

Interactions between local communities and transiting migrants in Hargeisa

The Eastern corridor from the Horn of Africa to the Arabian Peninsula has traditionally been one of the busiest maritime routes with 394,622 migrant arrivals since 2018.¹ The journey undertaken by predominantly Ethiopian migrants² can involve several stops at key transit locations to rest, look for smugglers, or work.³ In these locations, migrants' interactions with local communities are linked to their need for information, for assistance and services, and for income-generating opportunities as well as on potential shared cultural and ethnic affiliations. Recognizing that local communities in transit locations are key stakeholders in the migration process, MMC and IOM have partnered under the 2022 Regional [Migrant Response Plan](#) for the Horn of Africa and Yemen to design and implement a mixed-methods study to generate an evidence-base on the dynamics between local communities and transiting migrants along the Eastern Route.

The study has targeted three key transit locations along the Eastern Route: Hargeisa in the Somaliland region, and Obock and Tadjourah in Djibouti. This snapshot presents the main findings on interactions between migrants and local communities in Hargeisa, based on 201 surveys conducted with local community members in July 2022.⁴ Hargeisa is the capital of the Somaliland region and is a place of transit mainly for Ethiopian migrants. After crossing into the region at the border towns of Borama and Waajale, many Ethiopians stop in Hargeisa before continuing on to Bossaso and Ceelayo where they embark on the sea crossing.⁵

Key findings

- Most local community respondents interact with migrants on a daily basis (60%), while 24% interact weekly.
- The provision of free assistance is the most common form of interaction (52%) between local community respondents and migrants, followed by commercial/economic interactions (45%) and social interactions (22%).
- Food (89/97) and water (55) are the most common forms of free assistance provided by local communities, followed by cash (40).
- Migrants are commonly clients of local businesses, as described by 61 of 85 who had commercial/economic interactions with migrants. Others hire migrants (27), most often in domestic work.

Profiles of local community respondents

Respondents were residents of neighbourhoods with a large presence of transiting migrants, mostly of Ethiopian nationality. Of the 201 surveys, 36% were conducted in the neighbourhoods of Dami B, 27% in Dami A, 25% in Cakara, and 12% in Statehouse (see Map 1). A majority of respondents were women (70%), likely owing to data collection occurring largely in residential neighborhoods and men often being away from home and engaged in work activities when enumerators visited households (Figure 1).

1 IOM DTM data from 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 mid-year.

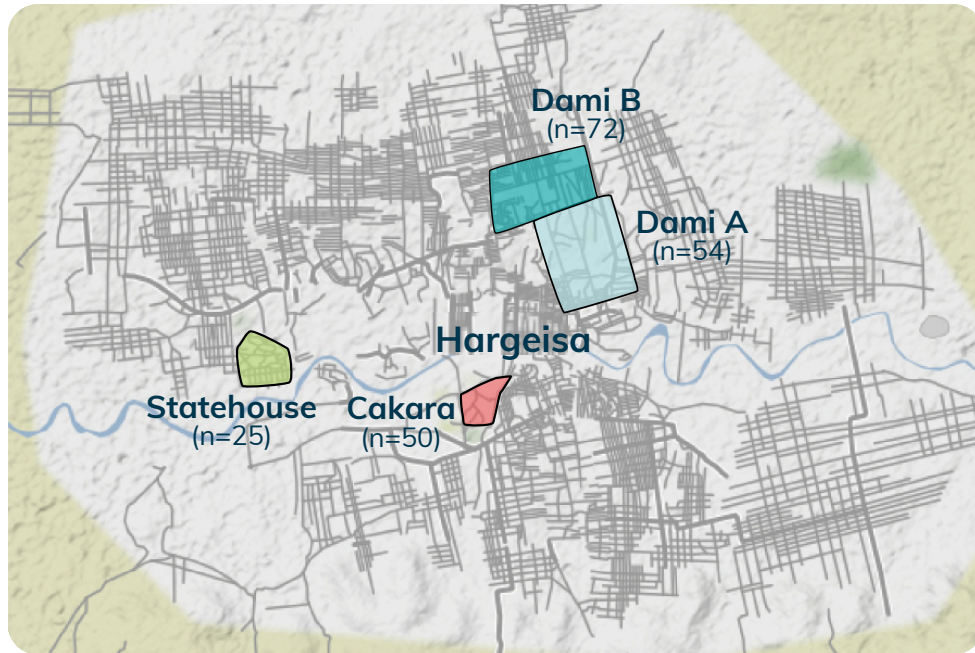
2 [MMC](#) usually reports on individuals engaging in mixed migration as "refugees and migrants", acknowledging that those on the move might be motivated by a multiplicity of factors and drivers, and have different statuses. [IOM](#) commonly refers to "mixed movements", or 'migrants', defined as "an umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally-defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students."

