SEEFAR

Zuara: A Formula for Change in Libya?

Libyan Perspectives on the Migration Crisis

Contents

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Executive Summary

Background

International actors have struggled to engage effectively with Libya's fragmented state institutions on migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons. Since the effective collapse of Libyan state institutions and the fall in the Dinar, Libya has moved from a destination country for millions of migrant workers to one of the biggest transit countries in the world. Despite much attention and desperate need, few sustainable solutions to migrant smuggling have been proposed or implemented in Libya. However, that is exactly what is needed and solutions require long lasting partnerships with Libyans that generate benefits for both Libyans and African migrant workers in Libya.

Similarly, the security vacuum left by the fragmentation of Muammar Gadaffi's formidable security apparatus has seen law and order breakdown, communities and citizens across Libya suffering the consequences of high crime rates, economic malaise, and the dissolution of basic services such as healthcare.

In the absence of national or international support, local entities found ways to support the population and restore law and order. Brigades, militia, and vigilante groups were established with varying intents.

Within this challenging context, irregular migration journeys proliferated into, and across, Libya to the Mediterranean. The lack of economic alternatives and the local populations' need to survive saw the marginalised and criminal activity of migrant smuggling become normalised in a number of transit towns. In many places it is accepted reluctantly as a rare source of income.

Communities across Libya have felt the knock-on effects of this activity. Locals of the north-western coastal towns such as Zuara, have borne witness to

migrant bodies washing up on their shores. In the south, in towns such as Ghat, residents have attributed strains on public health services and social ills to migrants, blaming both smugglers and migrants themselves.

> The conditions in Zuara that gave rise to the Masked Men are present in other locations. Targeted development programming in Libya could reduce onward movement to Europe and reduce abuse to migrants if certain conditions are in place.

Some communities have developed constructive and effective responses to help end the smuggling and the abuse of migrants. In Zuara, community opposition to smuggling was translated into action by local leaders and civil society, which created conditions hostile to people smugglers. Part of the response was the use of a volunteer force to prevent migrant smuggling called the Counter Crime Unit (CCU), regularly referred to as the Masked Men.

This case study tells the story of how Zuara—in the absence of a functioning state—created conditions hostile to criminal activity including migrant smuggling. More importantly however, it shows that the conditions in Zuara that gave rise to the Masked Men, are present in other locations. If harnessed, this could lead to better outcomes for all involved – Libyans, migrants *and* Europe.

This study investigates the manner in which local communities seek to bring about change, and the potential for international actors to work in partnership with Libyan communities in the migration field. It

argues that interventions aligned with the views of local populations are more likely to be effective at migration management, as well as sustainable and cohesive with other policy priorities – chiefly peacebuilding and development.

Our theory is that serious development programming in Libya, if it incorporates the views of Libyans and is targeted to smuggling hotspots and traditional migrant worker hubs, and harnesses the power of effective communications, can reduce abuse directed towards migrants and slow onward migration.

But first, we need to understand what happened in Zuara.

Methodology

The findings of this study are the result of three streams of research. The first is a set of focus groups with a cross-section of communities based in Zuara and Ghat, with key informant interviews with community elders, local authority figures, smugglers, and key personnel from local branches of relevant institutions.

The second was a programming scoping exercise completed by Seefar in May 2017. The exercise involved staff visits to Tripoli, Zuara, Sabratha, Ghat, Sabha, and Ghatrun to assess possibilities for migration programming.

And the third was two mixed methods research projects to understand mixed migration flows to Europe completed in Libya from December 2016 to June 2017. This included surveys and interviews with hundreds of people including migrants, smugglers, and stakeholders, and focus group discussions with Libyans from around the north-west.

