

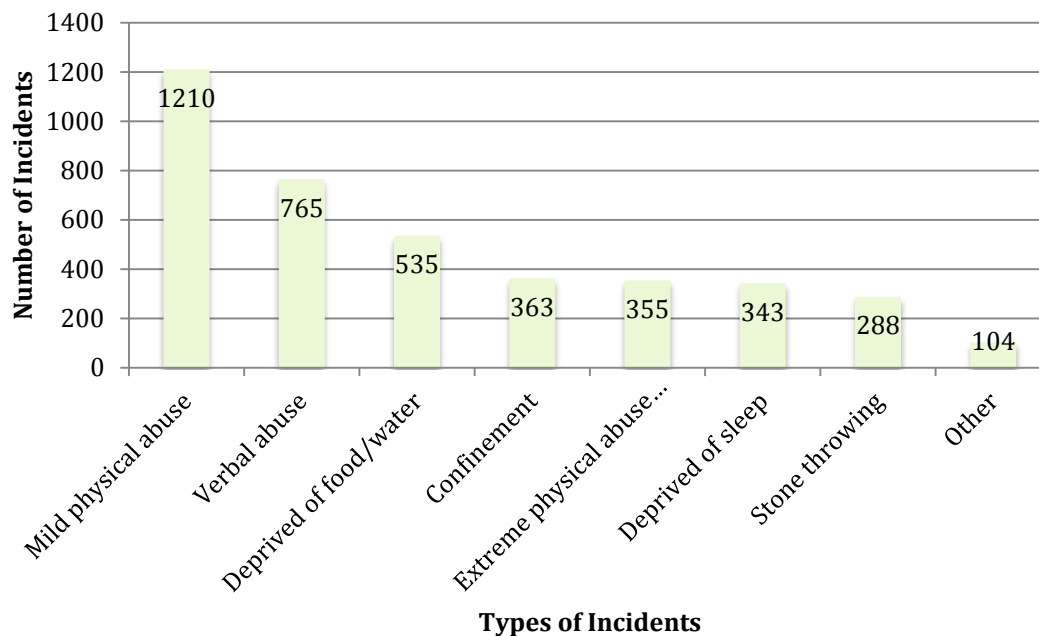
The Most Commonplace of Treatment: Physical Abuse of Migrants and Asylum Seekers on the Move from the Horn of Africa

Obscured in the discussions surrounding the myriad life-threatening incidents, gender-based and sexual abuses, and financial misfortunes that befall migrants and asylum seeker are the daily humiliations that people on the move have to endure on their journeys to Europe and South Africa.

Between November 2014 and August 2016, RMMS' Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative (4mi) interviewed over 2,000 migrants and asylum seekers originating from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia on a variety of topics, including physical abuse. Throughout the interview period, migrants on the move reported 1,511 incidents of physical abuse, including 535 incidents of withholding water and food along the migration routes across the eastern tier of Africa. All enumerated incidents below were either directly witnessed or were experienced by the respondents directly.

Of the 1,511 incidents, 1,175 were experienced directly by respondents. Mild physical abuse is the most commonly witnessed physical abuse, while verbal abuse also figures heavily in migrants' and asylum seekers' experiences. In all cases, one reported incident could have had more than one type of abuse, more than one type of victim, and more than one type of perpetrator.

