



**MMC East Africa
& Yemen**

QUARTER 1 2019



Quarterly Mixed
Migration Update:
East Africa & Yemen

This Quarterly Mixed Migration Update (QMMU) covers the East Africa and Yemen region (EAY). The core countries of focus for this region are Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Yemen. Depending on the quarterly trends and migration-related updates, more attention may be given to any of the countries over the rest.

The QMMUs offer a quarterly update on new trends and dynamics related to mixed migration and relevant policy developments in the region. These updates are based on a compilation of a wide range of secondary (data) sources, brought together within a regional framework and applying a mixed migration analytical lens. Similar QMMUs are available for all MMC regions.

The Mixed Migration Centre is a global network consisting of six regional hubs and a central unit in Geneva engaged in data collection, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration.

For more information on the MMC, the QMMUs from other regions and contact details of regional MMC teams, visit mixedmigration.org and follow us at [@Mixed_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

MMC's understanding of mixed migration

"Mixed migration" refers to cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking, and people seeking better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people in mixed flows have a range of legal statuses as well as a variety of vulnerabilities. Although entitled to protection under international human rights law, they are exposed to multiple rights violations along their journey. Those in mixed migration flows travel along similar routes, using similar means of travel - often travelling irregularly, and wholly, or partially, assisted by migrant smugglers.

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Michael Kirby Smith (2013)

Ethiopian migrants outside the Migrant Response Centre in Haradh,
Yemen, May 2013.

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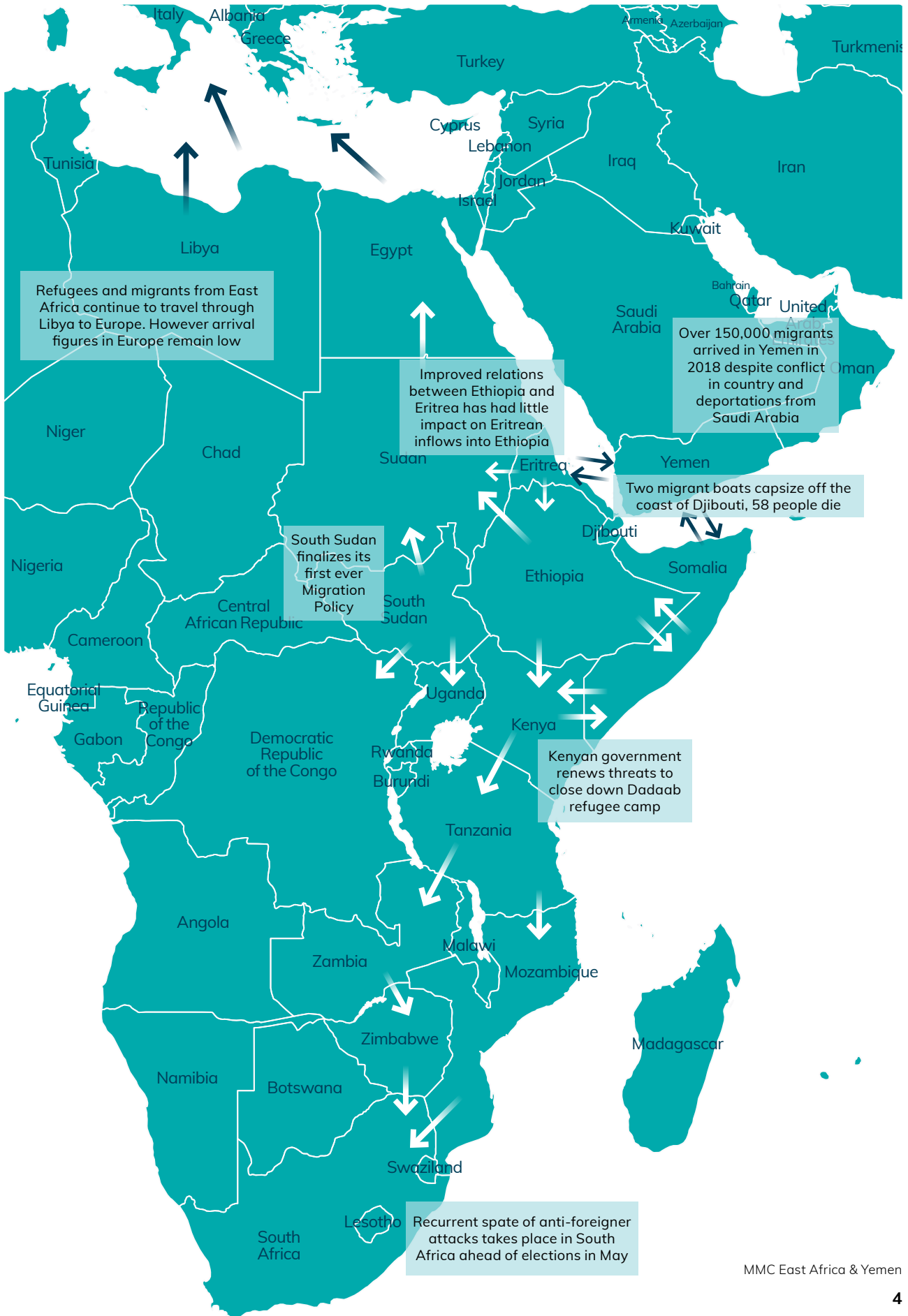
Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: East Africa & Yemen