See the Annexes for a full description of the methodology and sources consulted.
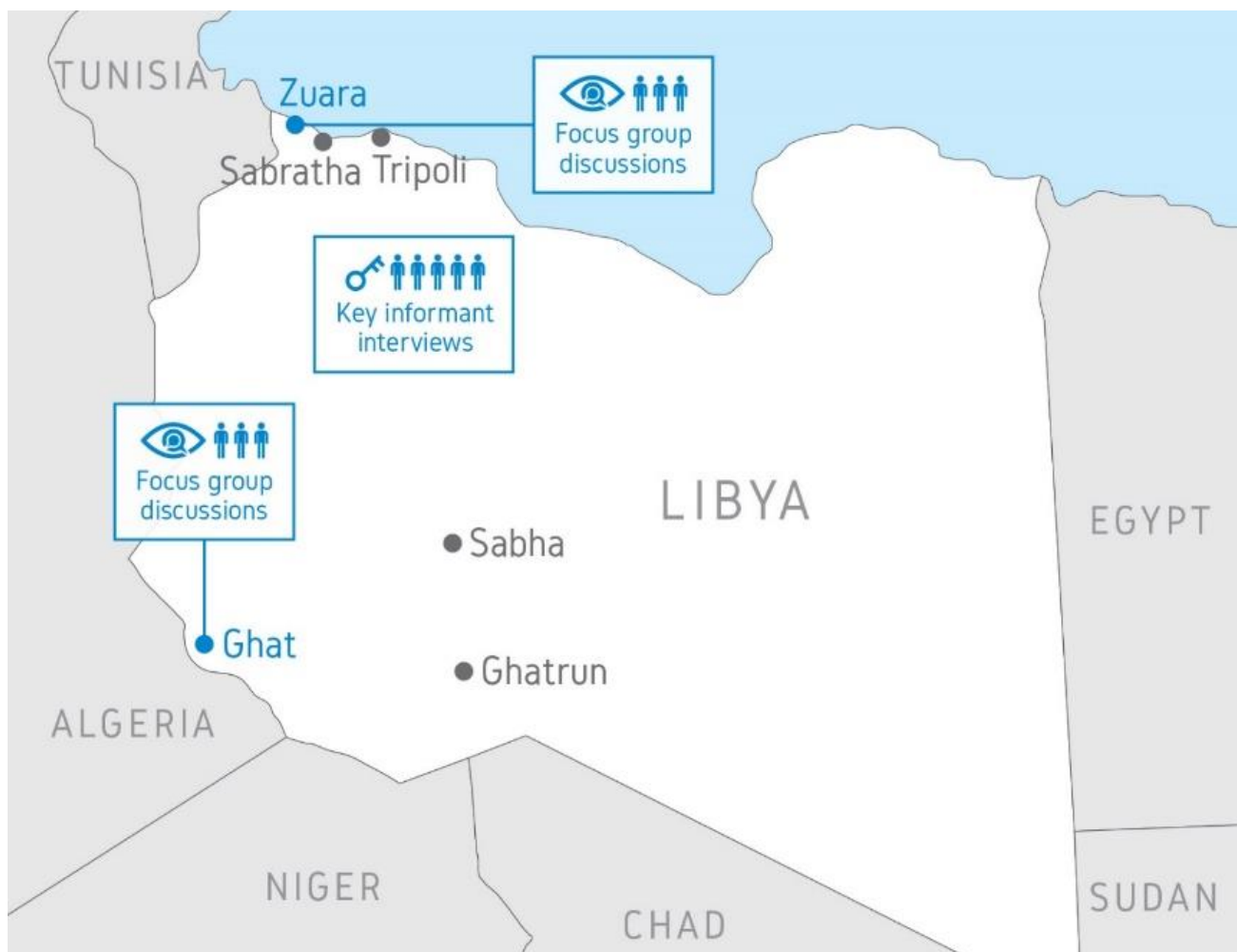
Findings

Donors should focus on reinforcing the space in which migrants can live and work securely. Key to this is securing the support of the local community. To this end, donors should consider funding complementary development—and communications —oriented actions. Action should be preceded by a focused formulation study specific to the place of intervention.

Lessons from Zuara

- Zuaran's feel they solved a problem for Europe but have since received little support for it – creating a negative incentive for other communities and trusting, sustainable interventions.

- There is support for migrants and migrant workers among the Libyan population, provided objections can be managed effectively, such as migrant health problems, taxes and a 'Libyan first' approach.

- The push factors for onward movement to Europe are reduced among a proportion of migrants when Libyans are accepting of migrant workers and migrant workers are not being exploited in Libya. When this happens, all parties–Libyans, migrants and donors—benefit.

Development-based actions

The results of the formulation study should guide the exact nature of the intervention. Potential actions might include:

- Establish a reception center for migrants in Ghat, including a health screening process, with the authority to certify migrants eligible to work and whose results are respected in the local community. Any services made available to migrants should also be available to the local community.

- Take measures to strengthen the economic benefit of industries reliant on migrant labour such as agriculture and construction. Futher research should establish the extent to which informal work can be regularized, including the possibility for a local tax on migrant work.

- Services should be delivered with full sensitivity to the local context. In Ghat, this includes recognition of existing formal and informal migrant-support structures.

