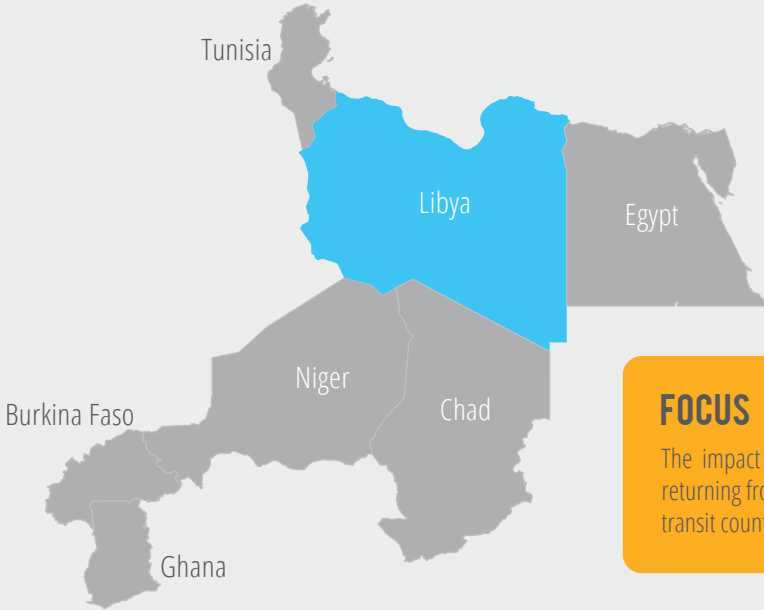
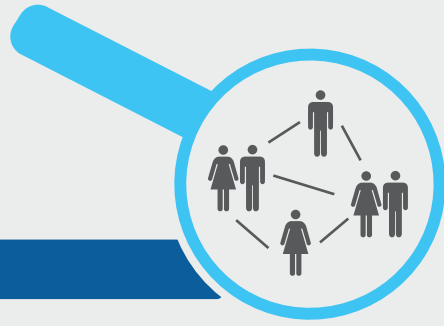


