugglers communicate with parents and demand ransom. Many parents sell their properties or collect contributions

from family members, relatives and friends. Magafe (a ransom demanding smuggler) payoffs are non-negotiable.

One positive outcome of a successful migration, however, is remittance. Many migrants regularly send money to their families back home through remittance to the tune of about \$1.4 billion annually. Because of this visible and all-encompassing benefit, a significant number of the Somali youth want to migrate and are making plans to do so.

The limited nature of available opportunities at home and the perceived and purported possibilities overseas encourage many Somali youth to take the decision to migrate. Efforts on the ground to reduce migration are nonetheless trivial. This study recommends the creation of employment and education opportunities, awareness, improving security, border controls, strengthening state institutions and creating better living environments. A combination of these efforts could significantly reduce the mass exodus of Somali youth.

Introduction

After Somalia's independence from the Italian Trusteeship Administration and British Protectorate, the first post-colonial Somali government was established in July 1960 with a union of the northern and southern regions. The civilian governments that came to power faced several challenges including political and economic

crises, illiteracy and corruption. Less than a decade after independence, President Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke was assassinated and a military regime took over by way of a coup in 1969.

The early years of the military regime were positive and progress was made in a number of key areas including a mass literacy campaign and building the public infrastructure. However, the long standing desire of Somali leaders to unite all Somali-inhabited regions in the Horn of Africa led to the Somalia-Ethiopia war in the disputed Ogaden region in 1977. Somalia's armed forces were defeated after the Soviet Union sided with Ethiopia. This conflict prompted massive refugee movement from Ogaden (in present day Ethiopia) to Somalia.¹

Moreover, this defeat set the stage for the slow disintegration of Somali state institutions in the 1980s. By mid-1988, the Somali National Movement (SNM) launched an offensive against the Siyaad Barre regime in Hargeisa and Burco. The response of the military government was the destruction of Hargeisa and the killing of thousands of citizens.² As a result, more than 600,000 Somalis fled to Ethiopia.³ In January 1991, two years after that brutal shelling, the United Somali Congress (USC) overran Mogadishu, the capital city, and toppled the regime.

¹ Joakim Gundel, "The Migration-Development Nexus: Somalia Case Study", *Centre for Development Research*, Copenhagen, Denmark, *International Migration* Vol. 40 (5) (2002): 257-264.

² Ibid

³ Ibid.

With the outbreak of civil war and the subsequent collapse of the central government, the situation in Somalia deteriorated dramatically. The fierce fighting among the warring clans caused major death and destruction, claimed the lives of a significant number of civilians and resulted in large-scale internal displacement. Hundreds of thousands of Somalis were forced to flee for their lives and crossed the borders into neighboring countries. An equally large number continued their journey across Africa, the Middle East, Europe and North America. Although the Somali exodus has fluctuated considerably over the past three decades, hardly a year passes without Somalis migrating to the rest of the world.

At the center of this mass migration is the youth population. The main drivers are security, conflict, economic and social factors. Despite the relative peace in some parts of the country, such as Somaliland and Puntland, there is still widespread poverty and inequitable access to already scarce education and employment opportunities throughout Somalia. Unemployment, marginalization and lack of opportunities are common youth problems both in rural and urban areas. Consequently, well-established human smugglers and strong smuggling networks facilitate and incentivize the mass youth migration.

Tragically, many of the youth migrants never reach their desired destination, often dying in the desert from hunger, heat and thirst or drowning as their boats sink or

capsize in the Mediterranean Sea, the Gulf of Aden or the Black Sea. Europe is the most popular, but not the only, destination for migrants arriving illegally. Some Somalis travel to the United States through Latin America countries, using multiple routes between the transit countries. Like other immigrants, the Somali migrants are subjected to extortion, rape, robbery, torture and illegal detention. Often, organized gangs abduct them and demand ransoms from families.

There is a growing discussion and awareness on the role of youth in social, economic and political developments in Somalia. Moreover, returning diaspora Somalis are contributing to the public and private sectors. However, Kenya's repatriation of Somali refugees and her decision to close Dadaab, the largest refugee camp in the world⁴, and the hundreds of Somalis deported from the United States, may add to the youth unemployment and migration problem.

On balance, while the repatriations are a burden to Somalia, diaspora returning, peace and state building efforts, the steadily growing business investments and the improving access to education and health services are positive signs that could help reduce the mass exodus of Somali youth.

⁴ BBC (2015), "Kenya's Deputy President William Ruto has called on the United Nations to close the Dadaab refugee camp and relocate more than 500,000 Somalis", 11 April. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-32269944>

Our primary purpose in this study was to understand the economic and security challenges that face migrating Somali youth today. In this context, we conducted research to explain the fundamental drivers of migration in Somalia in order to inform policies and programs implemented by relevant stakeholders.

Research Methods

This research investigated the nature and dynamics of migration in Somalia. The central focus was exploring the main drivers of youth migration in Somalia and understanding how migration is facilitated, its consequences and what can be done to address the underlying causes.

The research was conducted in seven geographically diverse and populous cities: Kismaayo, Baydhabo, Mogadishu, Gaalkacyo (south), Beledweyne, Bosaso and Burco. These cities are under different administrative authorities in a federal Somalia namely Puntland, Galmudug, HirShabelle, Benadir Regional Administration (BRA), South West, Jubaland and Burco in the self-declared republic of Somaliland. Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS) researchers travelled to these cities and collected the field data between 22 July and 25 October 2016. They used mixed research methods: surveys, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and desk research.

Outside Mogadishu, HIPS partnered with six local universities and research

organizations: Kismaayo University in Kismaayo, the University of Southern Somalia (USS) in Baydhabo, Gaalkacyo University in southern Gaalkacyo, the University of Bosaso in Bosaso, Hiiraan University in Beledweyne and the Research and Consultancy Center (RCC) in Burco. These institutions helped in the selection of surveyors and invited interviewees and focus group participants.

A total of 31 in-depth key informant interviews were conducted across the seven cities. The interviewees included youth who had either migrated or attempted to migrate, parents, federal and local authorities, businesses and nonprofit organizations focusing on youth-related programs and projects. Moreover, 14 focus group discussions were conducted, two in each city. Male and female youth were invited to one focus group to discuss and share their views on migration. Employers, local authorities, parents and academics participated in a separate focus group discussion focused on the availability of job and education opportunities in the cities, parent roles and possible solutions for migration. A total of 125 individuals contributed to the interviews and focus group discussions. HIPS researchers conducted all interviews and moderated the focus groups.

In addition, a total of 2,685 individuals were surveyed across the seven cities; 516 in Mogadishu; 360 in Kismaayo; 363 in Baydhabo; 362 in southern Gaalkacyo; 361 in Bosaso; 360 in Burco; and 363 in

Beledweyne. Forty-two trained research assistants (six in each location) collected the surveys using smart phones over three (four days in Mogadishu) consecutive days.

During the survey data collection, cities were divided into divisions (xaafado), and the enumerators were assigned to survey residents in specific parts of the city each day under the supervision of HIPS researchers. The survey respondents were selected randomly, and one person above 18 years of age was surveyed after every five households. However, Mogadishu was different. Since the Benadir region has 17 districts, the survey was conducted in all districts. One of the four divisions of each district was randomly selected, and 30 residents were surveyed in the selected division.

More than half (59 percent) of the respondents were male, while the remaining (41 percent) were female. More than three quarters of those surveyed (82 percent) were below 45 years of age; 47 percent were aged between 18 and 30; 35 percent were between 31 and 45; 15 percent were between 46 and 60; and only 3 percent were above age 61.