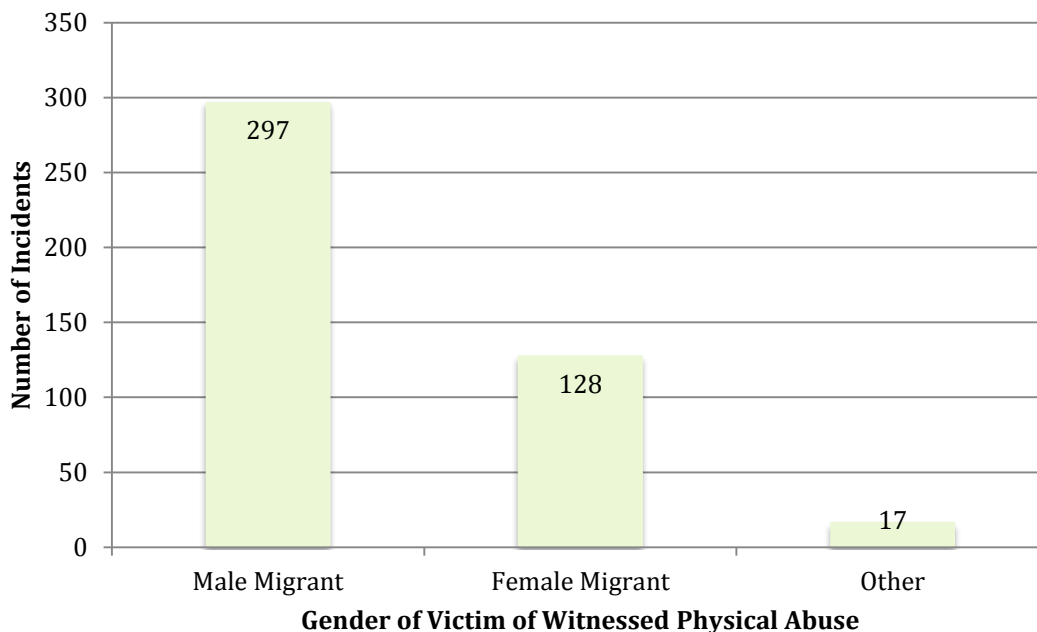
Figure 1: Types of physical abuse by number of incidents



Source: 4mi (<http://4mi.regionalmms.org/>)

The types of physical abuse encountered were overwhelmingly “mild”; however, mild physical abuse could include whippings, beatings and punching. Verbal abuse, food deprivation and confinement were also possible. Further, there were 355 cases where migrants were subjected to gunshots, burnings and torture.

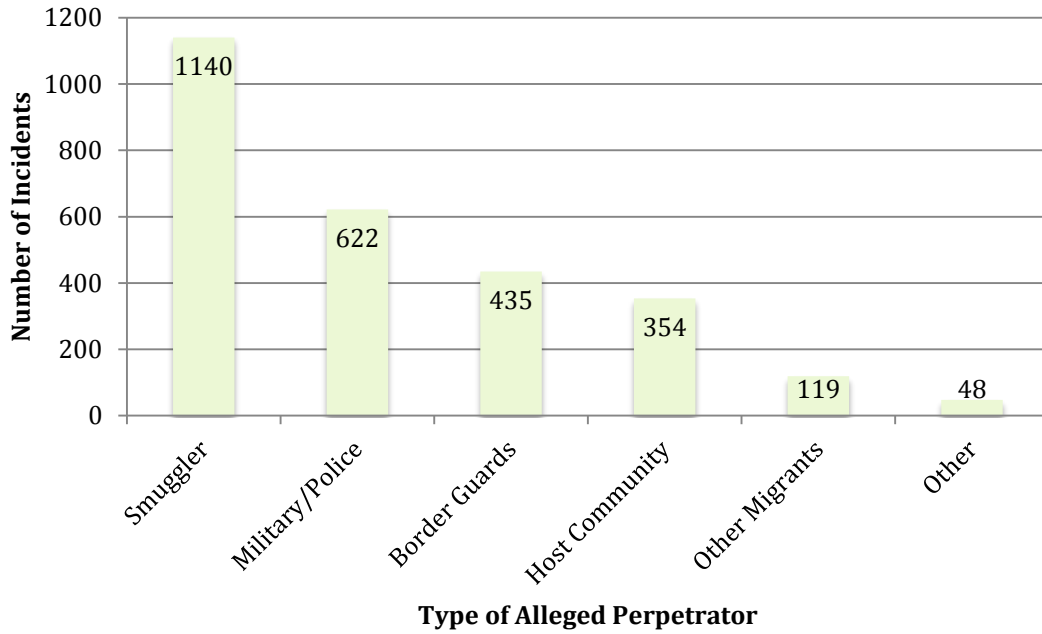
Figure 2: Victims of physical abuse by number of incidents



Source: 4mi (<http://4mi.regionalmms.org/>)

This graph asks respondents who witnessed physical abuse the gender of the victim of the abuse. Of witnessed incidents, respondents reported twice as many male victims compared to female victims. However, taking into account the relatively small number of women on the move compared to men and the relatively small proportion of women interviewed, the number of reported female victims is actually rather large. This means that women may be at more significant risk for abuse than men. Host community members and smugglers were also reported to be victims of abuse in limited instances, under the category of “other”.