BETTER ENVIRONMENT IN LIBYA FOR MIGRANTS TO LIVE AND WORK IN

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS + DEVELOPMENT-BASED ACTIONS = MIGRANTS More employment opportunities + MIGRANTS Less abuse = INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY Less irregular migration

Credible Flexible

Reception centre Agricultural industry Construction industry Sensitivity to local context

Strategic communications

Development-based actions should be accompanied by behavior change communications campaigns to highlight the co-ownership of the intervention and its objectives, and show how support to migrants is of direct interest to host communities. The campaigns would seek to reinforce positive perceptions of migrants as a valuable source of labor. The campaigns should be:

- Credible – the content and the delivery of the information should be trustworthy. This will likely mean a physical presence in the community. Further research should map the relative credibility of various channels.

- Flexible – the vehicle for delivery should be capable of adapting to the changing context and maintaining relevance.

SEEFAR

Introduction

Since 2015, irregular migration has been a critical concern for the European Union and its member states. With the slowing of spontaneous flows across the Aegean Sea, migrants transiting the Central Mediterranean to Europe have become the primary concern to policymakers wishing to end the 'migration crisis.'

International responses to the crisis in Libya have been primarily reactive, primarily entailing measures to secure Libya's land and sea borders. This has included strengthening the Libyan Coastguard's search and rescue capability, expanding the assisted voluntary returns and reintegration program of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and improving the standards and capacity of detention under the Department for Combatting Illegal Migration (DCIM).

These measures have been hampered by the limited capacity and legitimacy of the Libyan state. Security constraint that have prevented most international actors operating outside of Tripoli, where most smuggling occurs. Moreover, interventions have drawn criticism from civil society for not prioritizing migrant protection.

Solutions are needed that combat migrant smuggling and prioritize migrant protection. This brief study examines how Libyan communities—many of which have already responded to both concerns—can be supported to create an environment hostile to migrant smuggling and welcoming to migrants.

Intervening 'upstream'

Interventions earlier in the migration process—most appropriately targeted at those unlikely to qualify for international protection—can be both more effective

and compatible with principals of protection than coercive measures to halt flows at Europe's land and maritime borders. Existing initiatives focus on mitigating the drivers of migration in countries of origin and increasing the capacity of migration management actors in countries of transit. Considerable funding has been allocated to resilience and border management program in Sudan, Ethiopia, and Niger for this purpose.

Where those considering dangerous journeys decide not to depart in the first place, they avoid the physical, mental, and financial investments that otherwise make abandoning irregular journeys such a difficult prospect. In turn, authorities of transit and destination countries spend less on asylum processing, protection, psychosocial support, search and rescue, and return. Most importantly, the volume of migrants vulnerable to abuse and death is reduced.

In Libya, this means changing the conditions in which migrants live, so that remaining in Libya becomes a viable and even preferable option for the thousands of migrants who have established livelihoods. The communities hosting migrants, especially where state authority is lacking, are key to creating such conditions.

Vigilantism in post-Revolution Libya

After the 2011 removal of the Gadaffi regime in Libya, communities organized to maintain law and order to ensure survival. Vigilante groups formed and took on this responsibility, often funded and sponsored by local communities and authorities. Action in Libya echoes vigilante responses around the world to the retreat of state authority.

While the actions of vigilante groups can pose legal and ethical questions, their potential to tackle problems of local importance where formal authorities are unable or unwilling to do so can determine important (positive and negative) local outcomes. The objects of vigilante action are diverse. In the east, local mobilization against Benghazi-based Islamist brigades in 2012 upheld secular democratic norms in the city.[1] In the south, members of the Toubou ethnic group from Libya, Chad, and Niger came together in 2013 to regulate gold prospecting in the Tibesti mountings.[2]

Libyan solutions

There have been international backed enforcement actions, demonstrations against migrant smuggling, and motions among local government and tribal leadership against migrant smuggling. Yet, the dynamics that enable and constrain migrant smuggling and trafficking at the local level have received little attention.[3] Libyan perspectives have been limited geographically (often to Tripoli), to elite actors, or to journalistic anecdote.

Many migrants – West Africans and Sudanese in particular – enter Libya with no immediate intention of moving to Europe. Local conditions can encourage

onward movement, and their character and severity differ between region and town.