In terms of educational background, 26.9 percent of the respondents had no formal education. Slightly more than half (51.5 percent) attended either primary (22.9 percent) or secondary (28.6 percent) school. Another 21.6 percent went to university. The majority of respondents (36 percent) were unemployed, while 15

percent worked in the private sector. Seventeen percent were students. An equal number of nine percent worked either in the government or non-governmental sectors, while about 14 percent checked 'other' when asked their profession.

Limitations

While this research presents huge primary data collected in the form of surveys, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, there were a number of limitations in our study.

First, we were not able to do the research in all 18 regions of Somalia. The scope of our study was limited to seven capital cities. Many other important cities that suffered the effects of migration were not part of our research due to time, financial and security constraints. Therefore, while this research gives a comprehensive picture of migration trends in Somalia, the findings represent the views of those surveyed, interviewed or who participated in the focus groups during the period specified above and cannot be generalized to all of Somalia.

Second, the surveys were collected through smart phones. Although enumerators were given enough training about the methodology, sampling and mobile technology, the use of smart phones for data collection was new to some. As a result, some of the questions were not answered completely.

Third, we relied on our partner institutions to recruit the research assistants. Some of those chosen may not have had prior firsthand experience in conducting research surveys. This could have affected the quality of the data collected.

Finally, we carried out the survey, interviews and focus groups in mid and late 2016 meaning the data could now be slightly stale in 2018.

Operational Definition of Migration

A definition of migration is the movement of people from a place where they live to another place with the aim of altering residence.⁵ Based on this definition, migration has two important dimensions: the crossing of the spatial boundary and a change of residence.⁶

The term tahriib is the common word Somalis use to define migration. It is used for those leaving for Europe via Ethiopia, Sudan and Libya⁷ or those that also migrate to Saudi Arabia and South Africa through the Red Sea and several African countries.

⁵ Kyaing Kyaing Thet, "Pull and Push Factors of Migration: A Case Study in the Urban Area of Monywa Township, Myanmar", *World of Statistics*, P. 2.

⁶ Pieter Kok, "The Definition of Migration and Its Application: Making Sense of Recent South African Census and Survey Data", *South Africa Journal of Demography*, 7 (1) (1999): P. 19.

⁷ NiMo-Ilhan Ali, "Going on Tahriib: The causes and consequences of Somali youth migration to Europe", *Rift Valley Institute*, 30 (9) (2016): P. 12-13.

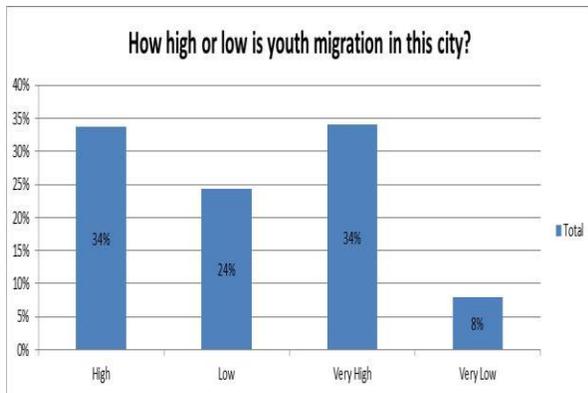
In contrast, the migration that involves the more sophisticated flying route with travel documents is mostly described as dhoof, meaning travel, even if it is illegal.⁸

In this paper, migration is defined as all illegal means taken to pass the spatial boundary of Somalia to reach a new destination in which to live. All forms of illegal migration, trends, routes, facilitators, causes, consequences and potential solutions are discussed and analyzed.

Migration Trends

To understand the perceptions of the respondents on the magnitude of migration in their respective cities, those surveyed were asked whether they think migration is high or low in their towns compared to other places. More than half of those surveyed (68 percent) responded that migration is either very high (34 percent) or high (34 percent) in their respective cities. A total of 32 percent believed that migration is either low (24 percent) or very low (8 percent). The whopping number of respondents that contend migration is high is an indication that the recent peace, state-building and developmental efforts have been unsuccessful in reducing the exodus of Somali youth.

⁸ Ibid.



That said, migration does not affect the Somali regions equally, and some face migration challenges more than others. Beledweyne, Burco and Bosaso topped the places where migration was seen as very high. The findings of the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions in Burco, Beledweyne and Bosaso agreed with the survey findings that migration is high compared to other cities. Despite relative peace in Somaliland and Puntland, those we surveyed there reported a very high level of migration.

In Baydhabo, Mogadishu, Gaalkacyo and Kismaayo respondents believed that migration in their cities is not high compared to other locations – despite these towns being located in volatile and insecure locations. Mogadishu results were mixed. Many emphasized that Mogadishu is a hot spot for migration. However, the magnitude of its migration is lower than other cities surveyed in Somaliland and Puntland, according to respondents. Kismaayo produced a different result. A substantial majority said that migration is not a major issue. Gaalkacyo and Baydhabo results were quite mixed. Although there are numerous

youth that have migrated, the issue was not one of the main challenges facing these cities. This contrasts with the view that insecurity is the major driver of migration in Somalia. Those in Beledweyne, however, considered insecurity as their main driver of migration.

Another interesting finding related to whether a member of the respondents' family or friends had migrated. More than half (55 percent) of those surveyed responded that a family member had migrated. The remaining 45 percent had not experienced family migration. Again Beledweyne and Burco had the highest number of families that had experienced migration. Respondents in Baydhabo, Mogadishu, Bosaso, Gaalkacyo and Kismaayo also had family that had migrated, albeit a lower number than that of Burco and Beledweyne.

Twice as many young males as females embark on the perilous journeys. An absolute majority of these migrants (72 percent) were male. Slightly more than quarter (28 percent) were female. This is understandable due to the hardship and difficult circumstances surrounding the migration process. Burco had more female migrants than the other cities, but men still outnumbered women. This could be a sign of the feelings of hopelessness of both genders and the scarcity of opportunities in the city.

Causes of Migration

There are many fundamental drivers and triggers of migration in Somalia. These include economic, political and socio-cultural factors. The findings of this research show that unemployment and economic difficulties, unbalanced and low quality education, access to technology, peer influence, security, strong smuggling networks, lack of hope and fragile administrations are the major drivers. Other factors include lack of awareness about the dangers of migration, discrimination and lack of entertainment facilities.

Unemployment and Economic Difficulties

When asked about the major cause of migration, a clear majority (69 percent) cited either the lack of opportunities (48 percent) or the poor economic situation of families (21 percent). The remaining 31 percent cited insecurity, lack of quality education and peer influence. These findings highlight the desperate need of opportunities in Somalia.

Of those that said unemployment is the major driver of migration, Mogadishu (21 percent), Burco (20 percent) and Bosaso (18 percent) were the highest compared to Gaalkacyo (13 percent), Baydhabo (13 percent), Kismaayo (8 percent) and Beledweyne (7 percent). The survey findings can be extrapolated to show that the major driver of migration in Somaliland and Puntland, which have relative peace

compared to southern regions and Mogadishu, is the lack of available job opportunities for youth.

Furthermore, many of the migrants are from poor families, and they migrate with the aim of helping those left behind. In order to live a normal life, some parents think migration is economically good for the family. Because of the pervasive unemployment and economic difficulties, one focus group participant argued that youth prefer to die in the seas or deserts trying to reach Europe rather than sitting at home and doing nothing. Additionally, some families are not able to pay the school tuition fees of their children. Thus, many youth strongly believe that migration is the way to help their families overcome economic difficulties. A youth in Gaalkacyo we interviewed explained why he wanted to migrate. "I wanted to leave, because I wanted to help myself and my family," he said.

Employment and income generation for families are interdependent. For example, if a family consists of five members and there is only one person employed, the rest face serious pressure, because they all depend on one breadwinner. If two or three of the family members work, the pressure is less. Therefore, creating more opportunities would mean better livelihoods for families. Though governments – local or national – cannot create employment opportunity for every Somali citizen, to halt the flight and reverse the ongoing and alarming migration

trends, opportunities must be created for young people.