Quarter 1 - 2019

Key Updates

- **Record displacement:** Displacement figures are at an all-time high with 5.18 million refugees and IDPs at the end of February 2019, and projections that by the end of 2019, there will be 5.5M refugees, and 7.4M IDPs within the region.
- **Ethiopia-Eritrea relations:** Improvements in Ethiopia-Eritrea relations have not necessarily resulted in reduced outflows from Eritrea.
- **Closure of Dadaab refugee camps?** In February 2019 the Kenyan government mounted a renewed effort to close Dadaab refugee camp. The Kenyan government asked UNHCR to expedite the relocation of refugees and asylum seekers living in Dadaab, and to close the camp within a six-month period, due to security reasons.
- **Ongoing mixed migration on the Eastern route:** Ethiopian migrants moving to Yemen undeterred by deportations and conflict. In January 2019, two migrant boats capsized off the coast of Djibouti as it was heading towards Yemen killing 58 people and injuring 15.
- **Deportations from Saudi Arabia:** Despite ongoing deportations of Ethiopians from Saudi Arabia, many deportees indicate they intend to migrate to Saudi Arabia again.
- **Low number of arrivals in Europe:** In the first quarter of 2019, only 492 people arrived in Italy via the Central Mediterranean route (compared to approximately 6,000 in the first quarter of 2018), of which only 44 nationals from the Horn of Africa.

Regional Overview



Mixed Migration Regional Updates

Mixed Migration within East Africa

This quarter, mixed migration dynamics within the region continued to be characterised by complex movements, driven by a mix of reasons including: economic; violence and general insecurity; a lack of rights in country of origin; personal and/or family reasons; lack of social services/poorly governed country; and environmental factors, among others.¹

According to UNHCR, displacement figures are at an all-time high with [5.18 million refugees and IDPs](#) at the end of February 2019, and projections that by the end of 2019, there will be [5.5M refugees](#), and 7.4M IDPs within the region.² Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia remain the three main refugee hosting countries hosting refugees and asylum seekers from Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia, Yemen, and South Sudan. While some countries in the region have shown commitment to implement initiatives to address the socio-economic needs of refugees within their host countries (through frameworks such as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework), policy decisions to place limits on access to rights and integration have in the past [encouraged refugees and asylum seekers to join mixed migratory and irregular flows](#).

Policy responses to mixed movements are being addressed through both regional and continental efforts. Following various rounds of [National Consultations](#), in March 2019 the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) held a regional experts meeting to review the Draft Protocol on Free Movement of Persons and its road map for implementation. The main aim of the Protocol is to facilitate the free movement of persons within this region in order to enhance regional economic integration and development. This could see increased legal pathways, especially for migrant workers, to work and settle in IGAD countries.

Similarly, the African Union (AU) held its 32nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union in February 2019 and during this session held a High Level Side Event on [Migration and Displacement in Africa](#) whose theme was addressing the underlying causes of migration and displacement in Africa through innovative risk financing mechanisms. With regards to migration, Member States welcomed the establishment of the African Migration Observatory in Morocco. The aim of the Observatory is to support existing continental initiatives on migration through the collection, exchange, analysis, and sharing of data with the view to efficiently address migration challenges.

