



## Migration Profile

### SOMALIA

#### A. Executive Summary

Somalia is a country of transit, destination, origin, and return for massive flows of internal and outward migration across the Horn of Africa and beyond. A civil war between 1987 and 1991 promoted the mass internal displacement of approximately 100,000 IDPs, and of more than 500,000 refugees towards Ethiopia. The subsequent failure of the Transitional National Government (TNG) to establish itself in Mogadishu in 2000 led to the creation of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2004, which assumed control of most of Southern Somalia. The splintering of the Islamic Court Union into radical groups, including Al Shabaab, has led to a condition of protracted conflict between such groups and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), together with the TFG. At the same time, Somaliland was established with an independent government with its own constitution and elections; and the semi-autonomous region of Puntland was created in 1998. Whereas Somaliland is seeking international recognition as an independent state, Puntland is constitutionally part of Somalia, though it maintains its own parliament, armed forces, and clan representatives. Puntland also develops its own foreign and trade policies. Such a fractured reality has reduced the state's capacity to govern, and weakened the functioning of the judiciary in parts of the territory.

The combination of protracted conflict, lack of food and water security, widespread poverty, and lack of economic opportunities, have continued to fuel both outward and internal migration. Around 13.2% of the Somali national population have become refugees and asylum seekers who have sought protection elsewhere through outward migration. In fact, in 2016 it was estimated that 1.1 million Somali refugees and 0.5 million Somali asylum seekers were displaced worldwide, the majority in the Horn of Africa and Yemen. By 2018, 2.6 million people were internally displaced, with an increase of 1.7 million between 2017 and 2018 alone. The recurrence of floods and droughts is a major driver for internal displacement, with more than 590,000 people being displaced by flooding in 2020, and approximately 63,000 being forced to migrate due to drought. During this period, governmental efforts to promote the return of Somali refugees have led to the return of 91,828 refugees from neighbouring countries between December 2014 and July 2020, and of 38,679 refugees from Yemen since 2015. Nevertheless, the lack of state capacity makes it increasingly difficult for returnees to be efficiently protected and housed. In 2019, there were heightened social tensions between communities, IDPs, and

returnees, and there were substantial evictions. In fact, forced eviction was a major trigger for secondary displacement, with more than 264,000 IDPs evicted in 2019.

Skilled migration is strongly driven by high youth unemployment rates and sparse economic opportunities, together with widespread poverty and a lack of resources, and is mainly manifested in the movement of low to medium-skilled migrants with a background in agriculture. In 2019, more than 138,000 Somalis moved to Yemen, and 110,000 arrived in Europe. Such figures, which include refugees and international skilled migrants, are indicative of massive yearly outflows produced by the combination of multiple drivers of migration.

Human trafficking and smuggling are extremely frequent in Somalia, with the majority of migrants being introduced into smuggling routes within the larger context of international migration. The main routes lead respectively towards South Africa, Yemen and Saudi Arabia, and the Mediterranean (Malta and Italy, or Greece and Turkey). Somalia's participation in the Khartoum Process - a regional dialogue developed to enhance cooperation in the matter of migration between countries of origin, countries of transit, and countries of destination, primarily focusing on the challenges of migrant smuggling and trafficking - aims at identifying smuggling routes and at promoting sustainable development as a mechanism to tackle the root causes of migration. However, limited state capacity significantly hinders such efforts.

International support is significantly bolstered by the financing efforts of the Somali diaspora, which engages with donor organisations and raises awareness of ongoing aid projects. Likewise, civil society plays a key role as a point of connection between NGOs and local communities, and allows assistance to reach vulnerable and marginalised communities, thus amplifying communitarian voices and needs. Somalia currently has no practicing Christian churches, after the closure of the Mogadishu Cathedral, and faith is experienced and practiced in secret due to pressures and attacks by Al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab frequently accuses International NGOs of attempting to convert individuals to Christianity, and all non-Muslim religious groups report an inability to practice their faith openly due to Al-Shabaab's violent opposition.

## **B. Country Profile**

### **I. Basic Information**

The World Bank has classified Somalia as a low-income country, with a population of 15,442,905 people, half of whom live in poverty. Within Somalia, Puntland has operated as a semi-autonomous, self-governing state since 1998. It comprises the regions of Nugaal, Bari, and northern Mudug. The regions of Woqooyi, Awdal, Galbeed, Togdheer, Sanaag and Sool constitute Somaliland, which in 1991 declared itself an independent Republic and is currently seeking recognition as an independent country. Somaliland operates autonomously and holds its own presidential, parliamentary, and municipal elections.