Since Somalia's state collapse in 1991, unemployment has remained staggeringly high. According to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) 2012 Human Development Index, 67 percent of Somali youth aged 14 to 29 are unemployed. "Females experienced higher unemployment at 74 percent than males at 61 percent."⁹ This makes Somalia one of the countries with the highest unemployment rates in the world. The public, non-profit and business sectors create some opportunities, but these opportunities are infinitesimal compared to the pool of unemployed.

One factor contributing to the soaring unemployment is the mismatch between the increasing number of secondary and university graduates and the lack of actual employment opportunities in the labor market.

In Burco, for example, many of those we interviewed said that migration is high in Burco compared to Hargeisa, because there are more opportunities in Hargeisa. Likewise, opportunities for graduates in Bosaso were very low. One university graduate described the situation in the city. "I have seen six positions advertised by a company. More than 500 candidates applied for the vacant positions. They

shortlisted 178 people for one single position," he said. Such comments illustrate how unemployment and lack of opportunities are associated with the high levels of migration in Somalia.

The distribution of resources is also a problem. Most of the jobs in the public, non-profit and business sectors are not awarded based on a straightforward meritocracy. The clan-based selection, coupled with the preference of employers for diaspora Somalis, precludes many local graduates from securing employment. Somalis who see certain jobs as beneath them have also exacerbated the situation.

Clan Dominance

Since 2000, the political power-sharing model for Somalia has been the (in)famous 4.5 formula. It allocates one in four seats in parliament to the major clans and half of one seat for the minority clans and a similar arrangement for cabinet ministers and other key posts. At the federal level, this has also become the yardstick for the recruitment of civil servants. Consequently, the recruitment and selection process is not fair in the eyes of many – another major reason that disadvantaged youth seek opportunities abroad.

The clan affiliation of the applicant is a major factor that determines whether he or she gets a job. Many believe, and there is anecdotal evidence to support this, that clan association has a direct correlation to employability in government offices.

⁹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Somalia Human Development Report: Empowering Youth for Peace and Development", (2012).

Qualifications without the sponsorship of and connection to a powerful relative has little meaning. One focus group participant in Burco said that you need an MP or influential politician to help you get a job. This is also true for some private and non-profit institutions. Education, qualifications and experience are at times a secondary consideration when it comes to recruitment. Many individuals in power, one respondent argued, believe that hiring relatives is a responsibility and should be the norm.

The complete collapse of the central government and the protracted clan infighting that followed contributed to the problem. One entrepreneur who participated a focus group in Mogadishu said a businessman cannot offer employment to everyone, saying his “relative Hassan is safer for his property than a professional Ali.” Although this is not true in all businesses, it highlights the lack of confidence in people from other clans. In fact, since the complete collapse of the Somali regime, there has been no genuine reconciliation, and businessmen have legitimate concerns.

Nevertheless, many of those interviewed believe that if there is a fair and equal chance of employment, migration would drop. The overall employment opportunities are low and the mismanagement of the available ones have pushed many young and educated Somalis to seek better lives elsewhere.

Young Somalis also complained about the inability of state and regional administrations to undertake civil service reforms and remove employees who do not come to work. Participants in Mogadishu reiterated the need to get rid civil servants that work elsewhere and only come to their government offices to receive their salaries and sign attendance sheets. Civil service reform would give opportunities to fresh and educated youth. However, changing this informal and clan-biased employment culture would be a difficult task and needs a political will, a conducive legal environment, properly functioning administrative institutions and leadership.

Clan dominance is not the only problem that Somali youth are experiencing when looking for work. The Somali diaspora is another employment challenge for local graduates.

Dual Nationals Versus Locals

In the past seven years, many Somalis returned home, mainly from Europe and the United States. The visibility of the returnees in the public and business sectors has been increasing every year. In October 2013, the Somali Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the Department of Diaspora Affairs.¹⁰ In Somaliland, the Somaliland Diaspora Agency was created in 2010.¹¹ The Ministry of Planning and

¹⁰ Maimuna Mohamud, “Diaspora Return to Somalia: Perceptions and Implications”, *Heritage Institute for Policy Studies*, Issue (7), June (2016).

¹¹ Ibid.

International Cooperation of Puntland has had a diaspora department since 2010.¹²

The engagement and influence of diaspora in Somalia can be seen at the highest levels of government. At the federal level, the president Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo, the prime minister Hassan Kheyre and the speaker of parliament's lower house Mohamed Sheikh Osman Jawaari are all dual nationals who have returned from the United States and Norway. Moreover, 38 percent of the members of the house of the people of the parliament are also dual citizens.¹³ The majority of federal cabinet ministers are from the diaspora. The director generals of some key federal ministries and those recruited as experts and advisors are returnees mainly from Europe and America. Some of the presidents, parliamentarians and ministers of regional authorities hold dual citizenships. International NGOs also prefer to recruit diaspora citizens for key positions.

Those interviewed believe strongly that both the federal government and the donor community prefer diaspora Somalis when it comes to employment as they are better educated than locals and able to travel easily. The term diaspora became a status symbol and created a sense that returnees could expect special treatment. A returnee in Mogadishu who attended one of the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Wakiil.org, "38% of Somali MPs, (105 out of 275) have dual citizenship", <https://twitter.com/wakiilorg/status/833936520696389633>

focus group discussions explained: "The returned diaspora believe that they are the only educated ones. There is egotism in them, and those in the country believed this. There is a superiority complex."

This perception combined with the huge diaspora influence created the feeling that local graduates do not have the same employment chances as the returnees. According to many of the graduate youth interviewed, holding a European or American passport helps in getting a job. Countless youth migrated with the aim of getting a foreign passport. The saying "tahriibayaasha maanta waa qurbajoogta berrito" roughly translates as "today's migrants are the diaspora of tomorrow" which captures the essence of this influence. The fact that the diaspora are welcomed when they return and rewarded with senior level government and international NGOs positions is a good indicator of how they have inspired many locals to migrate and secure another citizenship. Going to Europe could mean the chance for a European passport and better opportunities back home.

Further evidence of the importance of holding a foreign passport is that many professionals who studied and work in Somalia try to get passports from neighboring countries – Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti. For them, that second passport would help them get access to international travel and better opportunities.

While the diaspora experience, knowledge and investment are all crucial in rebuilding Somalia, the lack of employment opportunities for locals compared with returnees has encouraged a number of educated youth to migrate. One interviewee in Mogadishu explained that holding a non-Somali passport or having dual citizenship was a pre-requisite for some government or INGO jobs. Advancing equal employment opportunities for all Somalis and increasing the value of a Somali passport could help mitigate this challenge.

Unwillingness to Utilize Available Job Opportunities

While clan based recruitment processes and returning diaspora appropriated most of the jobs, there are also employment opportunities that many Somalis are not willing to do as they see them as inferior. These include jobs as barbers, waiters and cleaners.

Paradoxically, many must lower their standards when they migrate. “When we migrate, we do the jobs that we see as inferior in Somalia,” said one interviewee. When diaspora who worked blue color jobs in Europe and elsewhere return to Somalia with questionable certificates, they get senior jobs and are no longer willing to do the same jobs that they did in Europe.

Scarce employment opportunities and mismanagement of the available employment openings are seen as major triggers of migration in Somalia. However,

the substandard quality of education is also a factor that contributed to the high levels of unemployment and migration.

Lack of Access to Quality Education

When asked about the major driver of migration, eight percent of the respondents cited poor quality education. Our findings show that the foundation of private education institutions with minimal or lack of government regulation produced graduates that are not competitive. This contributed to the increase of unemployment in Somalia, which in turn leads to migration.