MIGRANTS IN COUNTRIES IN CRISIS

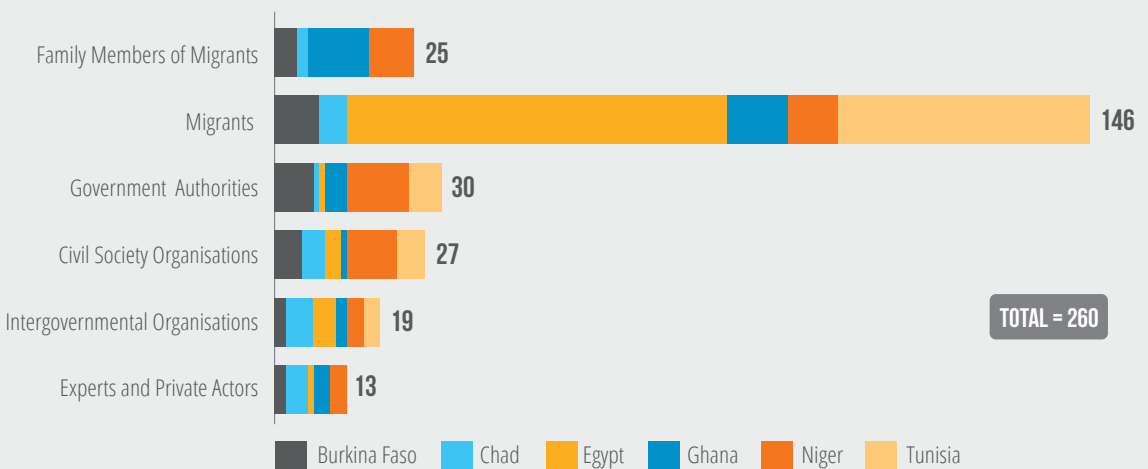
LIBYA FACT SHEET



FOCUS

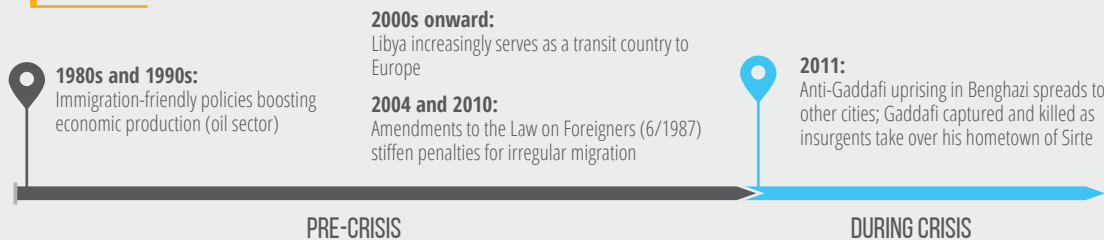
The impact of the Libyan crisis on migrants returning from Libya and migrants stranded in transit countries

INTERVIEW DATA (MARCH – SEPTEMBER 2016)



CONTEXT

TIMELINE



MIGRANT RESPONSES

SOCIO-ECONOMIC POSITION OF MIGRANTS

- Most migrated because of socio-economic deprivation in their countries of origin
- Cultural affinities among cross-border communities – between Niger and Libya – as well as linguistic affinities, low cost, and existing networks – between Egypt and Libya – are strong factors driving migration in the region
- Egyptians in relatively elevated socio-economic position compared to average Libyan nationals
- Migrants tended to work in un/low-skilled job sectors such as construction and agriculture
- Migrant earnings were either immediately remitted through returning migrants, or hidden at home or in safe places, due to migrants' lack of access to the formal banking system in Libya

During the crisis, migrants exhibited manifold coping strategies, one of which was return migration. However, almost half of all migrants who fled Libya went to Tunisia, the majority organising trips on their own in perilous conditions. During the crisis, Sub-Saharan migrants were particularly at risk of violence, being targeted by rebel factions as suspected Gaddafi mercenaries. Egyptians and Ghanaians received support from Libyan employers and landlords to escape the violence, while others, also including Egyptians and Chadians, reported relying on family members' support to return to their country of origin. Some Nigeriens, who were alerted to the crisis by private Western employers, were able to allocate funds for their return.

Returnees and stranded migrants faced difficulties in (re)integrating (socially and professionally), especially considering the loss of employment and remittances. Most migrants lost everything in Libya, and for those who returned, they became dependent on relatives' financial support, burdening an already tight financial situation. Return also entailed psychological and emotional stresses to both returnees and their households, with depression and occasional violence at home reported. However, some migrants in Niger and Tunisia reported having saved money to open a business, trade or a taxi service, and others are organised in associations and cooperatives.

The main coping strategy of migrants who fled Libya in 2011 has been re-migration. Migrants are re-migrating most commonly to Libya, but also elsewhere in Africa or to Europe by crossing the Mediterranean Sea.



Oh yes, I want him to go back! Things were much better when he was in Libya. You can see from his demeanour. Everything shows he is not a happy man.

(Spouse of a returnee from Libya, 36 years old, Ghana)

2011:
Hundreds of thousands of migrants flee to neighbouring countries

2014:
Protests erupt in response to the General National Congress' refusal to disband after mandate expires, leading to civil war between the two rival governments (Tripoli and Tobruk) and armed factions

2014–2016:
Rise of Islamic State and increasing jihadist presence, including Ansar Al-Sharia

2015:
EU starts EUNAVFORMED-Operation Sophia to address surge of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea from Libya

2016:
UN-backed 'unity government' struggles to secure a vote of confidence

DURING CRISIS

POST-CRISIS



INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES

Intergovernmental organisations were at the heart of aid processes during the Libyan crisis. UNHCR and IOM have been the principal actors managing arrivals and evacuations, in coordination with state authorities of countries of origin (also via embassies in Libya) and transit. IOM organised the evacuation and return of migrants to communities of origin from Egypt and Tunisia, while UNHCR was focused on processing of asylum claims.

Across our countries of study, engagement of countries of origin in the crisis response varied. In Ghana, the National Disaster Management Organisation coordinated support for return migrants by different intergovernmental and civil society stakeholders, as well as with the Ghana immigration, health and security services. In response to the arrival of returnees, Niger established an ad hoc committee responsible for coordinating reception and support, transporting them to their local communities. Egyptians interviewed complained about the lack of evacuation assistance from their consulate. For Egyptians in transit in Tunisia, however, the Egyptian government mobilised evacuation via military aircraft carriers and ships, as well as Egyptair.