In Somalia approximately 85% of the population is Somali and the remaining 15% (including 30,000 Arabs) is comprised of ethnic minorities including Benadiri, Bravanese, Bantus, Ethiopians, Indians, Persians, and Italians, with the Bantus as the largest ethnic minority. The official languages are Somali and Arabic. According to the federal Ministry of Religious Affairs, more than 99% of the population is Sunni Muslim. The balance of the population, less than one percent, includes a small Christian community of about 1,000 people, a small Sufi Muslim community, and an unknown number of Shia Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, and those not affiliated with any religion. Foreign workers mainly belong to non-Muslim religious groups; the majority of the Somali Bantu population is Muslim but additionally maintains traditional animist beliefs.

Agriculture is at the core of the national economy, with livestock accounting for more than 50% of export earnings, and 40% of the gross domestic product (GDP). In 2015, Somalia received US\$1.4 billion in remittances, which represents a lifeline for many families in the country, and supports 23% of the national GDP, facilitated by the increased use of mobile money transfers and the Internet. Remittances illustrate the strong ties between Somalia and its diaspora community. The recurrence of conflict, acute drought, and high youth unemployment rates (67%) are key factors in the stagnant GDP and slow economic growth and are important drivers especially for internal migration.

## **II. International and Internal Migrants**

The number of international migrants in Somalia has decreased from 478,300 in 1990 to 52,100 in 2019 (refugees included), i.e., from 6.6% of the total population in 1990 to 0.3% in 2019. The biggest decrease occurred in the five-year period between 1990 and 1995, coinciding with the beginning of the Somali civil war (1991). Nevertheless, refugees accounted for 96.2% of international migrants arriving in Somalia in 1990, and have decreased to 56.1% in 2019, indicating a steady and gradual decrease in the proportion of incoming numbers. The average age of international migrants increased from 20 in 1990 to 28 in 2019, with most international migrants currently being between the ages of 20 and 64 (59.7%). The percentage of international migrants who are women has remained steady between 48.9% and 47.9% over the course of the last two decades. In 1990, all international migrants entering Somalia originated from the same SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) region, the Global North, as compared to the 73% who were within-region international migrants in 2019.

Internal mobility is propelled to a significant degree by transhumance and nomadic rotation, which are traditional agricultural coping mechanisms in the face of resource scarcity. Pastoralist cyclical migration is both deliberate and strategic, and depends on rainfall patterns. During the dry season, pastoralists mainly congregate in encampments and villages close to reliable water resources and wells, whereas during the higher rainfall season, they move across the country and eventually cross into Ethiopia.

Other drivers for international and internal migration include multidimensional poverty, high youth unemployment rates, lack of food and water security, inter-clan conflict, low health, and

illiteracy. In 2012, 67% of youth aged 14-29 were unemployed, with females experiencing higher levels of unemployment (74%). Youth migration is specifically influenced by familial factors (with 55% of the migrant youth having experienced prior family migration) and by gender (with 72% of the migrant flow consisting of males). This gendered disparity can be understood as the product of complex migration processes, and of the feelings of hopelessness caused by a scarcity of opportunities. In 2019, more than 138,000 people crossed the Gulf of Aden to Yemen, and more than 110,000 migrants and refugees moved to Europe, indicating a significant migratory outflow along multiple routes.

### **III. Emigration and Skilled Migration**

Information about labour migration to and from Somalia is relatively scarce. Somali labour migrants have deployed their entrepreneurial skills to set up shops and small businesses in Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa, and Uganda. Somali migrants work as traders, farmers, and herders in Yemen, and also as domestic or casual workers in the Gulf countries and the Middle East. Pastoralists seasonally move internally and beyond national borders to find pasture and water for the livestock, and to trade. The lack of sustainable economic opportunities, and the high rates of youth unemployment, are major drivers of out-migration in pursuit of livelihood opportunities. Reports indicate that youth with low to middle-level education are most likely to emigrate, compared to those with high levels of education and high-earning jobs. Levels of emigration are consistent with income levels, and are likely to increase until people reach a higher income. Employment profiles indicate that the majority of Somali emigrants have a background in livestock and agriculture and have very little formal education. Emigration is also incentivised by contacts through social media between the diaspora and those still residing in Somalia, which spreads and gives lustre to the social imagery of transnational opportunities (more or less realistically) and promotes individual mobility.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) indicates that there are 25,000 migrant workers in Mogadishu who originate from the IGAD region and the Middle East, and that 7,000 work permits were issued in 2018 to skilled migrants from India, the UK, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Uganda, and Kenya, who work as doctors, teachers, and cleaners, or have jobs in construction, in hotels or in NGOs, and for the United Nations. Significant numbers of highly skilled migrants arriving from Syria also work in the health sector. Migrant workers include IT workers, cooks, and plumbers, who have arrived in Somalia with the regional peace-keeping mission of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

### **IV. Forced Migration (internally displaced, asylum seekers and refugees)**

In Somalia, the population is highly vulnerable to climatic and man-made shocks caused by weak governance, conflict, socio-economic underdevelopment, and social insecurity. The complex and protracted Somali humanitarian crisis, arising from decades of inter-clan and armed conflicts, and recurring climatic shocks, have led to the internal displacement of 2.6 million Somalis.