This brief examines how Zuara, a town on the northern coast of Libya, all but ended migrant smuggling through grassroots community action. It asks how the international community can harness a similar appetite for change elsewhere in Libya, without alienating communities understandably suspicious of European motives. Success in this approach has the potential to bring about outcomes that benefit migrants and Libyans, while furthering European and Libyan objectives to curtail migrant smuggling.

Drawing on focus group discussions and key informant interviews, the brief investigates local perspectives in Ghat. Respondents in Ghat recognised migrant smuggling and irregular migration as an issue of major local concern. Public health, prostitution and drug trafficking were all issues attributed to migrants. At the same time, migrants were recognised as a necessary part of the local economy. Respondents were receptive to – and sometimes suggested – solutions that addressed local concerns while allowing migrants to stay. The brief concludes that, with the right support, communities such as Ghat can mobilize to improve migrant conditions and reduce the prevalence of smuggling and trafficking in persons.

Figure 1: Migrant worker accommodation in Ghatrun

[1] http://carnegieendowment.org/files/libya_security_2.pdf, 12
[2] http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/working-papers/SAS-CAR-WP43-Chad-Sudan-Libya.pdf, 92-93

[3] See Altai Consulting and International Crisis Group (annex 2) for exceptions to this. See also the following argument (in French) in support of greater attention to tribal dynamics, https://www.frstrategie.org/web/documents/programmes/observatoire-du-monde-arabo-musulman-et-du-sahel/publications/2017/14.pdf.

Zuara Case Study

Context

Zuara sits on the northern coast of Libya and is a long-term place of transitory migration. Lower skilled migrants have often worked in local industry, and as female domestic workers. Higher skilled migrant workers (mainly from Arabic-speaking states such as Egypt and Syria) have worked in the oil sector and skilled professions such as medicine and teaching.

> *"Migration is of course a natural phenomenon."*
>
> CCU Member

With the 2011 Revolution and then 2014 Civil War, Zuara's status shifted from a primary destination for migrants to one of transit to Europe. The migrant smuggling industry, traditionally confined to a few specialist groups, began to expand as barriers to entry dropped. The high standards – and prices – offered to Syrian and other Arab-ethnic irregular migrants gave way to a race to the bottom to provide cheap services to poorer migrants, in particular West Africans.[4]

Ensuing moral indignation and moral panic changed the dynamic in the town. Smuggling – and the suffering of migrants – became more visible. On the one hand, irregular migrants were increasingly seen as taking advantage of the lack of regulation to transit the city to Europe, rather than coming to the city to work, and smugglers were blamed for facilitating it. On the other, the suffering of migrants became more visible.

Public condemnation began to grow, brought to a head twice by the arrival of bodies on local beaches following tragedies off the coast in successive years.

The Counter Crime Unit (The 'Masked Men')

Officially known as The Counter Crime Unit (CCU), the group referred to as the 'Masked Men' was conceived as a volunteer police force in 2012.[5] In 2013 it began addressing its mandate to tackle crime "under the Libyan Penal Code" (Zuara CCU member), and they received official permits from the Ministry of Interior to carry out their activity.[6] This included countering robbery, vandalism, drugs and weapons trafficking. Eventually, migrant smuggling became a priority when it began negatively impacting the local community.

What happened

The sinking of a migrant boat in summer 2014 and the arrival of "dozens" (community leader, Zuara) of bodies on the Zuara beach increased concern about

> *"The community is the number one supporter of the Masked Men."*
>
> Focus group participant, Zuara

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[4] Peter Tiniti and Tuesday Reitano discuss this process in detail in *Migrant, Refugee, Smuggler, Saviour* (2016), Hurst Publishers.
[5] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africa andindianocean/libya/11956432/Meet-the-Libyan-Masked-Men-leading-fight-against-people-smugglers.html

[6] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/01/libya-marked-force-zuwara-law-and-order

migrant smuggling.[7] The incident saw the CCU arrest hundreds of migrants and "more than 65 smugglers…" (community leader, Zuara). Smuggling continued throughout 2014 as Zuara's civil war losses[8] absorbed local attention until a second major tragedy on August 26, 2015[9] renewed pressure on migrant smugglers.

Community outrage motivated Zuaran elders, the municipal council and mayor, local civil society, and the Shura Council[10] to move against the smugglers.

Leaders formed a committee on migrant smuggling, which tasked the CCU specifically with arresting smugglers. The renewed efforts led to the near complete cessation of migrant smuggling activities in the town.