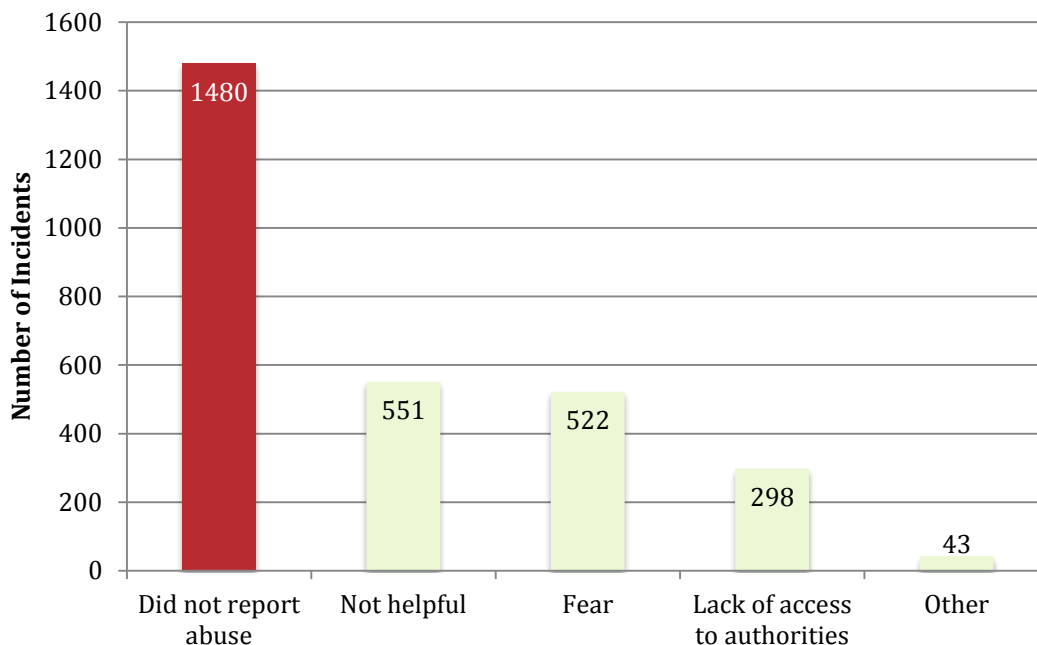
Figure 3: Perpetrators of Physical Abuse



Source: 4mi (<http://4mi.regionalmms.org/>)

Abuses were reported to be roughly split between smugglers and government officials (e.g. military, police and immigration officials).