In 2020, 72,000 new IDPs were displaced: 74% by armed conflict between the Somali National Army and the Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jam'a in the Galgaduud region, and 24% by famine provoked by a convergence of drought, desert locusts, and the destruction of crops and livelihoods in the Sanaag region. Other reasons for internal displacement include a lack of access to humanitarian assistance, healthcare, and education.

The droughts of 2011 and 2017 were a major factor in the forced movement of internally displaced people, who lacked water and food. These numbered 2,648,000 people in 2018. By July 2020, the UNHCR reported 158,000 new internal displacements driven by flooding (128,000), drought (9,000), and conflict and insecurity (19,000). The spread of desert locusts during the summer of 2020 persisted until November 2020, with continued hatching and hopper growth in the South, whereas rainfall produced by the cyclone Gati affected 200,000 people in Puntland, and displaced 42,000. Seasonal rains (also known as Deyr rains) have caused widespread flooding and have resulted in death, displacement, and devastation of roads, houses and farmlands in the South West, with 73,000 people affected amongst which are 53,000 already vulnerable IDPs. Other drivers of displacement include protracted armed conflict, human rights violations, and the resurgence of the extremist Al-Shabaab group, which aggravate the vulnerabilities of local communities and IDPs, and make it more difficult for humanitarian aid to reach rural areas. IDP camps present dire conditions, due to security issues in Somalia and difficulty of access, which prevents assistance from reaching them. Children, women and minorities are those most vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, especially sexual, within camps. Episodes of aid diversion on behalf of camp gatekeepers in Mogadishu and Hodon underline the existence of power struggles between self-appointed camp controllers and abused IDPs, who are constantly exposed to eviction and economic usury.

The heightened social pressure on urban centres produced by the increased arrival of people from rural areas is both fuelling rapid processes of urbanisation in Somalia and facilitating the emergence of informal settlements. These people are highly vulnerable to eviction, which can trigger secondary displacement, as was the case for the 264,000 IDPs who were evicted and displaced throughout 2019. Discrimination against IDPs becomes more significant when their displacement dislocates them from the protection of their clans. The complex coexistence of multiple drivers of forced migration and internal displacement is underlined by the migration data indicating that 11,500 people moved to Yemen in 2019 via the eastern maritime route, and that 150,000 people made the journey in 2018. Crucially, 62% of the arrivals in 2019 in Yemen originated from Somalia.

In April 2017, 313,000 Somali refugees entered Kenya and were mainly relocated between the Dadaab Refugee Complex and Garissa County along the border. Approximately 245,000 Somali refugees lived in Dadaab by then, yet the estimates indicated the possibility of effective numbers ranging between 300,000 and 350,000. These numbers add to the 30,000 refugees living in Nairobi and then 40,000 in the Kakuma Refugee Camp. In the same year, 255,000 Somali refugees were registered in Yemen. Between 2010 and 2016, more than 47,000 Somali refugees reached the United States, who were young (less than 45 years of age) and equally distributed

along gender lines. In 2018, 255,000 Somali refugees were registered in Ethiopia, with more than 217,000 living in the Dollo Ado Refugee Complex, 37,000 in the Jijiga Refugee Complex and 1,000 living in Addis Ababa. By the end of November 2020, 264,544 Somali refugees had entered Kenya, 202,217 had entered Ethiopia, 174,367 had reached Yemen, and 43,371 had arrived in Uganda. Refugees were equally distributed along gender lines, with the majority of refugees being between the ages of 5-11 and 18-59, with the latter group presenting a slight majority of female refugees (19% compared to 13% males).

In February 2020, Somalia recorded 17,843 refugees and 17,656 asylum-seekers, with a total of 35,499 refugees, mainly from Ethiopia (61%) and Yemen (37%).