Over the past two decades, a plethora of private schools, school umbrellas and universities were established in many parts of the country. The private schools and umbrellas emerged at a time when there was no functioning government and provided much needed primary and secondary education to Somali youth. However, the owners of private schools had little interest in opening vocational schools meaning technical training was neglected.

Higher education institutions were also established over the past 20 years to provide a tertiary education to high school graduates. Their limited fields of study were criticized for not corresponding to the needs of the country. A HIPS survey of 44 higher learning institutions in 2013 found that the majority of students were enrolled in information technology and business

administration.¹⁴ A senior member of a university in Kismaayo cited lack of resources (human and material) as the obstacle to creating much needed engineering, agriculture, animal husbandry and marine sciences courses to fill the higher education learning gap.

However, a lecturer in Mogadishu justified this imbalance and argued that theoretical sciences courses are less costly than hard sciences, and parents cannot cover the higher costs. His reasoning was logical. In fact, a sizeable number of youth migrated because they were not able to pay for university. While the fees of primary and secondary schools are affordable for many families, universities are more expensive. A mother in Baydhabo whose son migrated and was missing in the Sahara Desert at the time of the interview explained why her son had risked his life: “We were not able to pay the tuition fees of the university. I sell tomatoes in the market. I get about \$3 a day, but he wanted to study in a university.”

Absence of affordable education in Somalia is therefore part of the problem. A meaningful government effort to offer public education is yet to be seen. The 2017 federal government budget allocated \$8.3 million to all public services including

¹⁴ Heritage Institute for Policy Studies, “The State of Higher Education in Somalia: Privatization, rapid growth, and the need for regulation”, August (2013): P.2.

education and health.¹⁵ With such a meager investment, it is highly unlikely that the Somali government will provide meaningful public education in the foreseeable future. However, it is encouraging that the 2018 budget allocation for the Ministry of Education was increased from \$2.2 million in 2017 to \$7 million although the increase does not show a budget allocation exclusively for primary schools.¹⁶

A considerable number of graduates are not getting a quality education. The school curriculums are not carefully thought through, are not unified, and teachers are underpaid.¹⁷ There are no functioning regulatory and accreditation agencies at the federal level. Many of those interviewed also criticized universities for not imparting an education commensurate with the tuition fees they charge. Because of the pervasive privatized and unregulated education system, a young woman in Beledweyne argued that many students do not attend primary school at all and simply begin formal schooling at the secondary level.

The confluence of these factors contributed to youth migration in a number of ways. First, many Somali families cannot pay

¹⁵ For further details read the parliament report, <http://www.parliament.gov.so/billtracker/assets/bills/3651513164020.pdf>

¹⁶ The detailed 2018 budget is available here, <http://www.parliament.gov.so/billtracker/assets/bills/9241511177151.pdf>

¹⁷ Abdullahi Sh. Adam Hussein, “Educational challenges in post-transitional Somalia”, *Heritage Institute for Policy Studies*, April (2015).

university tuition when their children complete secondary school. As a result, many youth decide to migrate instead of facing a hopeless future at home. One interviewee told our researchers that when secondary school graduates “are not able to continue their studies and are not able to secure employment, most of them decide to migrate in order to get better lives in Europe”.

Second, since the quality of primary and secondary schools is low, many students fail to continue their education and leave school. Dropouts believe that they do not have many choices other than to migrate and seek a new life.

Third, the majority of the international and local NGOs and some government institutions prefer recruiting individuals with a good command of English and competitive skills. Since many schools and universities in Somalia do not prepare students for competitive jobs, individuals from neighboring countries such as Kenya and the returning diaspora Somalis usually get the opportunities. A local graduate in Kismaayo explained: “The ones that graduate from schools and universities in Kenya have a better chance than those who studied in Kismaayo.”

A quality and accessible education coupled with a vibrant private sector and proactive government striving to create a conducive regulatory and quality control environment are essential for a sustainable employment market. Education also helps individuals

create their own employment opportunities. Accessible and quality education could help in the emergence of labor forces that are educated, capable and can contribute to the improvement of the country’s economy and the reduction of unemployment and migration.

Technology and Peer Influence

Globalization and the use of advanced technology have made communications easy. This has created a condition in which affluence in the west; culture and lifestyle have become visible via direct communication with family members in the diaspora and the internet. One focus group participant argued that the average youth thinks that living in the West is the only way to success.

Unfortunately, we did not have peer influence as one of the options listed under the causes of migration question. However, two percent reported that peer influence was a driver of migration. When asked about the source of migration related information, a sizeable number (41 percent) cited the internet.

By using social media, those who migrated and live in Europe inspire locals in three ways. First, they post good-looking photos on social media, mainly Facebook. Old friends back home see these pictures and are inspired by the images of the lives their friends are supposedly enjoying in their new home countries. A young man in Mogadishu explained how social media encouraged

many to migrate: “The impact is huge. One picture post is enough. All [youth] migrate when they see. They think their friend is having a better life.”

Second, youth who have migrated stay in direct contact with friends in Somalia via phone and social media, describing their plans and new life. A parent in Burco whose son migrated described the situation: “Those who have migrated call the local youths and send pictures to them via social media.”

Indeed, five of seven youths who attempted an unsuccessful migration told researchers that the major driver was the influence of their friends. They wanted to migrate, because most of their friends had done so. “When friends migrate, you think that you have been left alone,” said one.

Third, some young migrants return home with money. When locals see an old friend who has returned richer, that is enough incentive to plan their own escape. A youth activist in Burco described this effect: “The first batch of migrants returned to Burco. They established families, bought fancy cars and built houses, and that affects the local youth.”

Security

When asked the causes of migration, 18 percent of those surveyed cited security. In Beledweyne, 28 percent were concerned about security followed by Mogadishu (25 percent), Kismaayo (19 percent), Gaalkacyo

(14 percent), Baydhabo (11 percent), Bosaso (3 percent) and Burco (none).

Gaalkacyo is a divided city and has experienced repeated conflicts. In Beledweyne clan infighting is constant. Since it is a seat for the federal institutions, Mogadishu residents have experienced relentless suicide attacks, high level of casualties and targeted killings. Baydhabo and Kismaayo are cities surrounded by al-Shabaab fighters. Therefore, it is unsurprising that many of those in these cities link insecurity with migration.

As discussed above, Burco and Bosaso youth migrate mainly because of scarce employment and livelihood opportunities and peer influence. This is an indication that while security is a driver of migration in south and central regions, unemployment and lack of opportunities triggered youth migration in the north and northeastern regions.

The security threat does not come from al-Shabaab insurgents alone. It also comes from fighting among clans, being associated with the government or misconduct by the security forces during operations. A teacher in Gaalkacyo explained how clan infighting and working for the government force youth in the city to migrate. He said: “If someone from your tribe kills someone else from another tribe, the relatives of the victim may target you for revenge. If you work for the government, you will also be targeted. In both of these situations, you will be forced to leave the country for your

own safety.” The division of the city was also a problem for Gaalkacyo youth. One respondent said that youth cannot cross freely from one side of the city to the other.

As a result of the fragile situations in some parts of the country, youth are used and harassed by armed groups like al-Shabaab, militias and government forces. A youth in Kismaayo described the situation: “Youth are victims. They are the most unfortunate group in society. The government and its opposition (al-Shabaab and armed groups) all treat youth badly.” Young people told the researchers that they want to migrate to escape this mistreatment including forced recruitment by insurgents like al-Shabaab.

Many of those interviewed or who contributed to the focus groups made connections between insecurity and unemployment. The Turkish ambassador to Somalia, in an informal discussion with a HIPS researcher, cited lack of security as the major hindrance to Turkey investing in Somalia. An improved security situation could reduce barriers to investment, create jobs and potentially contribute to the decrease of youth migration.

