



STUDY ON THE SITUATIONS OF MIGRANT WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA - Key findings

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Background of the study

- The **overall objective** was to provide DEVCO Staff, relevant EU Delegations and key stakeholders with a report and knowledge management pieces on the situations of migrant women and girls in the Horn of Africa region.
- The **specific objectives** (SO) of the study were as follows:
 1. To understand data gaps related to migrant women and girls in the Horn of Africa, and how to address them, providing specific recommendations on sex-disaggregated data collection;
 2. To understand the experiences of migrant women and girls and the specific challenges migrant women and girls face when migrating within the Horn of Africa region or from the region (to Gulf/Arab countries, to Northern Africa or to Europe), including risks of gender-based violence, labour exploitation, human trafficking in human being, with the aim to provide specific policy and operational recommendations for actions to be taken.
- The study focused on six countries in the Horn of Africa, including **Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda.**
- The report was drafted based on a comprehensive **review of existing literature** on the situations of migrant women in the selected target countries and beyond. The study was augmented by **key informant interviews** with development partners, EU staff, UN agencies and academic institutions

Women and girls' migration in the Horn of Africa

- Reasons for migrating

- Poverty, famine, conflict, ethnic fights, natural and man-made disasters, and/or persecution
- Deeply entrenched gender inequalities, such as:
 - Discriminatory access to education, training, decent work, and social protection, as well as to resources such as capital, land, and property
 - Restrictive gender roles and norms
 - Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)
 - Child, early and forced marriage
 - Female genital mutilation/ cutting (FGM/C)
- Economic opportunities
- Family/ peer pressure

- Agency and empowerment

- Critical to view migrant women and girls as agents rather than victims
- Migration can promote women and girl's socio-economic empowerment, autonomy and agency and contribute to changing social norms, including gender relations

Data on women and girls in migration in the Horn of Africa

- Serious **lack of gender data** in the context of migration in the HoA
- **Emigration**: women and girls represent ca 50%
- **Immigration**: women and girls represent ca 50%
- **Forced displacement**:
 - Refugees: women and girls represent 57% of refugees in **Sudan**, 54% in **South Sudan** , and in **Ethiopia** women make up 25% of the adult refugee population.
 - Internally displaced persons (IDPs): women and girls make up 46% of the IDPs in **Sudan**. In **South Sudan**, 80% of internally displaced households are women-headed.
- **Irregular migration** (only non sex-disaggregated estimates available)
 - It is estimated that irregular migrant workers make up between 60 – 70% of all Ethiopians in the Gulf
- **Smuggling of migrants**:
 - 73 per cent of migrants in the Horn of Africa use smugglers for some part of their journey
- **Trafficking in persons**:
 - Along the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes to Europe, 20% of detected trafficking victims were girls with 72% of them having experienced sexual exploitation.
- **Human and labor rights violations, including SGBV**:
 - 50% of migrant women travelling along the Central Mediterranean Migration Route reported were subjected to sexual violence or abuse during the journey.

Barriers to sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics in migration

- **Gender data not a priority** by governments, international organizations and donors
- **Limited awareness** among policymakers, legislators, and other users of statistics about the importance of gender data on migration
- **Lack of policies** and legislative frameworks to enable the collection, analysis and dissemination of gender data
- **Lack of capacity** on the production of gender data
- **Limited resources** for necessary data systems and capacity building of staff
- Aggravated by **general obstacles** to collecting data on migration:
 - Lack of adequate statistical systems and infrastructure
 - Lack of standardization of data
 - Lack of access to data among different stakeholders
 - Weak coordination among producers of statistics

Challenges for migrant women and girls in the Horn of Africa

• Lack of regular migration pathways

- A large proportion of migrant women and girls in the Horn of Africa region move irregularly because regular migration channels are limited or to avoid lengthy administrative procedures to apply for a visa, or to sidestep legal requirements e.g., an employment contract or the minimum age
- Driven underground, women and girls using irregular routes via land and sea are exposed to various rights violations by brokers, smugglers, traffickers, militias, policemen, soldiers, border guards and other migrants.
- Irregular journeys via land and sea are associated with the risk of physical exhaustion, starvation and dehydration, capsized boats and drowning, or attacks by criminal gangs who capture, torture, rape, and hold women and girls hostage until the gangs receive ransoms from family members and friends back home

• Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)

- Sexual violence against migrants is used as means for extortion, subjugation, punishment, and/or entertainment, often involving elements of intense cruelty and psychological torture
- High levels of impunity of perpetrators who range from smugglers, traffickers, border officials, police officers, to other migrants and family members
- Typically, not a once-off experience

Challenges for migrant women and girls in the Horn of Africa (*cont*)

- Trafficking in human beings

- Women and girls particularly vulnerable due to deeply entrenched gender inequalities , who are mainly subjected to trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced labour

- Smuggling of migrants

- Smugglers often hold migrant women and girls at ransom and subject them to beatings, threats, sexual violence, forced work, including sexual exploitation

- Continuum between smuggling and trafficking in persons

Challenges for migrant women and girls in the Horn of Africa (*cont*)

• Labor rights violations

- Lack of access to decent work and social protection
 - 59% of Ethiopian women migrant workers didn't receiving any entitlement in the Middle East
- Unethical recruitment
 - Brokers and private employment agencies are often responsible for exploitative practices such as the provision of false information regarding the type and conditions of employment in the destination country; the charging of excessive recruitment fees, which often result in migrant women running into large debts; the confiscation of identity documents to control the worker; and threats and intimidation and withholding of wages
- Forced labor
 - Migrant women at higher risk of forced labour. E.g., Ethiopian migrant women (61.4 per cent) being significantly more vulnerable to forced labour than men (38.6 per cent), particularly to sexual exploitation.
- Labour rights abuses of migrant women domestic workers (MWDW)
 - High risk of rights violations in the Middle East and Gulf states and in the region, including excessive work hours, lack of rest and privacy, lack of pay, food deprivations, movement restrictions, isolation, sexual abuse, and physical/ psychological harassment
 - Most GCC countries and countries within the Horn of Africa exclude MWDW from their national labour codes
 - Particularly prevalent in the absence of employment contracts
 - MWDW rarely report abuses and seek help
- Migrant child labor
 - Migrant child laborers are at increased risk of exploitative work including forced work. E.g., UNICEF found that almost half of the migrant adolescents they interviewed were forced to work while migrating along the Central Mediterranean route, as opposed to 37 per cent of respondents who were 25 and older.
 - Their vulnerability is exacerbated given that they are legally not allowed to work due to their age or migration status and hence resort to informal work

Challenges for migrant women and girls in the Horn of Africa (cont)

- Limited access to services for migrant women and girls

- Essential services for victims/survivors of GBV violence

- Limited in all six target countries of this study due to a lack of national laws, policies, action plans and referral networks on GBV that identify migrant women and girls as particularly vulnerable to GBV; a lack of governance, oversight, and accountability mechanisms; limited or no infrastructure and systems to identify and assist victims in a gender-responsive and child-friendly manner; and lacking resources and financing including for training staff on the provision of quality essential services

- Health services

- Migrant women are vulnerable to physical and mental health risks arising from situations such as sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking in persons, forced sex work and labour, extortion, abduction, torture, dangerous sea and land crossings, food and water rationing or starvation, and/or dehydration.

- Access to public health care services are limited in the six countries and in destination countries outside the Horn of Africa

- Justice services

- Access to justice services is extremely limited for migrant women and girls in the six countries, and particularly for domestic workers working in the Middle East and Gulf States

- Specialized justice services for victims/ survivors of SGBV and trafficking are particularly scarce

- Education and vocational training

- Migrant girls have limited or no access to educational services due to lack of eligibility; school fees and other related costs such as transportation, school uniforms, and materials; language barriers; and lack of familiarity with local systems

- Reintegration services

- Economic and social reintegration services are limited or lacking entirely in the six countries

- In some countries like Ethiopia, reintegration services are mainly provided to migrant returnee men