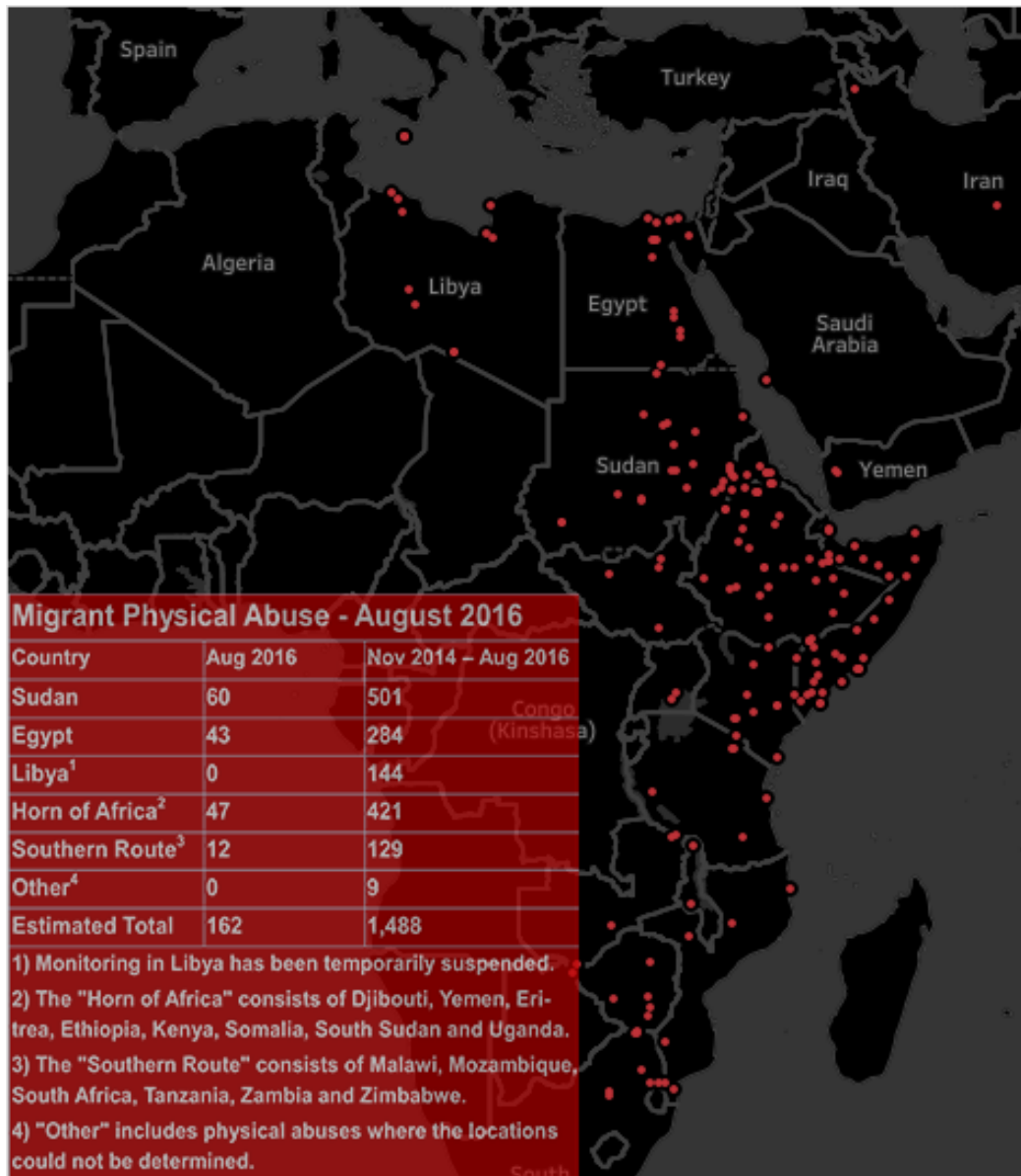
Figure 4: Incidents Reported to the Police by Type of Account



Source: 4mi (<http://4mi.regionalmms.org/>)

While 30 incidents were reported to the police, 1,480 incidents were not reported. A combination of fear, lack of access, and lack of faith in the justice system hinder official reporting. While some did not report due to lack of access to reporting channels, respondents were more concerned that reporting would not be helpful or may possibly endanger their own status.

Figure 5: Number of physical abuse incidents by country



Source: 4mi (<http://4mi.regionalmms.org/>)

The bulk of reported incidents occurred in Sudan (501), Egypt (284), Ethiopia (216) and Libya (144), along the western route to Europe. In interviews completed in Tanzania and South Africa, migrants and asylum seekers on the southern route from the Horn of Africa to South Africa reported only 122 incidents. The disparity in reported incidents may be due partially to the total number of monitors on the southern route, which are greatly outnumbered by the number of monitors on the western route.

There were restrictions to the above analysis, which affected the final numbers. Only incidents directly experienced or witnessed were analyzed. Therefore, it is a safe conclusion that the real number of physical abuse incidents is far higher than what is documented in this analysis.