In November 2013, Somalia, Kenya and UNHCR concluded the Tripartite Agreement Governing the Voluntary Repatriation of Somali Refugees Living in Kenya, which aimed at the return of 135,000 Somalis by December 2015 and led to the repatriation of 66,674 Somalis between December 2014 and May 2017. Since 2014, UNHCR has been assisting the repatriation of Somali refugees returning to Somalia. With the emergence of the Yemeni conflict in 2015, the majority of Somali refugees living in those conflict-affected areas voluntarily returned. 91,828 Somali refugees voluntarily returned to Somalia from Djibouti, Kenya, Libya, Sudan, and Eritrea between December 2014 and July 2020. An additional 38,679 returnees arrived from Yemen since March 2015. However, the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) underlines the potential failures of return due to inadequate infrastructure and reintegration mechanisms for the safeguard of migrant livelihoods.

## **V. Victims of Human Trafficking**

Somalia is involved in all phases of human trafficking as a country of destination, source, and transit. Mixed migration flows in and through Somalia and this, together with the lack of efficient legal channels for migration, facilitates the use of smuggling routes by refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and victims of human trafficking. The 'northern route' leads migrants from Somalia to Libya, and eventually to Europe by land and sea, by transiting through Puntland, Somaliland, or Djibouti, towards Sudan and Ethiopia and finally Libya. This route is mainly utilised by Eritrean and Sudanese migrants, and was originally directed towards Israel via the Sinai, yet was diverted after the closure of the Israeli-Egyptian border in 2012. Since then, only 302 migrants from the Horn of Africa have entered Israel. The 'central Mediterranean route' and the 'eastern Mediterranean route' both lead towards Europe, with the primary destinations being respectively Malta and Italy, and Greece and Turkey. The southern route moves through Kenya (mainly Nairobi) to East Africa via Mombasa and terminates in South Africa. The main stations along the eastern route include Yemen, Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern locations, and people transit through Djibouti, Puntland, and Somaliland before undertaking boat journeys towards Yemen. With the emergence of the conflict in Yemen, the flow of migration along this route has reversed, with increased refugee arrivals from Yemen and growing numbers of returnees arriving in Puntland and Somaliland. 813,683 Somalis and

Ethiopians utilised this route between 2006 and 2016, with 72% of the smuggled migrants being Ethiopian. 2016 saw the record arrival of 117,107 migrants in Yemen.

Human trafficking through the Eastern route has led to the rampant disappearance and exploitation of women and girls. Recent COVID-19 restrictions have promoted the development of more perilous smuggling routes in this area, which have resulted in the death and torture of several migrants during the journey and the stay in Yemen. The main transit routes of Somalia pass through Mogadishu, Galkayo, and Belet Weyne, through which smuggled migrants move north towards Djibouti, Somaliland, and Puntland. Other key transit cities are those of Hargeisa in Somaliland and Bossaso in Puntland. In early 2015, 97% of migrants from Somalia said they used a smuggler along the southern route towards South Africa.

In Somaliland, female intermediaries and recruiters introduce victims into human trafficking networks towards Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Puntland, where they are exploited through domestic servitude and sex trafficking. Such structures have a highly gendered impact inasmuch as they mainly target women. Somali men are smuggled abroad to be subjected to forced labour as herders and farmers. Marginalised ethnic groups like the Bantus and the Midgaan are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking by reason of their marginalisation and poverty. In northern Somalia, Ethiopian migrants in transit towards the Middle East often fall victims of trafficking and exploitation as they seek the financial means to fund their journey.

Somalia participates in the Khartoum Process, also known as the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative, which aims at the elimination of human trafficking and smuggling networks by collaborating in the identification and prosecution of criminal networks, in the establishment and management of reception centres, in the support and protection of victims and their rights, and in the promotion of sustainable development as a mechanism to tackle the root causes of irregular migration. International engagement can also be seen in the European funding of the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) counter-trafficking project (2014), which focused on capacity-building and on raising awareness in Puntland to promote and facilitate the prosecution of traffickers.

## **VI. National Legal Framework**

In Somalia (South Central), Somaliland, and Puntland the governments have a limited capacity to deliver basic state functions on account of the influence of Xeer traditional law and sharia law. The state's limited capacity results in inadequate responses to human trafficking and smuggling, and the non-unified national legal system complicates the prosecution of traffickers and the management of migration outside UNHCR channels. Although state incentives for the return of Somali emigrants include the development of the 2013 Kenya-Somalia-UNHCR agreement that promotes the return of people to Somalia, nevertheless the inflows of returnees are confronted with states that are incapable of providing housing and support for the needs of significant numbers of people. As a result, on November 14, 2019, the Government of Somalia adopted a new national policy seeking to provide rights-based solutions for the protection of IDPs and refugee-returnees. The National Policy on Refugee-Returnees and Internally

Displaced Persons (NPRRI) was developed in recognition of the scale of the return to Somalia and of its internal displacements, and it identified the need for solutions for certain issues, such as as a need for stabilising and peace-building efforts within Somalia. This entails the identification and strengthening of the institutions and organisations for the assistance of IDPs and returnees, and the creation of a common policy for the facilitation of institutional action.