Despite this, the CCU felt they gained little recognition or support from the international community. CCU members claim that a shortage of good equipment, including "long range and encrypted communications

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

2012
Counter Crime Unit conceived as voluntary vigilante force

2013
Counter Crime Unit begins to carry out operations against crimes under the Libyan Penal Code

August 2014
Migrant boat sinks, 'dozens' of bodies arrive on Zuara's beaches and arrests of migrants and smugglers

December 2014
Zuara is targeted in ongoing Civil War, distracting from people smuggling concerns

August 2015
Migrant boat sinks with loss of 180 lives, renewing anger against people smugglers, and leading to arrests

2016
Ongoing vigilance leads to the near complete cessation of smuggling activity through Zuara

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[7] https://deathbyrescue.org/assets/annexes/Porsia_ Libya_smugglers.pdf, 10-13.

[8] Reuters reported attacks on a port and food storage area in December 2014, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security/jets-carry-out-air-strikes-west-of-libyan-capital-idUSKCN0JG1F920141202.

[9] A smuggling boat carrying more than 300 migrants capsized off the Libyan coast resulting in the loss of 180 lives. The exact number of bodies reported varies. See https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/28/libyans-protest-people-smugglers-up-to-200-drown; http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-libya-boat/libya-recovers-82-bodies-after-migrant-boat-sinks-official-idUSKCN0QX0WT20150828.

[10] Shura Councils are "made of local experts and personalities. Their main role is to advise the Municipal Council…" See http://www.ly.undp.org/content/dam/libya/docs/UNDP%20Libya%20Rapid%20Diagnostic%20of%20Local%20Governance%20-%20Synthesis%20Report%20%28Final%20Version%29.pdf, 11

systems that can't be hacked" (Zuara CCU senior member) are essential to ensure they stay ahead of well-resourced smugglers.

More importantly than the provision of funding or equipment itself, the perception that international actors were more active in more volatile areas of the country – including towns 'supportive' of migrant smuggling – led some to conclude that chaos brings greater reward.

Ingredients of success

Zuara's success comes with caveats: some smugglers have been displaced to neighboring coastal towns, and the town continues to smuggle other contraband, namely fuel. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of a community bringing justice into its own hands – and the potential for communities to do this elsewhere in Libya – is a powerful tool inviting further examination. A vigilante response in the style of the CCU may not be appropriate in other Libyan municipalities. But the factors that allow the CCU to thrive can be nurtured elsewhere, leading to locally-relevant and -owned responses of a development or humanitarian character.

Interviews with leading figures in Zuara and focus groups with a cross-section of the community pointed to the following factors as enablers of the CCU's success:

- **Trust** – the CCU enjoys high levels of local legitimacy. Its members are drawn from the local community and are trusted by residents. There are no reports of the abuse of power associated with militia elsewhere in the country.

- **Accountability** – in spite of their anonymity while on duty, members are known to the

    community and face public scrutiny for their actions. Although they operate independently, with public funding, they are also answerable to local authorities.

- **Alignment of official and public support** – Zuaran and Amazigh[11] community leadership is respected by the wider community. Zuara's municipal council could be confident that its endorsement of the CCU would be accepted and adhered to by the public.

- **Support to the rule of law** – where some vigilante groups exist to enforce (social) norms outside of the law, the CCU were clear on their purpose to enforce Libyan law, and said they were answerable to the attorney general.

- **Sympathy towards migrants' plight** – stakeholders and focus group participants widely lamented the situation migrants found themselves in and the limited resources and options available to authorities to support them.

- **Willingness to support migrants in Zuara** – focus group discussions show an acceptance and support for migrants remaining in the town in licit occupations.

- **Community owned** – Zuaran respondents were consicous of the local specificity of the actions. They made it clear that they did not feel the force was 'transplantable' and that similar efforts in other areas would have to be made up of an area's local residents. Local knowledge and investment is essential for such initiatives to be effective and sustianable in the longer term.

Community ownership must also be understood in opposition to international ownership. Success was achieved in a context where international programs such as Operation Sophia—while not drawing condemnation—became the source of considerable distrust. The delegitimization of international actions reinforced support for local initiatives. Respondents felt that Operation Sophia was:

- not very effective in preventing departures;

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[11] The Amazigh, also known as Berbers, are an ethnolinguistic group indigenous to North Africa. The Amazigh in Libya suffered decades of repression and discrimination during Gaddafi's rule.

- together with NGO search and rescue, possibly a pull factor, encouraging more migrants to transit in Libya ultimately increasing the burden on Libyan communities to care for them; and

- focused on preventing migrant departures from Libya, without offering support to Libyan communities.

