

# Mixed Migration Task Force Update

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## CREATING PUBLIC SPACES FOR COMMUNITY DIALOGUE INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS



Leaflets included colorful cartoons drawn by a Somali refugee in Kenya. UNHCR/M.B.M. Arts.

As figures of migrants attempting the dangerous crossing through the Gulf of Aden keep growing, the MMTF keeps informing Somalis and Ethiopians on the dangers of crossing to Yemen. Last month, DRC began to air radio spots and organized roundtables to sensitize people likely to undertake the crossing to the dangers related to the boat trip, and to inform the authorities and the community on alternative options and on human rights. A distribution of leaflets is being prepared in partnership with UNHCR and Italian NGO INTERSOS to further inform would-be migrants on the limited employment opportunities awaiting them in Yemen.

This information campaign follows the one organized by UNHCR, DRC and OCHA in 2008 to warn migrants about the dangers they were going to face during the crossing, encourage asylum seekers to seek asylum in Puntland and call on host communities to treat foreigners with dignity. 15,000 leaflets were distributed in Puntland and another 5,000 around Mogadishu. The leaflets were written in Somali and in three Ethiopian languages, with striking pictures and colorful cartoons illustrating the plight

of migrants, and radio campaigns were simultaneously launched. *“People in Puntland welcome advocacy campaigns because they have the feeling that at last, the international community takes an interest in all the lives that have been lost”*, an aid worker who helped distribute leaflets in Bossaso said. In Afgooye, where over 300,000 people have been sheltering on roadsides since they fled Mogadishu nearly 2 years ago, people were eager to read the leaflets. They have become more aware of the risks laying ahead of them, should they decide to travel to Yemen. *“Now that people have access to reliable information through radio programs and leaflets, they no longer have to rely on rumors”*, says a UNHCR staff who was in charge of the campaign in Mogadishu. *“At least now they can make an informed decision on their future.”*

### Trends and figures

Some 43,500 people, mostly Somalis and Ethiopians, have arrived on the coast of Yemen since the beginning of the year. This is the highest figure ever reported since 2002, when figures started to be compiled. The proportion of Somalis crossing keeps growing. Since the beginning of the year, some 65% of the passengers are Somalis. Last year, they represented roughly 55% of the flow.

The number of people crossing the Red Sea rather than the Arab Sea has significantly increased since last year. This means that a growing number of people, especially Ethiopians, have been transiting through Djibouti rather than Bossaso, in northern Somalia. In November, 4 boats out of ten arrived on the Red Sea coast.

The number of people dying or disappearing during the journey is significantly lower than last year. While in 2007, 7% of the passengers went missing or died during the crossing, this year some 2% of the passengers have not made it to the other shore. The Red Sea crossing is relatively safer: 47 people died or disappeared during that crossing since the beginning of the year compared to 954 on the Arab Sea. This could notably be related to the duration of the journey, the type of boats used and the behavior of the smugglers.

A limited number of new arrivals settle in Kharaz refugee camp, located in the coastal area of Yemen. Most new arrivals either settle in urban areas or continue their journey onwards to the Gulf States and Europe.

### EFFORTS TO INFORM ETHIOPIANS

The ordeal of Ethiopian migrants on this route is often unheard, and local people are unaware of the dangers that lie ahead. Human traffickers and smugglers are shifting their focus to rural dwellers where they can more easily manipulate potential migrants to become easy prey of their false promises. IOM, in collaboration with various stakeholders are informing the public through radio spots and programs on the FM and national radio in Ethiopia in various languages. Community dialogues were conducted along main routes in departure and transit cities where a considerable number of migrants concentrate. Dialogues were conducted in a manner that emphasized the role of stakeholders to reach potential migrants with accurate information and also explore livelihood opportunities. A leader in Combocha stressed the role of religious leaders to strengthen and urge fellow leaders to integrate messages of human trafficking and smuggling in their teachings. Since 2007, IOM in collaboration with other stakeholders began producing and airing radio spots, and offers a telephone hotline service at IOM Addis-Ababa. IOM indicated the clear information gap that calls for continuous information campaigning targeted to specific groups of the public.

**The Mixed Migration Task Force:** The Mixed Migration Task Force (MMTF) was established in early 2007 with UNHCR and IOM acting as co-chairs, under the auspices of the Inter Agency Standing Committee’s Protection Cluster. MMTF membership includes OCHA, OHCHR, UNDP, UNICEF, the Danish Refugee Council and the Norwegian Refugee Council. The purpose of the task force is to develop a rights-based strategy to ensure a comprehensive coordinated response to protection and humanitarian needs of migrants and asylum seekers transiting through Somalia.

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