In addition, the Session concluded that a [Continental Operational Centre](#) for combating irregular migration with a particular focus on human trafficking and migrant smuggling be established in Khartoum, Sudan. Sudan remains a key player in mixed migration with the European Union pledging USD 2 million on a migration deal with the country. The country remains a key source and transit country for refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa on their way to Europe. However, the country has also been accused of crimes against [refugee and migrants](#) including torture, kidnapping, extortion, violence, sexual assault and corruption by border authorities and police abuse. Reports indicate ongoing arbitrary arrests, detention

¹ According to data collected from the Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative (4Mi)

² This includes Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda

and [deportation of refugees and migrants](#), particularly along the country's northern border with Libya.

At the end of February, the High Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen took place in Geneva, Switzerland. This was the third pledging event to take place since the beginning of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. While the focus of the event was to increase funding for humanitarian assistance to Yemen, Danish Refugee Council's Secretary General, Christian Friis Bach, spoke on the need to "scale up support to both refugees, migrants, and IDPs...and to protect the people of Yemen and in Yemen".

Eritrea-Ethiopia relations and indefinite military service

It was with much anticipation - following an [announcement in June 2018](#) that Eritrea and Ethiopia had agreed to end the two-decade long "state of war" between the two countries and resume friendly relations, including the [reopening](#) of border points - that the humanitarian community expected to see a change in cross-border displacement dynamics. Forced military conscription, often justified by the Eritrean government as a necessary defence measure during the hostilities, remains one of the primary drivers of migration for both Eritrean children and adults. To date, the Eritrean government has not made any changes to the duration of national conscription and it remains as service for an indefinite period.

Renewed concerns have emerged surrounding reports that the EU is backing a [road-building project](#) that will use National Service conscripts, who critics argue are "forced labour" and are recruited for an indefinite period. The EU has stated that it will increase the pay rates of the national service recruits while still upholding their human rights.

While UNHCR projects that the Eritrean refugee caseload in Ethiopia will go down to [123,841 by the end of 2019](#) (from 173,879 at the end of 2018), figures in the final quarter of 2018 suggest that the opening of borders between the two countries actually resulted in an influx of Eritreans crossing over into Ethiopia with UNHCR approximating that the average daily rates of arrivals was [180 individuals](#) – up from 50. By the end of 2018, there were over 1,700 refugees registered at Endabaguna Reception Center [awaiting transfer to the camps](#) with an average daily rate of 390 individuals across all camps in Ethiopia. [Family reunification](#) was cited highly as one of the reasons for the influx, and anecdotal reports suggest that the high levels of arrivals have continued into the first quarter of this year.

Furthermore, interviews conducted with Eritrean refugees in refugee camps in northern Ethiopia indicate that a sizeable number of Eritrean youth arriving into Ethiopia opt to [pursue onward movements](#) from the camps to urban centres within, as well as outside of Ethiopia. In fact [research indicates](#) that the number of Eritreans crossing into Sudan has not reduced. This is likely due to various reasons: the driving factors for migration for many Eritreans (forced conscription, political oppression) still remain; many Eritreans remain sceptical of the political changes between Ethiopia and Eritrea which some feel have not been transparent especially with rumours of security crackdowns in border towns; and the deterioration of living standards for many refugees living in over-populated camps in Tigray State. Additionally, Sudan's smuggling networks still remain operational and flexible allowing them to adapt to broader regional shifts including closure of old routes thereby making it easier for migrants to cross through.

The Government of Ethiopia continues to advance its 'Out of Camp' policy under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework which will seek to provide work permits to refugees, increase their enrolment in schools, provide access to irrigable land, facilitate local integration, earmark jobs in industrial parks for refugees and provide access to documentation to facilitate access to essential social services. In addition to the continuation of factors that drive people out of Eritrea, this could be a pull factor for Eritreans to come to Ethiopia once rolled out. Meanwhile, government representatives from both countries held high level meetings in January 2019 to discuss the [regularisation of trade and transport relations](#) between the two States.

Closure of Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya

In what appears to be a cyclical occurrence of threats and acquiescence, in February 2019 the Kenyan government mounted a renewed effort to close Dadaab refugee camp. According to [Human Rights Watch](#), the Kenyan government asked UNHCR to expedite the relocation of refugees and asylum seekers living in Dadaab, and to close the camp within a six-month period, due to [security reasons](#).