3 IOM (2020). [Comparative Eastern Corridor Route Analysis: Obock, Djibouti and Bossaso, Puntland](#).

4 This snapshot is published alongside an equivalent snapshot on Obock and Tadjourah in Djibouti. The snapshots will be followed by a full-length report further exploring interactions, but also local communities' experiences with and perceptions of transiting migrants. The report will be informed by both quantitative and qualitative data, as well as research team field observations.

5 France24 (2021, 23 November). [The broken dreams of desperate migrants fleeing Africa for Saudi](#).

Map 1. Targeted neighbourhoods of Hargeisa

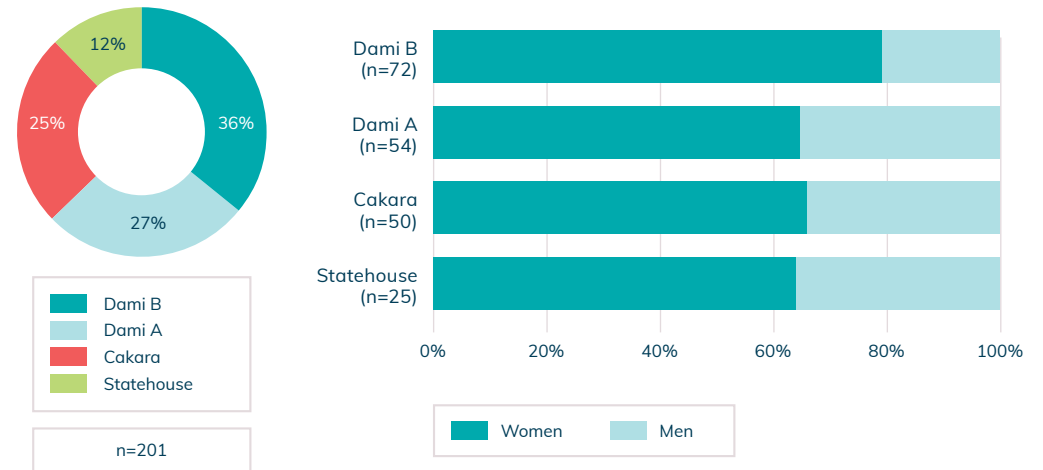


Map 2. Location of Hargeisa



This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by MMC and IOM.

Figure 1. Sample overview by respondents' neighbourhood and sex



17% of respondents were 18 to 25 years old, 50% were 25 to 40 years, and 33% were above the age of 40. As per the study's sampling strategy, all respondents had lived in the location of interview for at least 3 years. In terms of education, one in ten (10%) of respondents had no schooling, 17% had completed primary education, 34% had completed either lower or upper secondary education, 26% completed religious schooling, and 12% completed some form of tertiary education.

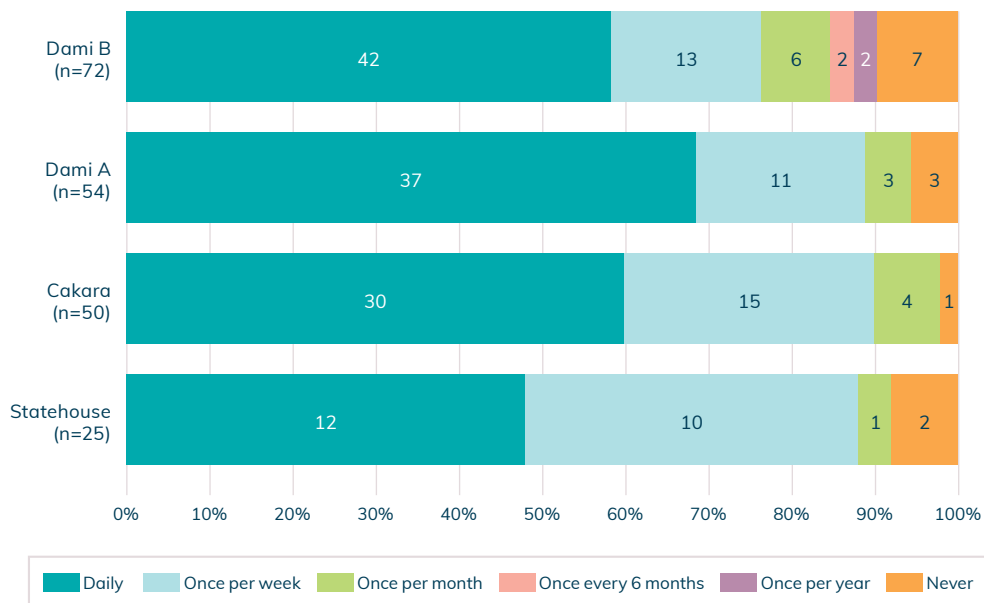
Less than half of respondents were personally making an income at the time of interview (42%). This was the case for two-thirds (67%) of men and 31% women. A higher proportion of residents of the neighbourhood of Cakara were making money (27/50) than those residing in other neighbourhoods, particularly in Damii B (22/77), perhaps linked to the fact that Damii B had the highest share of women respondents. Of respondents reporting having an income (n=84), job profiles included business owners/self-employed (30), regular employees (28), and casual/occasional labourers (26).