Smuggling Networks

Human smuggling networks have emerged in the past few years in Somalia. Smugglers cover all costs until the migrant reaches transit countries like Sudan or Libya, and then claim the money back from the family. The smugglers know before taking the

migrant from Somalia how much land or property families own. They often hold the migrant for ransom until the money is paid.

Uncontrolled borders have also contributed to the increase in smuggling networks along with the use of advanced technology and communication networks which have simplified the coordination of transnational smugglers. The process of smuggling is simpler than it used to be and more accessible to young people – driving youth migration.

Lack of Hope and Fragile Administrations

Migration happens when a person is frustrated about the situation (s)he lives in. Somali youth are migrating, because they are disappointed about the country, in terms of security and the lack of education and opportunities. A significant number of youth were disappointed about government incompetence, corruption and the lack of focus on vital public services for citizens.

Many of the youth who participated in this study had little hope for Somalia and did not consider that their future lies in the country. They mentioned the low quality of education, the high level of unemployment and the lack of merit-based recruitment, insecurity and the weak political and public institutions. They also cited scarce entertainment facilities such as playgrounds, public libraries and gardens.

The perception of some of those interviewed for this study could have been affected or changed by the 2017 political transition. On February 8, the federal parliament elected Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo as the president. The jubilation felt by many was a signal of a revival of hope and belief in the country. However it already seems that the federal government's key policy decisions in 2017, including the extradition of an ONLF member to Ethiopia, has created public discontent.

Miscellaneous Factors

There are other reasons seen as secondary factors to youth migration including obliviousness to the risks involved, discrimination and lack of entertainment facilities.

Lack of awareness about the risks associated with migration and life after migration was seen as a factor. "Nobody tells the young people the danger of migration. If they were told how risky the journey is, they wouldn't dare to make it," said one interviewee.

Another cause of migration is discrimination. Somalis are grouped into clans and sub-clans. There are some clans that are considered as second-class citizens. Members of these clans are not allowed to marry people from other clans, get access to employment, are painfully socially isolated and given derogatory names. Kusow and Eno (2015) grouped the Somalia

minority clans into three major categories: the Banadiri Reer Hamar, the Somali Bantu Jareer and the occupational caste groups. According to the authors, the Somali Bantu are discriminated against for their perceived racial differences. The occupational caste groups are discriminated against because of occupations they practiced that other Somali clans historically despised.¹⁸ Youth from these groups migrate in search of a better place to live with respect and equal rights.

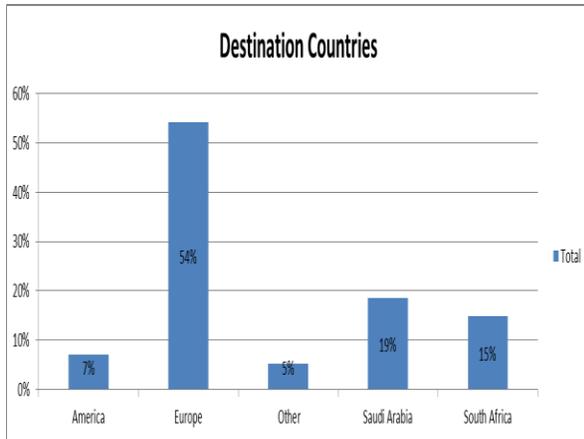
Finally, lack of entertainment facilities was seen as a cause of illicit migration. There are few reading clubs, volunteerism and playgrounds for youth. This, along with unemployment, gives young people plenty of free time to explore other possibilities. Many migrate while others, especially in southern regions, join al-Shabaab and other armed groups.

Destinations and Roots

According to our survey findings, the majority of Somali migrants go to Europe. Of the 55 percent that experienced migration in their families, more than half (54 percent) went to European countries. Because of its distance from Somalia, only seven percent migrated to the United States. Another 19 percent went to Saudi

¹⁸ Abdi M. Kusow and Mohamed A. Eno, "Formula Narratives and the Making of Social Stratification and Inequality", *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* © American Sociological Association, Copenhagen, Denmark, International Migration Vol. 1(3) (2015): 413.

Arabia while 15 percent migrated to South Africa. Only five percent migrated to other countries.



Residents in Burco (23 percent), Bosaso (20 percent), Beledweyne (18 percent), Mogadishu (17 percent), Gaalkacyo (9 percent) and Kismaayo (8 percent) said that family members migrated to Europe. Only five percent of those surveyed in Baydhabo said that their family went to Europe.

Somali illegal migrants prefer Europe, because they believe that working and living conditions are good, and they will be treated better than in the Middle East. A focus group participant in Gaalkacyo explained: “If you work in Saudi Arabia, you don’t have any employee and human rights, but in Europe human rights are valued. There is no deportation in Europe. Even if you don’t work, you get allowances and benefits [ceyr] from the government which is not possible in Saudi Arabia. Getting a legal document from Europe is also easier than getting Saudi passport.”

Baydhabo in southern Somalia offered a different result. Close to half (32 percent) of those surveyed said that family members migrated to Saudi Arabia followed by Mogadishu (22 percent) and Beledweyne (19 percent). In contrast, only nine percent of those surveyed in Gaalkacyo and six percent in Kismaayo, Bosaso and Burco said their family went to Asia despite their proximity to the Red Sea.

When asked why they prefer Saudi Arabia, a focus group participant in Baydhabo summed it up: “It is cheap, less risky and can be reached in a short period of time.” Another estimated the cost of the voyage to Saudi Arabia at about \$500, which is a more manageable amount for many young people than the trip to Europe.

Those in central and northern regions did not like the jobs on offer in Saudi Arabia and other Asian countries. An interviewee in Gaalkacyo said: “Girls from Mudug abhor being maids. There are very few of them who go to Saudi Arabia, and most of these are divorced women.” Another in Bosaso said: “Ethiopians and those from southern Somalia are the majority of those who migrate to Yemen.”

Residents of Beledweyne, Mogadishu and Kismaayo were among those who favored migration to South Africa and other African countries, though mainly as transit countries. “Kismaayo youth mostly go to Angola, South Africa and Mozambique. After they work in South Africa and other African countries, they go to America and

Europe,” said one focus group participant. Kismaayo survey respondents cited America as their final destination (30 percent) compared to 19 percent in Beledweyne, 13 percent in Mogadishu and Gaalkacyo, 10 percent in Burco and Baydhabo and only five percent in Bosaso.

Our findings show that the geographic location of the city has a considerable effect on the migration route and destination. Migrants from Kismaayo, which is near to Kenya, often go through Kenya and travel to South Africa. Another important consideration is the migration cost and risk factor. Travelling to South Africa, for example, costs between \$2,000 and \$3,000 with a minimal risk compared to migrating to Europe.

The major route for Saudi Arabia migrants is the Bari or Sanaag region then on to Yemen. There are two migration centers in Puntland: Mareero in Bosaso and Ceelaayo in Sanaag, which serve as a transit to Yemen. The route to Yemen via Bosaso was popular at the time of the data collection in northern Somalia, because Ethiopia had tightened its borders.

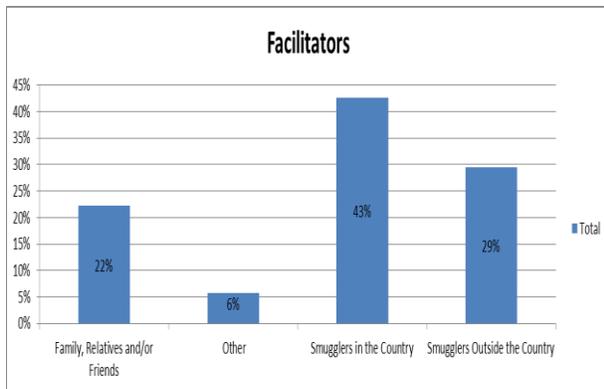
Those migrating to Europe also take this route then head to Sudan. When the migrants reach Sudan, there are also two routes: one is through Libya and the other through Egypt. Another route is to migrate through Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya and then Italy. The Ethiopia route is easier for those in Somaliland, Puntland and central regions. It was one of the first routes that Somali

migrants used before the recent tightening of the border. The route through Kenya and Sudan is easier and popular among migrants from Kismaayo and Mogadishu aiming to reach Europe.