To date, UNHCR has voluntarily repatriated over 79,000 Somali refugees and asylum seekers since December 2014. As at the end of January 2019, there were 209,979 mostly Somali refugees in Dadaab. Despite this push by the Kenyan government, cross border movement monitoring indicates that [46%](#) of households in Dadaab will not return to Somalia. Anecdotal reports suggest that a number of refugees further opt to engage in onward movement from the camp to urban areas within Kenya or the region, or in migratory flows to countries outside of the region. 4Mi data suggests that [6%](#) of the Somalis who started their journey in Somalia had sought asylum in Kenya.

South Sudan Migration Policy, migrant flows & regional relations

The Government of South Sudan in February 2019 began working on finalizing its [first migration policy](#) that it hopes will enhance the country's capacity to manage its borders while also protecting the rights of migrants. This migration policy comes at a time when South Sudan is grappling with its 1.87 million IDPs and 293,966 refugees in-country.

Regarding regional relations, the Eritrean President, Isaias Afwerki and Ethiopian Prime Minister, Abiy Mohamed visited Juba in March 2019 to discuss on matters pertaining regional peace, economic ties and infrastructure development. In addition to this, the two government officials also held [high level talks](#) with President Salva Kiir following fears that the September 2018 peace deal was falling apart.

The Eastern route from the Horn of Africa to Yemen

The Eastern Route refers to movement of refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa towards Yemen and the Gulf countries. The main profile of people on this route are Ethiopians and Somalis. Given the ongoing humanitarian situation in Yemen, this quarter has seen bi-directional flows, with in addition to the ongoing movement of Ethiopians and Somalis to Yemen, also Yemenis and returning Ethiopians and Somalis going from Yemen to the Horn of Africa. For a majority of refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa, Yemen is a transit country on their way to Saudi Arabia.

Returns from Saudi Arabia and Arrivals in Yemen

As at the end of January 2019, an estimated 230,000 Ethiopians, including 15,793 registered minors, had returned to Ethiopia from Saudi Arabia since the beginning of the returns process in 2017. Despite the Saudi government granting an amnesty period to all irregular migrants to leave the country without facing penalties, only [14 percent have reported having returned voluntarily](#). Deportations appear not to have made any negative impression on the appetite of Ethiopian migrants to travel towards the Gulf, as 77% of men and 23% women said they plan to [return to Saudi Arabia](#). 4Mi data shows that one of the major drivers for movement to Yemen and the Gulf is economic.

While there have been no updated figures on migrant arrivals in Yemen in 2019 due to access constraints, IOM estimates that in 2018, 159,838 Ethiopians and Somalis arrived in Yemen. In fact, this [number is higher than the total number of irregular arrivals by sea in Europe in 2018](#) and more than the total number of migrants that arrived in Yemen in 2017 (100,000) according to IOM. This is despite the worsening humanitarian situation in Yemen where more than 3.3 million Yemenis have been displaced and 28.6 million people are in critical need of humanitarian assistance.

Hazardous sea crossings

In January 2019, two migrant boats capsized off the coast of Djibouti as it was heading towards Yemen killing [58 people and injuring 15](#), mostly Ethiopians. Djibouti remains a major transit country for refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa intending to travel to the Gulf Countries. The Bab el-Mandeb strait between Yemen and the Horn acts as the main transit point for both Yemenis fleeing war in Yemen and for Horn of Africa nationals aiming to reach the Gulf. Migrant deaths in the Red Sea are not uncommon.

The Northern Route towards North Africa & Europe

The Northern Route refers to movements of refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa (mainly Eritreans and Somalis) towards Northern Africa and, for some, onwards to Europe passing through Sudan, Egypt and Libya.

Arrivals in Europe & East African refugees and migrants in Libya

According to UNHCR, the total number of arrivals in Europe between January and March 2019 was [12,408 persons](#). Reports show that the number of irregular entries into the EU are at the [lowest level](#) in five years. Just 492 people arrived in Italy via the Central Mediterranean route, which is the route most frequently used by refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa. While a subdued level of movement is typical during the first quarter due to adverse weather conditions, this represents a significant drop in number of arrivals into Italy from 5,945 over the same period in 2018. Refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa accounted for just 44 of the arrivals into Italy in the first quarter of 2019, representing less than 9 percent – a large difference from numbers at the peak of European sea arrivals in 2016, with more than 40,000 arrivals from the Horn of Africa.