Working women were commonly employed in small businesses (shops/catering/services) (25/44) and domestic work (9), while men were employed in small businesses (shops/catering/services) (11/40), construction (7) and transportation (7). Of the 117 respondents who were not making an income, most (57%) were taking care of their homes/children, while others were unemployed (17%), students (14%), or sick/taking care of someone sick or elderly (12%). Nearly all of those engaged in childcare and taking care of their homes were women (64/67).

Most local community respondents interact with migrants on a daily basis

Every respondent confirmed the presence of transiting migrants in their communities. The data reveal that interactions between surveyed local community members and migrants were frequent and varied in nature. 60% of respondents interacted with transiting migrants on a daily basis, while 24% interacted weekly, 9% interacted more sporadically, and 6% never interacted. No notable disparities in interaction frequencies were observed based on sex or age. More daily interactions were reported in Dami A (37/54) than in other neighbourhoods, in particular Statehouse (12/25).

Figure 2: On average, how often do you interact with transiting migrants in your community?



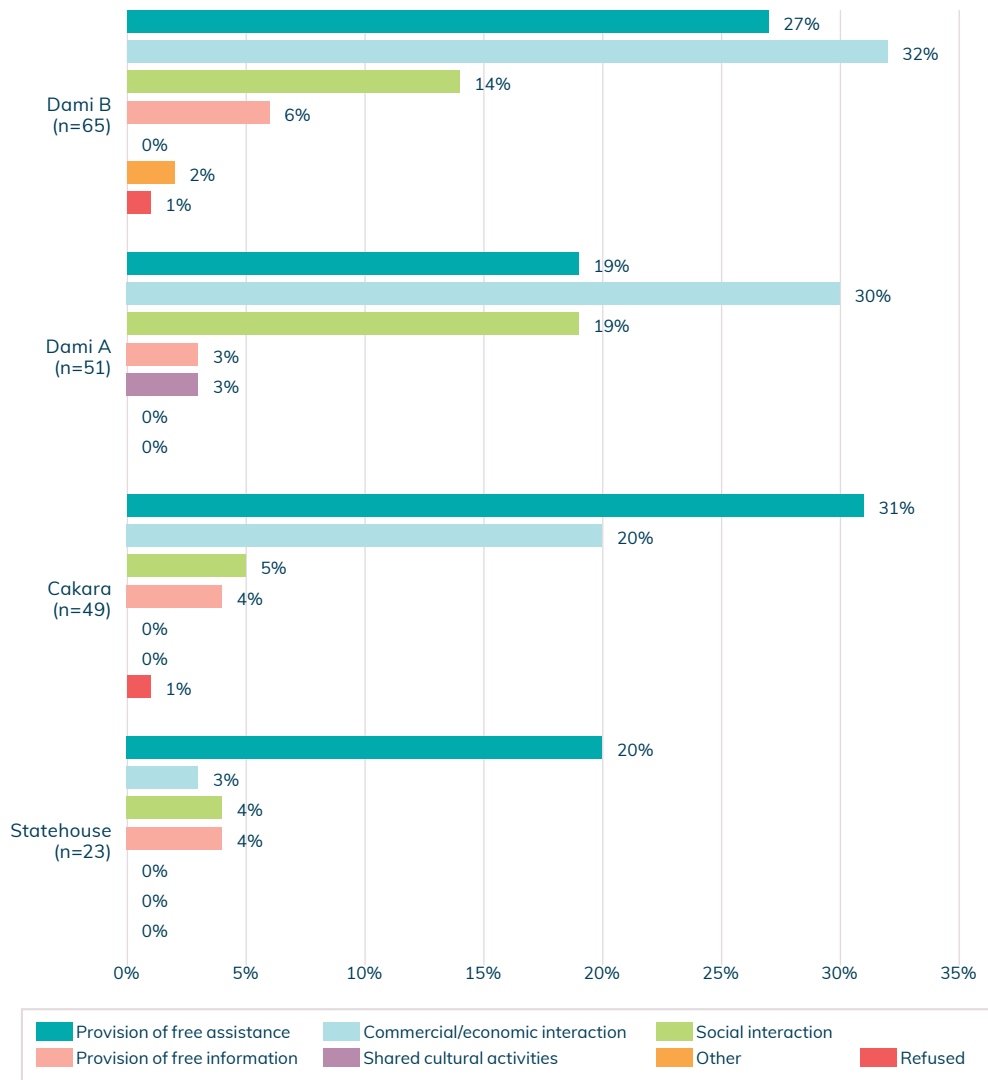
Local communities most commonly interact with transiting migrants by providing free assistance, followed by commercial interactions