Since 2014 a less risky but expensive route to Europe has emerged through Turkey and Greece. Although this is done using travel documents, many described it as illegal migration. A focus group participant in Gaalkacyo explained how Turkey became a route to Europe: “Turkey gave scholarships to the Somalia federal government. Actually, many of the people who were taken to Turkey as students had no desire to study and were not real students. They bribed the officials to be taken as students to Turkey.” Another interviewee said: “The Turkey route is more expensive but less risky.” Turkey has since changed the process of applying for scholarships – cutting out the government and allowing students to apply directly and online to the Turkish institutions. However, this route is still seen as a good option for those that can afford to pay more to reach Europe.

Facilitators and Costs

When asked who facilitates the migration, a clear majority (72 percent) responded either smugglers in the country (43 percent) or smugglers outside the country (29 percent). Close to one quarter (22 percent) cited family members, relatives or friends while only six percent named other facilitators.



Smugglers in Somalia are believed to be facilitating migration in five of the seven cities surveyed: Mogadishu (23 percent), Bosaso (21 percent), Burco (17 percent), Beledweyne (15 percent) and Gaalkacyo (12 percent). Most youth from these cities migrate to Europe. Only seven percent in Kismaayo and five percent in Baydhabo said that Somali smugglers facilitate migration. This is an indication that in-country smugglers are found in cities where migration to Europe is higher.

More than one quarter of those surveyed in Kismaayo (27 percent) responded that smugglers from outside the country facilitate migration. Most migrants from Kismaayo left from Kenya [mainly refugee camps] to reach African countries primarily South Africa or Sudan (to reach Europe).

A significant number (34 percent) of those surveyed in Baydhabo responded that family, relatives and/or friends facilitate migration to Saudi Arabia via Bosaso and Yemen. Since Saudi Arabia is not far from Somalia compared to Europe, many don't need pre-arrangements and sophisticated networks. The cost to travel to Saudi Arabia

is also less, so smugglers don't see this as a lucrative business. The common name given to facilitators of migration to Saudi Arabia and Yemen is the Arabic word 'mukhallas'.

There are agencies and organizations which facilitate migration. Some government officials are members of these networks. Some migrants get visas to Sudan so that they can travel directly to Libya. The federal government was cited as a facilitator of such travels. But there have been efforts to deal with this. For example, the migration department at the airport was ordered, according to a minister we interviewed, to stop youth under 30 years of age from travelling to certain countries until they brought a reliable person who could guarantee that they were not migrating.

However, government officials including diplomats are believed to be facilitating migration to Turkey. An individual or agency alone cannot get migrants through immigration and airport procedures without assistance from a government official. Visas and other travel requirements are also believed to be provided by certain individuals in authority.

Migration has no fixed price and depends on the route and who facilitates it. The cost of migration to Saudi Arabia is low. South Africa is higher. Migration to Europe and America is the most expensive at between \$10,000 and \$20,000. Costs for illegal migration by airplane are much higher because forged travel documents are often needed.

The network that facilitates the trip to Libya and the Mediterranean Sea is known as 'magafayaal' which is derived from magafe – a ransom-demanding smuggler.¹⁹ Smugglers cover the cost of the journey until migrants reach Libya then parents receive a phone call demanding ransom money in order to release their son or daughter.

Many sell their properties and others collect contributions from family members, relatives and friends. The magafe ransom is compulsory and not negotiable. It is common to see fathers at the mosque after prayers pleading for money to pay the magafe.

There is often more than one magafe meaning parents must pay more than once. A father described a call from his son: "He said that he was in the hands of the first magafe who wanted \$3,000. That was just the first door. The boat and the bigger magafe remained. He was detained again and asked to pay \$5,000. He was screaming when he called me and said that he was beaten and his kidneys would be sold if he failed to pay the money." Other parents tell similar stories of smugglers using physical abuse to get ransom money.

¹⁹ The magafe is the chief of the smugglers. It is also a network that makes money out of migrants. The network has workers in Somalia and neighboring countries who demand ransom money from the parents of migrants while threatening to kill the migrant if they don't pay.

Another interviewee explained how these networks operate and target people: "One condition is that the migrant's mother must be alive as mothers are believed to be more sympathetic than fathers. When, for instance, youth are imprisoned, mothers are ready to sacrifice everything." He added that the family must also have land or property.

Hawalas – informal money brokers – play a role in facilitating the exchange of cash from parents to smugglers. A parent in Bosaso was given the contact number of someone in Baydhabo and asked to send the money through a specific hawala. This ensures that parents don't learn the identities of the smugglers.

There is one positive consequence of these networks. Somali migrants used to die in the Sahara Desert of thirst or starvation. Now, the network feeds them though charges migrants for the food.

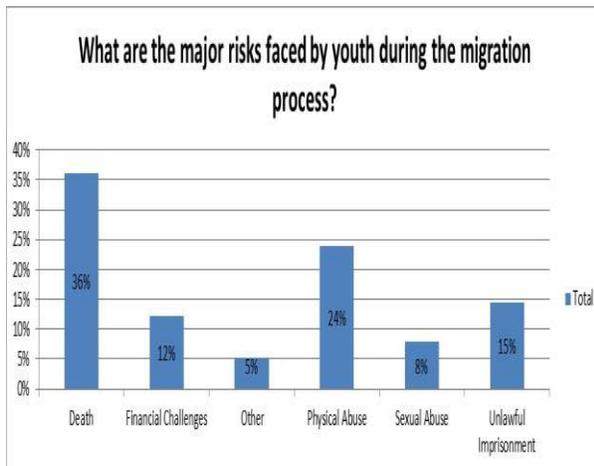
There are incentives for local facilitators such as a young man we interviewed in Bosaso. He said: "If you organize and gather 21 people your boat seat is free of charge."

Because of the lucrative nature of the business, the numbers of those involved in human smuggling have been on the rise. In Puntland, one clan controls much of the trade. One interviewee said: "The majority of the smugglers, about 60 percent, are from one clan that lives around the coastline." These internal networks have strong connections with smugglers outside

the country to help migrants reach their final destination. After travelling from Bosaso, for example, there is a team waiting in Yemen to help the migrants reach Sudan.

Challenges During the Trip

Asked about the major risks migrants face, 36 percent cited death. Close to one quarter (24 percent) responded physical abuse. Unlawful imprisonment (15 percent), financial challenges (12 percent) and sexual abuse (8 percent) were also mentioned as challenges during the trip.



Broken down by city, 20 percent in Burco, 18 percent in Kismaayo, 17 percent in Mogadishu, 14 percent in Gaalkacyo and 12 percent Bosaso cited death as the biggest migration risk. Ten percent in Baydhabo and nine percent in Beledweyne also cited death. Migrants from these cities are aiming for Europe with the risks to their safety very high from dangers including magafo, the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea.

According to UNHCR, an estimated 3,116 migrants lost their lives while crossing the Mediterranean to Europe in 2017.²⁰ A significant number of those who perished came from Somalia. The main reason is believed to be the low quality vessels used by smugglers. In April 2016, more than 200 Somali migrants lost their lives when a boat carrying more than 400 immigrants capsized.²¹

Because of the risks, many who tried to migrate returned home to search for other alternatives. One youth explained why he came back: “I was frightened. We were three. One died in the Mediterranean Sea on his way to Europe, and the other one is in Sweden. I was fearful, and I didn’t have enough money for my trip.”