As data shows that refugees and migrants from the region are still moving northwards towards Europe, this may suggest that increasing numbers are stranded along the way. As at the end of March 2019, there were 8,728 Eritrean, 3,680 Somali, 1,252 Ethiopian and 156 South Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers in Libya. Measures by EU-supported Libyan coastguards to intercept and return boats departing from the Libyan coast and efforts to [repatriate irregular migrants](#) continued, possibly also contributing to the reduction in arrival figures in Europe.

Risk of kidnapping on the rise

According to 4Mi data used to inform a report piece by [The Guardian](#), incidences of refugee and migrant kidnapping are on the rise. Data shows that more than 15% of interviewed refugees and migrants travelling north from the Horn of Africa in 2018 had been kidnapped at least once during their journey. Preliminary analysis reveals that smugglers may be resorting to kidnapping as an alternative source of income, due to the decreasing number of people travelling on the northern route towards Europe, as a result of attempts to control or stop migration.

In recognition of Sudan as a major human smuggling transit hub and the risks reported by migrants in country, IOM in partnership with government stakeholders, and other non-governmental counterparts, has opened a second Migrant Resource Center in Gedarif State which will act as a hub for migrants and potential migrants to receive information and services.

Organ trafficking in Egypt

According to the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons in 2018, 99% of victims of trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa are [trafficked within the same sub-region](#) while only 1% are trafficked across sub-regions. The various forms of exploitation in Sub-Saharan Africa include trafficking for sexual exploitation, for forced labour, and for other purposes. In East Africa, less than 500 people are trafficked for either sexual exploitation, forced labour, organ removal and other purposes. In Egypt, media reports show cases of refugees and migrants being exploited for organ removal as was the case with an Eritrean refugee who underwent surgery and had his [kidney removed](#) for an alleged USD 5,000.

Refugee status recognition for Eritreans in Israel

In an announcement by the Director General of the Population and Immigration Authority, the Israeli government has issued a qualification to a [landmark ruling](#) that gave Eritrean asylum seekers in Israel hope of finally being recognised as refugees by the State. The government announced that it would not grant blanket protection to Eritrean nationals who deserted military service in Eritrea in search of refugee status in the country. Instead it proposed the formulation of a variety of classifications which would consider for example, Eritreans who fled before being conscripted and those who were actually conscripted and tortured, in a different light – in contravention of the UN Refugee Convention which offers protections to those who have a “well-founded fear”.

This has put Eritrean asylum seekers in the country on unsteady ground, which [critics fear](#) is a delay tactic employed by the government to eventually not offer protection to any Eritreans. Israel has a notoriously low acceptance rate for Eritrean asylum seekers at less than one percent.

The Southern Route towards South Africa

Despite receiving limited attention in comparison to other migratory routes out of the region, south-south migration from the Horn of Africa towards countries in Southern Africa, notably South Africa, Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique remains prevalent.

Within the region, the governments of Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania are set to hold technical meetings in partnership with IOM and the EU in April 2019. This inter-governmental consultation is expected to deliver a [final comprehensive roadmap](#) to address the situation of irregular migrants on the Southern route. This roadmap is set to address issues on human trafficking and migrant smuggling, alternatives to detention practices, and explore better coordination mechanisms to protect vulnerable migrants while also improving existing voluntary return and reintegration processes. Some of the recommendations that were adopted include the [harmonization of anti-trafficking and smuggling laws](#) within the three countries, and sensitization of the diaspora of the countries of origin on the risks of irregular migration.

Risks en route South

This quarter, attention was drawn to the prevalence of human smuggling and suspected human trafficking operations in the region and on the route south. In March 2019, detectives from the Kenyan Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) arrested 2 people in the Nairobi neighbourhood of Eastleigh, suspected to be part of a [human smuggling syndicate](#). According to the detectives, the two suspects were part of a larger group smuggling migrants from the region to other countries. The detectives also recovered false Kenyan, Ethiopian and Somali passports during the investigation. Similarly, three other suspects were arrested in Isiolo, Kenya who were trying to smuggle eight Eritrean nationals aged 17 and 31 years.