Besides this, The National Eviction Guidelines and the Interim Protocol on Land Distribution for Housing to Eligible Refugee-Returnees and IDPs were developed with support from IDLO (International Development Law Organisation), which provided legal and subject-area expertise and financial resources for the facilitation of inclusive dialogue amongst the relevant stakeholders. The policy was developed as a response to the complex causes leading to the internal and international displacement of Somali citizens. The policy recognises the Federal Government's primary responsibility in the avoidance of arbitrary and forced evictions of IDPs, and in the identification of durable solutions to displacement. Moreover, the guidelines explore the human rights implications of evictions in rural and urban areas. The Interim Protocol on Land Distribution and Housing establishes the criteria for the allocation of land available for distribution and determines the priority of land allocation and the obligations of land ownership. Such policies seek to prevent the unlawful eviction of IDPs from informal settlements that result from a lack of necessary safeguards, and they seek to implement a set of judicial protections and clear procedures for the resettlement of IDPs and returnees.

Previously, Somalia had engaged with the National Development Plan (NDP) between 2017 and 2019, which sought to develop resilience vis-à-vis displacement; and with the UN Strategic Framework 2017-2020, wherein Somalia emphasized its commitment to policies to gradually reduce the short and long-term vulnerabilities of displaced people, through the concerted involvement of peace and state-building approaches.

## **VII. Main Actors**

### *The State*

The Federal Government of Somalia deals with people on the move through various ministries. The Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, acting through the National Commission for Refugees and IDPs (NCRI), is the lead ministry with respect to migrants. Its mandate includes the implementation of the National Policy on Refugee-Returnees and IDPs as well as activities supporting durable solutions for refugee-returnees and IDPs. Other state actors in relation to migrants include the Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development; the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management; the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; the Ministry of Public Works, Reconstruction, and Housing; the Ministry of National Security; the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development; and the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

### *The Catholic Church*

The Catholic Church is represented in Somalia by Bishop Giorgio Bertin, O.F.M., Bishop of Djibouti and the Apostolic Administrator of Mogadishu. However, all churches have been closed down in Somalia and non-Muslim faiths are expressed in secret due to violent outbreaks by the extremist group Al Shabaab. Al Shabaab has historically accused international NGOs of being vectors for the potential conversion of individuals to Christianity. As a consequence, it is very difficult for openly faith-based organisations to carry out migrant relief in Somalia. There continue to be no public places of worship for non-Muslims, other than in the international airport.

Caritas Somalia (CS) is another main actor for the Catholic Church in Somalia. Established in 1980, CS became an official member of Caritas Internationalis in 1983 and has been recognised by Somalia's Ministry of Interior as a "local association" working to assist the poor and to carry out development projects. With its head office in Djibouti, CS's main areas of work are: food, emergency relief, education, health, and aid to development. In all these areas of work, CS has been carrying out projects such as food security programs, training and development programs, agricultural projects, school and health support, activities promoting productivity, as well as emergency interventions. CS also responds to catastrophes such as drought, famine, and armed conflict.

#### *International organisations and other organisations*

Main actors include international organisations and NGOs. The UN, UNHCR and the IOM are key actors who seek to identify migrant routes, to monitor outflows and inflows through the major points of transit, and to promote international agreements for the protection and facilitation of returnees. Moreover, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) intervenes to develop resilience in the face of environmental phenomena and agricultural realities, while monitoring the cyclical movements of nomadic herders and the role of their movements in exacerbating local tensions. The work of these NGOs and international agencies is mainly supported by local civic groups and by the diaspora's efforts in favour of infrastructural development. The former is crucial for the development of proposed solutions, because civil society can facilitate access to marginalised groups, identify issues, and foster productive dialogue.

Civil society organisations are often involved in activities implemented by the government and by international actors, due to their credible representation of community voices and to their informative capacity. Concerted efforts involving civil society allowed the IOM to access vulnerable and stigmatised groups for the development of the HIV & AIDS prevention and treatment programmes. Moreover, it allowed a rapid response to chronic child malnutrition promoted by UNICEF in 2016, and the construction of the Edna Adan Hospital in 2002. The latter, instead, plays a vital role in Somalia's development through policy influence, skills transfer and investment. The Somali diaspora supports local institutions delivering services and provides emergency relief during crises, whilst raising awareness for aid projects and being employed in donor organisations.

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