Physical abuse was cited as the major challenge to migrants going to Libya and Saudi Arabia. Respondents in Mogadishu (28 percent), Bosaso (17 percent), Baydhabo (15 percent) and Beledweyne (14 percent) all cited physical abuse as a major danger. Eleven percent in Kismaayo, nine percent in Gaalkacyo and six percent in Burco feared physical abuse. Fifteen

²⁰ IOM, “Mediterranean Migrant Arrivals Reached 171,635 in 2017; Deaths Reach 3,116”, 05 January 2018, <https://www.iom.int/news/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-reached-171635-2017-deaths-reach-3116>

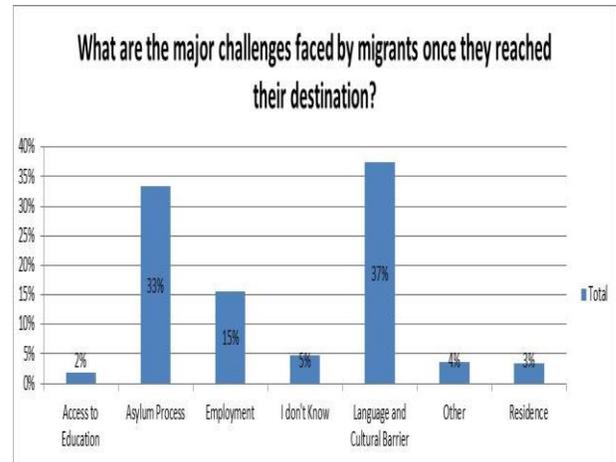
²¹ Hiiraan Online, “Boqolaal dhalinyaro Soomaaliyeed ah oo ku naf-waayay Doon ay ku Tahriibayeen oo la Quustay”, April 2016, http://www.hiiraan.com/news/2016/apr/wararka_maanta18-95609.htm

percent of overall respondents had concerns about unlawful imprisonment.

The magafe were seen as the most likely to commit physical abuse and unlawful imprisonment of those migrating to Europe through the Sahara. Magafe networks arrest migrants and abuse them physically to pressure their families to pay the ransom without delay. Similarly, imprisonment and physical and sexual abuse are dangers for those who migrate to Saudi Arabia. The most likely place for torture and imprisonment is the border between Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Rape cases have also been reported. A young man interviewed in Baydhabo who was deported from Saudi Arabia said: “The hardest part of the migration is the border between Yemen and Saudi.”

Experiences After Arrival

A small percentage of those we surveyed and interviewed experienced life after migration. Language and cultural barriers (37 percent) and the asylum process (33 percent) were seen as two major challenges in the host countries after arrival. Only 15 percent cited employment challenges while residency (3 percent) and access to education (2 percent) were not seen as significant issues.



Language and cultural barriers were short-term challenges for migrants with the asylum process being the most difficult in the long term. After the long and tough journey to Europe, getting residency and citizenship in the host country is difficult. Once Somali migrants reach Italy, most prefer to transit to other European countries more welcoming to refugees and migrants where the asylum process is easier. Smuggling networks that facilitate this transit began in Italy.

The life of Somalis in Europe is different than they expect. The asylum process takes many years, and Somalis face huge residency challenges. Some end up homeless. The researcher of this study interviewed a Somali traveller who seen Somalis sleeping on the streets of France. A father in Burco who spent thousands of dollars to facilitate the migration of his son said the boy was struggling: “What I am saddened about is that he eats rations from churches and sleeps in the streets.”

Most of the available job opportunities are unskilled positions which most would consider to be inferior if they were in Somalia. It is an open secret that many of the diaspora returning home to do businesses, politics or join the public sector did not get the professional jobs in Europe that they are now pursuing in Somalia.

The asylum process is very difficult in Saudi Arabia. Somalis who live and work there face constant fears of imprisonment and deportation. The available opportunities for men are jobs as mechanics and building houses. The women mostly work as maids.

In South Africa, local people have killed Somalis. As a result, some migrants opt to return home after experiencing serious threats to their lives. A youth who returned from South Africa and interviewed in Kismaayo said: "I migrated to South Africa. I don't want to migrate again. A country which is not yours is always worrying. What the people say is mostly a delusion. When you reach the destination, you will regret that you left your country." Narrating these experiences to Somali youth in the country could be a powerful awareness tool to fight illegal and risky adventures.

Contributions to Families Left Behind

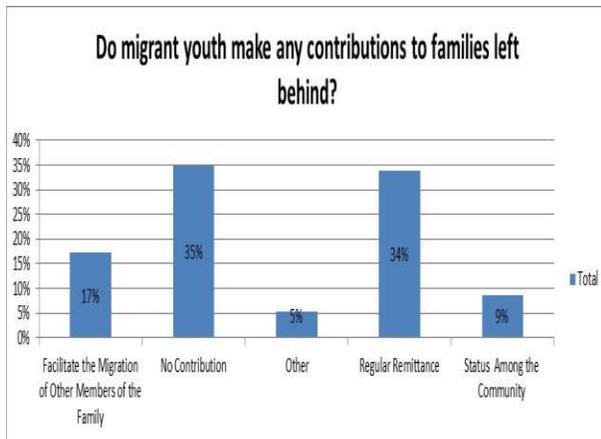
Families often sell properties to facilitate migration costs so many expect to get some return when their loved ones settle in their new home country. However, 35 percent of those surveyed said that migrants do not

contribute to the families left behind. The asylum process takes many years, and during this time migrants can do little for their families back home.

On the other hand, a considerable number (34 percent) contribute regular remittances to their families. Improving the living conditions of families is one of the major drivers of migration. In Somalia, families whose members are outside the country are considered better off as they can receive these remittances. According to the World Bank, an estimated \$1.4 billion in regular remittances are sent to Somalia by about two million Somali diaspora each year.²² Families use the money for food, shelter, education, health services and to establish small businesses.

Interestingly, 17 percent of those we surveyed said that migrants facilitate the migration of other members of the family. Nine percent said that having a family member who migrated increases the social status of parents and family back home. Parents whose children migrated and send regular remittances are valued and borrowing money from local businessmen is easier for them.

²² World Bank, "World Bank Makes Progress to Support Remittance Flows to Somalia", June 10, 2016, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2016/06/10/world-bank-makes-progress-to-support-remittance-flows-to-somalia>



Limited Opportunities at Home

This research found that there is a direct correlation between employment opportunities and the level of migration. Where initiatives existed such as short-term skills development projects supported by a number of international donors and business migration was not a major problem.

The most noticeable opportunities on the ground in the seven cities were vocational skill development projects funded by international donors to stop youth being radicalized or migrating. Beneficiaries of these projects were school dropouts and uneducated youth around the country who studied electricity, plumbing, tailoring, carpentry, mechanics, literacy and numeracy and fishing. Graduates are often given certificates and money to start up their own business or they are introduced to employers. However, the number of youth graduates from these centers are small compared to the proportion of youth in the cities surveyed.

Skills training programs are not usually local initiatives and depend on available funds from international donors. There are two other challenges facing such programs. First, the target groups are uneducated youth and dropouts so most of the graduates of secondary schools and universities do not benefit. Second, the beneficiaries are selected on a clan basis meaning the dropouts and uneducated youth do not have an equal chance to benefit these opportunities. The implementing organizations select mostly friends and relatives for the small number of available positions.

Some youth create their own opportunities such as driving *bajaaj* (three-wheeled taxis), especially in Mogadishu and Baydhabo. In Kismaayo, the *bajaaj* were prohibited by the local authorities at the time of the field data collection for security reasons. Driving taxis rather than *bajaaj* were an alternative for those in Bosaso and Burco. The taxi is called ‘*hooyo ha iga tahriibin*’ in Somali meaning ‘don’t migrate mother’, reflecting the fact that some parents buy taxis for their children to keep them at home.