Of the local community members who reported interacting with transiting migrants (n=188), 52% interacted by providing free assistance to migrants, followed by interactions based on commercial/economic exchanges (45%), and social interactions (22%). Additionally, it was more common for women to cite social interactions (27%) than it was for men (11%), while interactions based on free assistance, commercial exchanges, or information exchanges did not appear to vary by sex.

Interactions between local communities and transiting migrants vary by neighbourhood

When considering respondents' neighborhoods, residents of Dami A and Dami B most commonly cited commercial/economic exchanges (30/51 and 32/65, respectively) while residents of Cakara and Statehouse primarily cited providing free assistance to migrants (31/49 and 20/23, respectively). Commercial/economic interactions in Statehouse (3/23) were less frequent than in other neighbourhoods. Social interactions were proportionally more common in Dami A (19/51) and Dami B (14/65) than in Cakara and Statehouse.

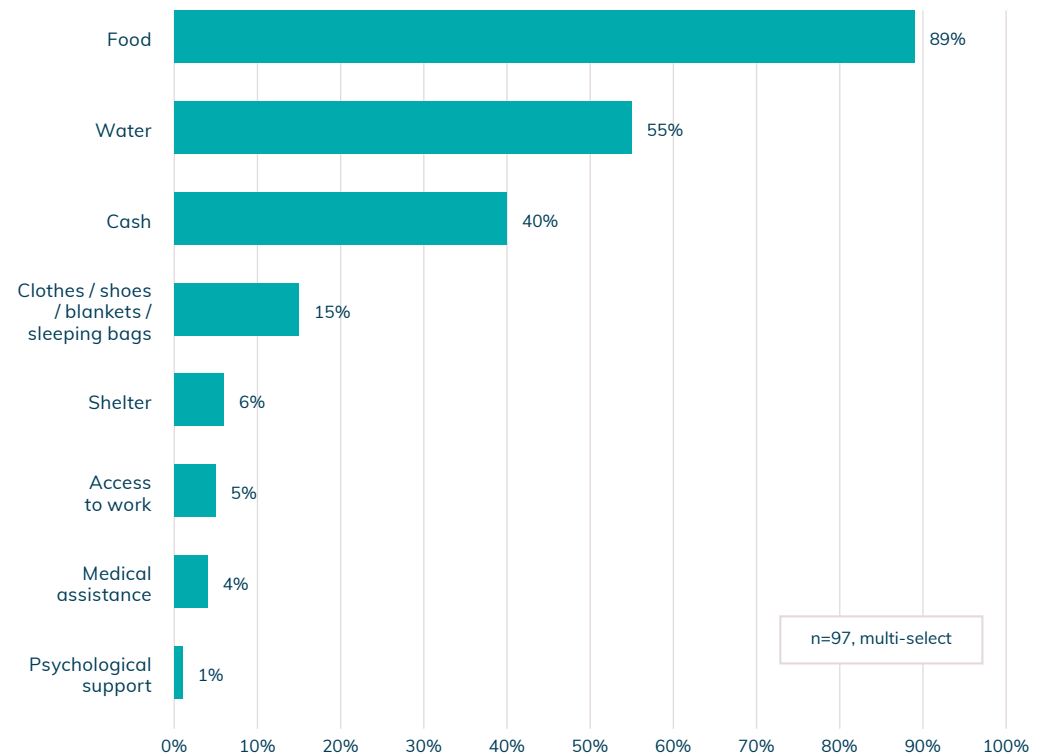
Figure 3: Which of the following describes your interactions with migrants in your community? (Among respondents who reported interacting with migrants in their community; multi-select)