"The masked men came from our society, and nobody imposed them on us. A Masked Man is either me, or you, or your cousin, or your friend..."
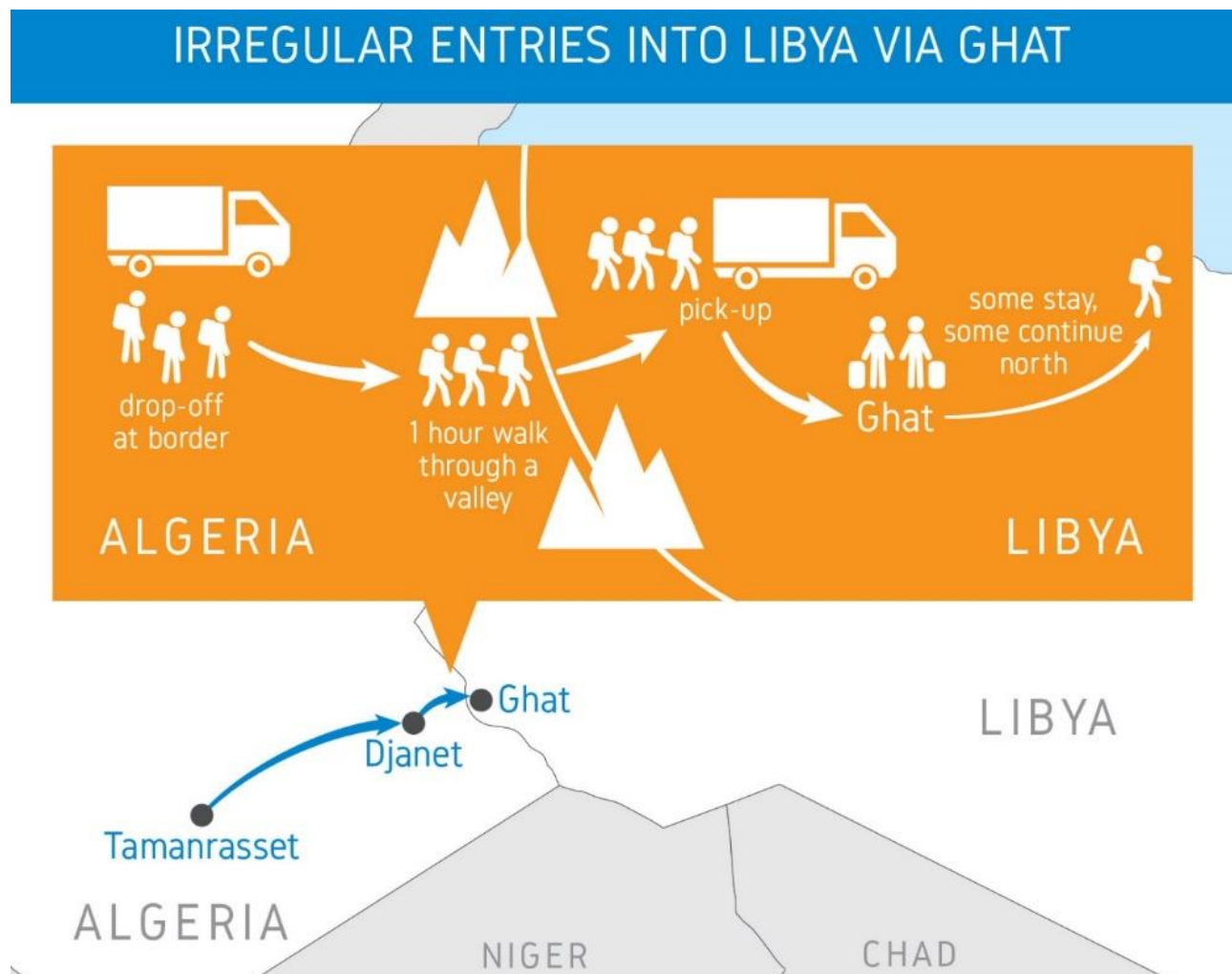
Focus group participant, Zuara

A recurring theme

Ghat

Ghat is a town on the south-west Libyan border with Algeria primarily made up of Tuareg and thus has a high level of ethnic homogeneity like Zuara.[12] It continues to be a destination and transit route for Sub-Saharan African migrants. Migration to the town

has fluctuated over several hundred years. During the migration crisis, smugglers routed significant numbers through Algeria and into Western Libyan towns including Ghat and Ghadames. Reports suggest that this trend began to decline in 2016[13] –