These reports come on the back of [allegations of human trafficking](#) of third country nationals levelled against a high level Kenyan government official. MMC's 4Mi data has previously highlighted the [role of government officials](#) in turning a blind eye or even actively participating in human smuggling activities.

In early 2019, it was reported that the Ethiopian government was assisting 541 nationals stranded in Tanzania to [obtain travel documents to return home](#). This followed the release of another 1,900 Ethiopians in Tanzania who had been allegedly held by the Tanzanian authorities.

Anti-migrant sentiments in South Africa

In February 2019, a spate of recurrent xenophobic attacks on foreigners were reported in Durban, South Africa. Such outbreaks of violence are not uncommon in the country, and are often linked to unemployment levels in the country, currently pegged at [27%](#). In a mirroring of politics in Europe, [anti-migrant rhetoric](#) has been capitalised on by politicians to secure votes ahead of the May 8th 2019 polls.

Highlighted New Research and Reports



[Disrupting the Finances of Criminal Networks Responsible for Human Smuggling and Trafficking, Research and Evidence Facility, February 2019](#)

A report launched by the Research and Evidence Facility in 2019 looks at the dynamics of trafficking and smuggling networks, mechanisms for regional and international cooperation, pathways for synergies and an overview of activities of national and international authorities. Some of the findings highlighted in the report include:

- Smuggling and trafficking networks in Ethiopia are facilitated by agents who are part of an intricate web of expansive international networks who then recruit migrants and arrange logistics mainly through legal means backed by complex money laundering schemes. This is particularly done through legally registered travel agencies that provide clients with the necessary documents to travel to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries. These agents then provide names of persons who will act as employees in the proposed destinations
- Traveling with the help of smuggling networks is often not at a fixed cost but is renegotiated at various stages of the journey. By the end of 2018, it was estimated that a trip to Saudi Arabia through these networks costed EUR 4,000. Upon arrival, these migrants remain under the control of the criminal networks until app payments are cleared
- In Eritrea, there has been a pattern of systematic transfers of USD 3,200 into bank accounts in Europe which are managed by family members of the smugglers and traffickers
- Criminal networks conduct most of their transactions in cash particularly between the Gulf, Turkey and Africa thereby evading detection by financial institutions. This money is then deposited into money services businesses where it can be laundered back into the economy.



[Meeting Report of the 4th Pan African Forum on Migration \(PAFOM\)](#)

The final report of the 4th Pan Africa Forum on Migration that took place in Djibouti in November 2018 was officially released in February 2019. It highlights the summaries of the meeting sessions. These include:

- The need for greater coordination between Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the AU Commission on migration and human mobility issues in the continent
- The need for data in Africa is to develop, implement and monitor evidence-based migration policies. Therefore, countries were encouraged to leverage existing technologies to