Food and water are the most common forms of free assistance provided by local communities

Of the respondents who provided free assistance (n=97) to migrants, most described providing food (89/97), water (55), and cash (40). Some also provided clothes/shoes/blankets (15), shelter (6), access to work (5), and medical assistance (4) (Figure 4).

Figure 4: What type/s of assistance do you/have you provided? (Among respondents who reported providing assistance)

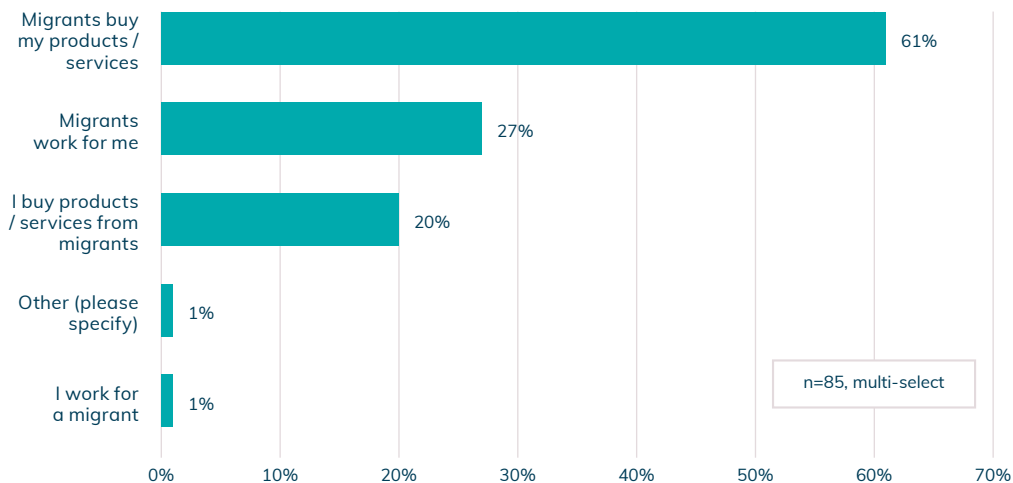


Respondents who reported providing free information to migrants (n=17) mostly gave information on the migration routes (14/17), conditions of the journey (7), conditions at destination (6), and safety and security along the journey (5). Few also provided information on where and how to access services (3). Delving into why respondents provided free assistance and/or information (n=100) to transiting migrants, interviewed local community members described doing so out of general courtesy (58%), courtesy towards people in need (57%), and/or due to their custom of helping all travelers (37%).

Migrants are commonly clients of local businesses

For the local community respondents who engaged in commercial/economic exchanges (n=85) with transiting migrants, such exchanges fell within three main categories: migrants buying products/services from respondents (61), migrants being employed by respondents (27), and respondents buying products/services from migrants (20) (see Figure 5). It was more common for women to buy products/services from migrants than men (16/59 versus 4/26).

Figure 5: What type of commercial/economic interaction? (Among respondents reporting commercial/economic interactions)



Among respondents who reported employing migrants (n=27), most (24/27) reported that migrants were working for them at home, suggesting employment as domestic workers, while some outlined migrants were working on their land/with their animals (6) or in their business (2).



Methodology

This snapshot draws on 201 quantitative surveys conducted with local community members in Hargeisa, the Somaliland region, in July 2022, using a random walk sampling methodology. The random walk sampling methodology involved assigning each enumerator a starting point and direction from which the enumerator would interview 1 person every 4 houses/structures, alternating sides of the road and choosing a random direction at road intersections. Enumerators were invited to prioritize interviews at shops, cafes and restaurants when these were encountered using the sampling method, to capture a wide array of respondents. As per the study's targeting strategy, respondents were all residents of the two locations and had lived in the location of interview for at least 3 years.