IRREGULAR ENTRIES INTO LIBYA VIA GHAT

drop-off at border

1 hour walk through a valley

pick-up

some stay, some continue north

Ghat

ALGERIA

LIBYA

Ghat

Djanet

Tamanrasset

LIBYA

ALGERIA

NIGER

CHAD

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[12] Although there is a high level of ethnic homogeneity, this is not to say that allegiances are automatic. Ties are often clan-based, rather than tribe-based, and Tuareg have, like other groups, joined various militia that cut across ethnic groups and reject traditional authority. See https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/181511/Inside_Libyas_Wild_West.pdf, 3 and http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/T-Briefing-Papers/SAS-SANA-BP-Ubari.pdf, 5 for further background on the ethnic dynamics of the south-west.

[13] http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/AFIC/AFIC_2016.pdf, 15

though were certainly not halted[14] – as Algerian efforts to manage irregular migration encouraged ever greater numbers of migrants to travel the comparatively shorter route directly north to Libya via Ghatrun.

Throughout the migrant crisis, the community in Ghat has supported new arrivals arriving from Algeria. Migrants on this route typically drive the last leg from Djanet, Algeria to the Libyan border. They then walk for around one hour, through a valley and towards Ghat. Libyan smugglers then take them the rest of the way to Ghat. Community leaders explained how, with limited resources, the community provides food and water to new arrivals. They then allow some migrants to continue their journey, preferring they move on than become a burden locally.[15]

Some migrants remain—men often finding work as day laborers in construction, workshops or home maintenance and women as domestic help or in the care economy, making food or providing care for children.

Whether or not migrants remain for the short term or long term – long enough only to raise money for the onward journey or actually achieve some degree of settlement in Ghat – depends on the ability to save and remit money, working and living conditions, and personal security.

In turn, this depends on how the community in Ghat and its leaders view migrants, and the degree to which immigration and 'settlement' is permitted locally and abusive practices sanctioned and condemned.

View of migration

In focus group discussions in Ghat, 'illegal migration' was recognized as a problem with inadequate redress. Equally, there was recognition that 'legitimate migration' should be allowed. Some gave a religious justification, saying Islam recognizes the right to migrate, so long as the laws of destination countries are respected.

Discerning the line between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' migration is more problematic because of the distance between the law, how communities remember its enforcement in the Gadaffi era, and the inability of state institutions to enforce it in any meaningful way now. It is therefore an area where the experiences and perspectives of local actors determine how migrants are viewed and treated. A key example is that 'refugees' is not a widely recognized category. Here, external actors, must be most cautious in how terminology is interpreted locally.

> *"Who should address this issue? Is it the source... transit... or destination countries? My opinion is that [everyone] should cooperate to overcome this migration issue."*
>
> Focus group participant, Ghat

Respondents saw irregular migration as falling into two categories: settling and crossing. Migrants who were transiting Ghat were seen as less problematic for the local community, and concern focused on humanitarian need, namely a shortage of food and medicine. Notably, these needs were shared by vulnerable Libyan groups too. The shortage of resources caused anxiety around those who might settle. This is where perceptions that the international community intends to 'trap' migrants in Libya by preventing boat departures are most problematic.

Participants' principal concerns about irregular migrants remaining in Ghat fell into five categories:

- **Culture** – Tuareg migrants from other countries were seen to integrate better. Language and cultural barriers were seen to hinder the integration of other nationalities.

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[14] Unpublished research by Seefar and Aktis Strategy in 2017 found that repressive measures by Algerian authorities also encouraged migrants working in Algeria to continue their journey to Libya.

[15] Interviewees did not elaborate on the extent to which the support that locals provided migrants was managed formally.

- **Crime** – some believe that the widespread participation of migrants in illicit activities, including crime, drugs and prostitution is caused by migrants.

- **Health** – the community experienced the Ebola outbreak without a functioning government to manage it. This contributed to fears that unscreened irregular arrivals could be carriers.

- **Tax** – despite acknowledgement of the economic need of migration, some believe that the breakdown of a formal system of migrant registration means that economic benefitis of migration through taxation are not being realised.

- **Humanitarian** – Libyans took a moral stance that the humanitarian need faced by irregular migrants was unacceptable.

In sum, there was a desire to see *irregular* migration end and policies developed to govern the entry, residence, welfare, and integration of migrants.

