



DIHAD 2013: Building Effective and Sustainable Partnerships in Humanitarian Assistance and Development Activities

Session: Chronic Emergencies

By: Mohammed Abdiker, Director of the Department of Operations and Emergencies, International Organization for Migration (IOM)

CRISIS MIGRATION IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

Human mobility is affected by crises, both singular events and chronic emergencies. The latter are characterized by long-lasting or recurrent events or conditions and require a comprehensive approach to crisis response. Chronic emergencies include sporadic outbreaks of conflict; corrupt or impaired law enforcement; and weakened economic systems. Adverse political conditions, disregard for basic human rights, and a lack of development also contribute to migrants' decisions to leave. Those who cross international borders often find themselves in equally unstable circumstances, as many host countries are faced with severe resource constraints. In essence, chronic emergencies are environments where aggravating conditions have accumulated to the point where any one of them can tip people over the edge into acute crisis.¹

Two of the world's current protracted crises are in the Horn of Africa.² Approximately one-third of Somalia's population is in some form of forced migration due to over two decades of insecurity and conflict. This is compounded by recurrent drought and food shortages, which are some of the main push factors in the region. Between 2001 and 2011, there were eight droughts in the Horn that affected 67 million people,³ with the worst drought in over 60 years occurring in 2011. Every year, countless people from the region move because of conflict, physical insecurity, lack of food and a desire for better economic opportunities.⁴ They represent a mixed migration movement that encompasses refugees, asylum seekers, displaced persons and irregular migrants.

The effects of these chronic conditions are reflected in the population flows from the Horn of Africa to Yemen, Kenya, South Africa, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya and

¹ OCHA Occasional Policy Briefing Series, *Brief No. 6: OCHA and Slow-onset Emergencies*, April 2011, p. 5 available at http://ochanet.unocha.org/p/Documents/OCHA_OPB_SlowOnsetEmergencies190411.pdf

² The majority of humanitarian aid is applied to eight protracted crises around the world in Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Pakistan, DR Congo, Afghanistan, the occupied Palestinian Territories, and to high-profile natural disasters such as Haiti. See *State of Humanitarian the System*, ALNAP, 2012 Ed., p. 10, available at www.alnap.org

³ ECB/ACAPS, *Secondary data review on Horn of Africa Drought*, ECB/ACAPS, Geneva, 2011. (ALNAP Humanitarian Action in Drought-Related Emergencies, Oct. 2011, p. 2)

⁴ IOM Info Sheet on Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa, July 2012.

Europe.⁵ In 2012, refugees and irregular migrants travelled through Sudan and Egypt en route to Israel and beyond.⁶ Others embarked on hazardous journeys across the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden to Yemen, travelling on makeshift boats from ports in Djibouti and Puntland.⁷ Last year, 1603 boats carried 84,376 Ethiopians and 23,086 Somalis to Yemen,⁸ where migrants reported being threatened or held hostage by smugglers or criminal gangs to extort ransoms.⁹ Women and children are particularly vulnerable, and are at increased risk for rape¹⁰ and sexual exploitation from human traffickers.¹¹ Rough sea conditions and overcrowded boats have also led to tragic incidents of mass drowning.¹² Migrants seeking livelihood opportunities in Saudi Arabia and Gulf States often become stranded in Yemen's northwest border-town of Haradh.¹³ During the past two years, IOM has assisted over 9,000 such migrants to return home¹⁴ and treated over 42,887 medical cases, including injuries sustained during travel and from traffickers and smugglers.¹⁵ While these are critical services, they also divert resources from addressing the root causes of protracted crises.

Identifying effective and sustainable solutions in the Horn of Africa requires political will and continued engagement by the international community. Intervention plans must be comprehensive, taking into account the political, security, social, economic and environmental factors that drive high-risk migration. Life-saving assistance must be implemented in parallel with a longer-term migration crisis management framework. At a minimum, this should include reintegration, community stabilization and livelihood initiatives which are fundamental to building resilience, reducing chronic vulnerabilities and ultimately reducing crisis-induced migration patterns.

⁵ RMMS, Regional Mixed Migration Summary for December 2012 and RMMS Map of Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa, 2012.

⁶ IOM Cairo

⁷ IOM Info Sheet on Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa, July 2012.

⁸ IOM key data/RMMS, Regional Mixed Migration Summary for December 2012.

⁹ IOM Regional Flash Report No. 3, available at: www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/where-we-work/africa-and-the-middle-east/middle-east-and-north-africa.html

¹⁰ IOM key data / RMMS, Regional Mixed Migration Summary for December 2012.

¹¹ RMMS Map, Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen, Dec. 2012.

¹² The number of deaths from capsizing boats is decreasing from previous years. RMMS, Regional Mixed Migration Summary for December 2012.

¹³ IOM Cairo

¹⁴ IOM Cairo

¹⁵ RMMS Map, Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen, Dec. 2012.