In southern Somalia, joining the army or an armed group gives young people the chance to secure stipends and employment, however dangerous.

Some organizations, which depend on funds from donors, focus on encouraging youth to come up with business plans and find investment. They also train graduates on CV writing and job interview skills. Such

organizations are few in number and operate mainly in major cities such as Mogadishu, Bosaso and Hargeisa. A member of one of these organizations interviewed in Bosaso explained how they work: “The most important duty of our organization is creating jobs for youth by training them on how they can create a small business. We offer a training package including how to prepare financial and business plans. We teach them customer and market research skills. We also offer training about how they can borrow money from the financial institutions. We give training to those looking for a job on how to write CVs, interview guidelines and how they can be shortlisted.”

There are migration awareness programs in some cities, though they are not regular and mostly come out after Somali youth perish in the seas. Islamic scholars do awareness in mosques, and some organizations also do awareness in schools and via radio. Others, mostly in the north, organize night lectures for youth. HIPS researchers attended a migration awareness night lecture in Burco during their field research in September 2016. A local youth association organized the event, and Islamic scholars, government authorities and youth were keynote speakers and participants. Such gatherings and awareness raising is important but is rarely seen in Somalia.

Opportunities from the Somali government (federal and regional) and Somaliland are limited. At the federal level, cabinet

ministers recently approved a national youth policy²³, however regional authorities have not yet come up with significant youth policies. But policy alone is not enough. The Somali authorities have failed to create meaningful opportunities for youth. They also failed to properly manage the recruitment process in the public sector. Businesses and the non-profit sector do create some opportunities, but the same recruitment challenges remain.

In a nutshell, the available opportunities are not enough to reduce youth migration. The question is what should be done?

Filling the Gap

There are gaps in the efforts made to create education and employment opportunities and better living conditions which would reduce migration.

First, Somali federal and regional authorities are unable to deliver vital public services. Institutions do not work properly and the misappropriation of public funds and the mismanagement of public sector employment opportunities have lowered public confidence in the government. In addition, the authorities have failed to set strategies to regulate the education sector so that youth get proper training and

²³ UNSOM, “*Somalia Launches National Youth Policy at Gathering of Country’s Youth*”, December 2017, <https://unsom.unmissions.org/somalia-launches-national-youth-policy-gathering-country%E2%80%99s-youth>

education that could equip them to find local jobs.

Second, the education system and the skills required for employment do not match each other. Many graduate from schools and universities, but most do not have the skills and capacity necessary for the work. The problem lies with the curriculums and the absence of regulations. Therefore, the majority of the graduates lack the entrepreneurship mindset and the soft skills. On the other hand, the available job opportunities with good compensation/salary require competitive candidates.

Third, labor-intensive projects and investments that would create jobs are lacking. There are few manufacturing enterprises that produce essential household products. The authorities and the international community have failed to improve the security situation, which in turn would attract investment, creating a missed opportunity.

Conclusion

This research was aimed at investigating issues surrounding youth migration in Somalia. Citizens in seven populous cities in different geographical locations and administrations were surveyed and key informants were interviewed. The study has revealed that migration is high in even relatively peaceful places. The causes of migration are many, and the main factors are unemployment and economic

difficulties; the unbalanced, privatized and under-regulated education system; peer pressure; strong smuggling networks; lack of reliable security; and the overall fragile and weak state institutions that have failed to create hope for citizens.

The study also found that Somali migrants face enormous risks and challenges during the migration process including death, detention and sexual and physical abuse. Moreover, the majority of the migrants do not achieve the high expectations they had had before they migrated, and many face a difficult life in their destination countries. State authorities, the private and nonprofit sectors and the international community have had little impact on halting the flight of Somali youth. With new leadership in the federal government, the Somali authorities and the international community should prioritize tackling youth migration and its causes including creating opportunities for young people.

Policy Considerations

Migration results from a confluence of many factors. Dealing with all causes is the ideal remedy. Illegal migration cannot be eliminated, but it can be reduced significantly. To do this, stakeholders should consider the following policy recommendations.

Opportunities: The creation of employment and business opportunities by the Somali authorities is the most fundamental factor that can reduce illegal migration in Somalia. A comprehensive policy that secures employment for Somali youth [under the age of 30], who are about 75 percent of the population,²⁴ is a long overdue. It is encouraging that Somalia's National Development Plan (2017-2019) has a component that deals with migration. The NDP envisages creating direct and indirect employment in each sector, skills development, putting in place a social protection system and policy legal and institutional development.²⁵ Effective implementation of the plan would help reduce migration.

Somalia has an abundance of resources that can be utilized. Investment in the agriculture, water, livestock and marine

sectors would employ a large portion of Somali youth. This, however, needs the federal government and regional administrations to increase budget appropriations in these sectors as well as direct foreign investment. Public-private partnerships should also be encouraged. Improving the security situation is a prerequisite for investments.

Federal and local administrations should create a merit-based recruitment process. Citizens should have equal chances to be employed without clan and foreign passport considerations. The historical clan dominance in Somalia's political and social sectors and the complete collapse of the central government encouraged the reliance on clan and family connections. This mindset should be challenged and the quality and competency of the young person should be the key consideration when hiring. This will improve institutions and advance the quality of education in Somalia.

Awareness: Educating the youth about the perils of *tahriib* is crucial in reducing migration in Somalia. Some local and international organizations and volunteers engage in awareness campaigns. But these are uncoordinated and not enough. Campaigns should be continuous and convey the risks associated with migration and life in destination countries. Awareness creation while youngsters are in school is important. Media and Islamic scholars awareness is also needed. Migrated Somalis in Europe and other African and Asian

²⁴ United Nations Population Fund, "POPULATION ESTIMATION SURVEY 2014 FOR THE 18 PRE-WAR REGIONS OF SOMALIA", (2014): 42 – 43.

²⁵ Federal Government of Somalia, "National Development Plan", *Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development*, Mogadishu, Somalia, 10/(2016): 123 -125.

countries should partake in the campaign using social media. Returnees who have firsthand experience should also be part of the awareness raising effort.

Formal Education and Technical Skills:

Education is a powerful tool to mitigate illegal and dangerous migration. The formal education institutions in Somalia are highly privatized and youth from poor families have little or no access to education. The federal and state authorities, as well as international donors, should work together in advancing access to free and affordable education. The formation of regulatory commissions should be expedited to enhance the quality of education. A quality education system will help institutions produce competitive students, which can significantly contribute to the revival of the economy, peace and stability and the performance of state and non-state institutions.

Further, technical training programs can help youth get short-term training and employment. Therefore, advancing access to technical and vocational training is essential in creating alternative opportunities than migration for youth.

Peace and Stability: Peace and stability should be advanced in Beledweyne, Mogadishu, Baydhabo and Kismaayo, areas that cited security as a driving force of

migration. Improving the security situation would definitely reduce the migration trends in Somalia.

Border Restrictions: Smugglers have flourished because of the poorly controlled borders. Tightening the border has a direct impact on migration, smugglers and routes. The route to Ethiopia is not a favored option for migrants because of the difficulty of crossing the border. As a result, smugglers and migrants use the uncontrolled Bosaso route to facilitate migration. A coordinated effort among the federal government and states are required to control national borders.

Creating Hope and Better Living Environments:

The state collapse and the years of destruction, lawlessness and weak government institutions at the national and regional levels have dashed the hopes of young people. Many youth repeatedly told us that they have no faith in the government, and they do not see a better future ahead. Both government and private sector actors should collaborate and create hope. Youth tailored programs such as public libraries, sports facilities and community centers could be created to establish an environment welcoming to young people.