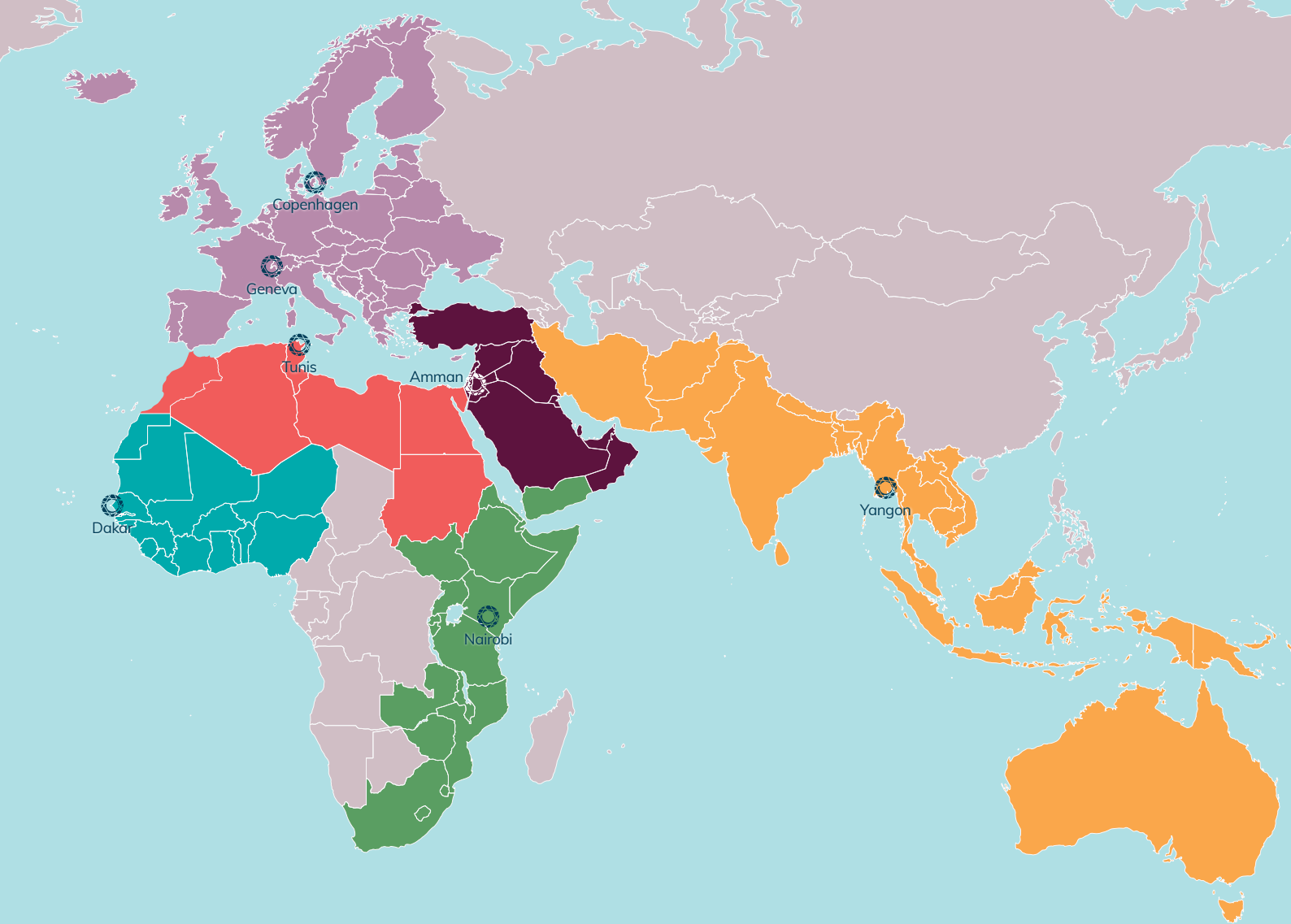
- invest in national and regional statistical systems to enhance data collection and sharing
- The need to recognize skills across borders through frameworks that will reduce the potential for migrants to be exploited. Through these frameworks, social protection and social benefits of migrants would be enhanced
- The need to harness the benefit of free movement in the continent which can act as a catalyst for increased intra Africa trade and tourism opportunities. This will also include addressing infrastructural gaps and capacity building of relevant institutions.
- The need to address vulnerability associated with the free movement of persons especially women, children and senior citizens. This will also include the adoption of protection sensitive reception and holding centres of vulnerable groups
- The need to start implementing the Global Compact for Migration that involves all stakeholders



[On the move in a war zone: Mixed Migration Flows to and through Yemen](#)

This article published by the Migration Policy Institute looks at Yemen as not only a country undergoing the worst humanitarian crisis experienced in the region but also as the epicentre of one of the world's busiest mixed migration routes. It highlights that the collapse of law and order in the country has given smugglers in the region free reign to move migrants across which has acted as a pull factor for many migrants. On the other hand, the conflict between warring parties in Yemen and the consequent anti-migrant policies has been a major push factor particularly for Somali

migrants who have been caught in between the crossfires. The reduction in the number of Somali migrants in Yemen is largely attributed to this and to the improving political situation back in Somalia. Similarly, new routes have emerged as a result of the conflict in Yemen. Referring to previous research by MMC, it is reported that Somali youth are crossing the Gulf of Aden through Bossasso to Mukallah on Yemen then over land into Yemen's Western Coast and on by sea to Sudan and onwards to Europe via Libya and Egypt.



The MMC is a global network consisting of six regional hubs and a central unit in Geneva engaged in data collection, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration. The MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise on mixed migration. The MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. The MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

The MMC is part of and governed by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and global and regional MMC teams are hosted by the DRC offices in Amman, Copenhagen, Dakar, Geneva, Nairobi, Tunis and Yangon.

For more information visit:

mixedmigration.org and follow us at [@Mixed_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