- Services during transit and upon arrival

- There is a lack of gender-responsive and child-friendly services available during transit and upon arrival, with most available services being provided by international organisations

Challenges for migrant women and girls in the Horn of Africa (*cont*)

- Lack of access to information about regular and safe migration
 - Migrant women and girls have limited access to information about regular and safe migration in the Horn Africa, including about the gender-specific risks of migration
 - Migrant women and girls often lack information about the differences between regular and irregular migration
 - Even if informed about the challenges of migration many proceed migrating due a lack of viable options back home
 - Migrant women and girls tend to rely more on informal information passed on via word of mouth (from family and friends, returnees and/or brokers) rather than on online information sources
 - Some governments in the region such as Ethiopia offer mandatory pre-departure trainings via registered employment agencies, but impact is patchy

Challenges for migrant women and girls in the Horn of Africa (cont)

- Multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination
 - Migrant women and girls are vulnerable to overlapping forms of discrimination based on their identity characteristics such as:
 - gender
 - age
 - race
 - ethnicity
 - nationality
 - religion
 - marital and family status
 - sexual orientation and gender identity
 - disability
 - migration status
 - health status
 - HIV status
 - pregnancy
 - economic and social situation

Challenges for migrant women and girls in the Horn of Africa (cont)

- Detention

- Refugees and migrant women and girls may be subjected to detention in harsh and inhumane conditions within and outside the Horn of Africa
- Detainees are at high risk of human rights violations, including SGBV partly due to a lack of gender-segregated, gender-responsive, child-sensitive or children-only facilities, and lack of female officials in detention centers

Challenges for migrant women and girls in the Horn of Africa (cont)

- Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrant women and girls
 - Migrant, refugee and internally displaced women and girls within and from the Horn of Africa are particularly vulnerable to coronavirus infection
 - Socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are particularly severe for migrant women and girls in the Horn of Africa:
 - Loss of jobs and livelihoods
 - Unable to return because of closed borders, interrupted long-distance transport and unavailability of governmental agencies/ service providers
 - Elevated risk of human trafficking due to their increased economic hardship
 - Increased risk of SGBV whilst essential services have been limited
 - Increased xenophobia and racism (being accused of spreading COVID-19)

National migration policies

- None of the six focus countries of this study currently have adopted a comprehensive migration policy
- **Kenya, South Sudan, and Sudan** have draft national migration policies in place
- **Ethiopia and Uganda** are currently drafting its national migration policy
- Somalia plans to initiate the drafting of the policy in 2021.
- Whereas some of the draft policies integrate gender equality considerations, others make more cursory references to the situations of women and girls, lacking gender-responsive policy strategies and actions.

Recommendations

- ✓ Improve the collection, analysis, dissemination and use of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics on migration
- ✓ Ensure that the development and implementation of national migration policies and action plans are gender-responsive
- ✓ Expand and diversify regular migration pathways to ensure safe, orderly, and regular migration of women and girls
- ✓ Prevent and eliminate all forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against migrant women and girls
- ✓ Prevent and eliminate trafficking in human beings, including migrant women and girls
- ✓ Eliminate smuggling of migrants
- ✓ Promote decent work and social protection for migrant women and girls
- ✓ Promote fair and ethical recruitment of women migrant workers
- ✓ Eliminate all forms of forced labour of migrant women and girls
- ✓ Protect the labour rights of migrant women domestic workers

Recommendations *(cont)*

- ✓ Eliminate migrant child labour
- ✓ Guarantee essential services for victims/survivors of GBV violence
- ✓ Guarantee universal access to health care for all migrant women and girls
- ✓ Ensure justice services for all migrant women and girls
- ✓ Guarantee education and vocational training for all migrant women and girls
- ✓ Adopt gender-responsive reintegration services
- ✓ Ensure gender-responsive services during transit and upon arrival
- ✓ Eliminate multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination
- ✓ End detention of migrant women and girls
- ✓ Improve access to gender-responsive information about regular and safe migration
- ✓ Mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrant women and girls

Questions?

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Thank you