Civil society, local NGOs and community leaders also provided emergency response services, developing projects for reintegration and psychosocial intervention with returnees and stranded migrants, with an increased attention to migration issues. For stranded migrants in Tunisia, public opinion has also played a valuable role, through the strong solidarity shown by the Tunisian population and national and international NGOs in providing assistance to the mass arrivals from Libya.

All selected countries organised some kind of response to support return/stranded migrants, but longer-term assistance to returnees was often limited, usually due to lack of funding.

LEGAL SITUATION OF MIGRANTS

- Most migrants entered Libya irregularly or overstayed visas
- Under Gaddafi, intensified detention and deportation operations targeted irregular migrants
- Lack of an asylum law in Libya and Tunisia has limited access to asylum in both countries
- Ongoing tension between Egypt and Libya after 2011 led to regular denials of entry to many Egyptians attempting to (re-)migrate to Libya as well as systematic deportations



UNHCR, the Red Cross and IOM were instrumental in getting us the buses [...]. We always relied on them.

(Former Senior Diplomat, Ghana Embassy in Libya, Ghana)



POLICY LEARNING

The learning process ‘from’ and ‘for’ crisis takes a long time to be implemented. A number of limitations of stakeholders’ preparedness in the aftermath of 2011 were identified across the fieldwork countries and six years on most are still to be comprehensively addressed, particularly considering the ongoing security situation in Libya. The lack of data on the numbers of migrants in Libya inhibited stakeholders’ abilities to adequately prepare to receive returnees, and few states have made concrete efforts to obtain better data. There are still no reception facilities provided to receive large numbers of nationals in times of crisis. Although state institutions have tried to develop policies on crisis response, through contingency plans or a designated department, means and sufficient resources were an important obstacle, often halting the establishment of such bodies and mechanisms, as well as (re)integration assistance. For example, the recent National Migration Policy for Ghana enjoins stakeholders to “draft guidelines for the evacuation of Ghanaian nationals abroad, during situations of political crisis, deportation or natural disaster”, but no specific policy has been drafted. In Niger, with the new government, a Ministry for Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management was created, as well as a multi-risk contingency plan which was amended to integrate the management of migrants in times of crisis. In Chad, a 2015 National Plan for Global Reintegration of Returnees was elaborated, but returnees from Libya have not benefited from it. Furthermore, attention in Chad has now shifted to the situation around Lake Chad, further obscuring the impact of the Libya crisis on returnees. Concurrent crisis in the area did not allow dealing with each ‘crisis’ and entailed the need to prioritise the emergency-humanitarian aid, instead of dealing with long-term reintegration plans. Even though those who fled Libya at the onset of the crisis may at the present time no longer be categorised as returnees per se on the basis that time has generally lapsed since their return, an effective and transparent reintegration programme by governments is needed.

The success of the evacuation campaign of migrants to their home countries via Tunisia has demonstrated the strength and solidarity of state structures in a context of instability and transition. Yet, the lack of a domestic law on asylum and emergency plans were main challenges in Tunisia. For the first time since the liberation war in Algeria, a transit camp for refugees was set in the country (Choucha camp, 2011-2013), where the army, the Ministry of Health, regional bodies and international organisations met the needs of those arriving from Libya. However, civil society organisations and migrants have criticised the Tunisian state for the lack of reform on the legislation concerning foreigners, which they view as repressive, and the lack of an asylum law. Since the crisis, local NGOs have managed to develop know-how and skills on these topics, allowing them to exercise pressure on the Tunisian state to support migrants stranded in the country.



The State of Niger lacks resources to assist returning migrants. It does not have experience in this field. It also does not have data on Nigerien migrants abroad. Thus it’s especially the international organisations such as IOM that assists migrants.

(Head of migration department, Association ‘Alternative’, Niger)



The Ministry of Labour and Manpower announced work opportunities for returnees and when one reads the criteria, you feel it is tailored to us. We applied, paying EGP 50 [2,47 EUR] for the application and we received nothing back. None of the people I know benefited from this employment service. Three to four months after, we were asked to pay EGP 10 [0,49 EUR] to fill a reparations form listing all items lost in Libya, we did and heard nothing.

(Returnee, 29 years old, Sahag, Egypt)