However, the economic contribution of migrants was recognized. They acknowledged the importance of migrants to the local economy, recognizing the tendency for them to do the difficult and dangerous jobs not favoured by Libyans. Although rarer, there was also mention of the potential of (West African, non-Tuareg) migrants to bring cultural enrichment by, for example, teaching English.

Parallels to Zuara

This study enables us to outline preliminary areas where the local community, with support, could create conditions in which migrant smuggling (and trafficking in persons) is not tolerated, and migrants *in situ* are able to remain and integrate – as has been the case in Zuara:

- **Tight-knit community structures based on common ethnic origins.** The Amazigh in Zuara were united by state discrimination during Gadaffi's rule, much like the Tuareg in Ghat.

- **Outrage at the the human consequences of migrant smuggling, and concern about the impact of smuggling on the local community.** Residents of Ghat and Zuara were concerned about the suffering of both migrants and the local population. There is an understanding that the development of the smuggling industry has undermined the development of licit more sustainable industries, and the commitment of young people to education and licit industries.

- **Economic security to withstand the exit of the smuggling industry from the local economy.** The ability of Zuara to make money from other trades softened the blow of foregoing migrant smuggling revenues. While fuel smuggling appears to be a mainstay, Zuara has licit income from the oil and gas industry, and is in talks with foreign investors to open a recyling plant. Ghat derives income from other smuggling too, but there is also potential for revenue from oil and agriculture, with the right kind of external support.[16]

Figure 1: Migrant workers in Ghat

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[16] For a discussion of economic potential (and challenges) in the south-west, see International Crisis Group, *How Libya's Fezzan Became Europe's New Border,* https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/libya/179-how-libyas-fezzan-became-europes-new-border

Community responses beyond Libya

While the work of the CCU in countering human smuggling is unique in Libya, communities around the world consistently apply a local framing of problems and devise their own responses. Often, these are aligned with global objectives to build more stable and prosperous communities, and often more effective than international interventions.

In Ghana, vigilante groups take the form of 'foot soldiers' who are tied to political parties and who ensure that elections are not interfered with.[17] In South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya, groups maintain order in localities where municipal police do not have control. In 2006, during Europe's last 'migration crisis', the village of Thiaroye on the western coast of Senegal was the site of formation of 357 mothers of irregular migration. These women halted departures through informal awareness raising with fishermen (doubling as smugglers) and potential migrants.[18]

Mexico's vigilante groups offer lessons and warnings for other nascent movements. For some, the proliferation of *autodefensas* (self-defense forces) are lamentable evidence of a failing state.[19] Yet, residents in towns and villages in Michoacán, reported a decrease in kidnappings and incidents of extortion, the return of property from cartels, and the protection of key licit exports, namely avocados.[20] An agriculture engineer told a researcher: "the *autodefensas* exist because the people became tired of being kidnapped, murdered, and dispossessed."[21] *Autodefensas* are now present in an estimated 33 of Michoacan's 113

municipalities, and enjoy popular support in many of them,[22] as well as from *michoacanos* living in the United States.

Autodefensas are often controversial, and offer warnings as well as examples of the potential of local actions. The alleged engagement of the group in criminal activities and collusion with drug cartels prompted central government to commit to their disarmament. This is to the chagrin of many locals, who see the groups as the main – and often only – actor guaranteeing their security.[23]

Examples of community-based interventions have allowed researchers to collect lessons that can inform programming in Libya. Like with drug trafficking in Latin America, the high-level response to migrant smuggling in Libya has been overwhelmingly centered on law enforcement. Where formal law enforcement proves ineffective, and the negative consequences are borne by local communities, communities calculate that their best interests are best served by structures and groups outside of the law. For many Mexicans and Libyans, the response for many has been to join armed groups, contributing further to instability. As discussed in the Zuara Case Study section, some feel that 'good behavior' is not recognized by international actors, and military action is the only way to be recognized. Social movements, whether they take the form of more typical vigilante groups or another shape, offer an alternative path.

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[17] http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Vigilante-groups-in-Ghana-a-necessary-evil-529613. and https://www.modernghana.com/news/768151/vigilante-groups-and-the-democratization-process-in-ghana.html

[18] http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/18/AR2006101801155_pf.html

[19] https://www.crimejusticejournal.com/article/download/320/271/

[20] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/28/mexican-militias-vigilantes-drug-cartels.

[21] https://rei.iteso.mx/bitstream/handle/11117/1482/Autodefensas+de+Michoac%E1n,+en+la+encrucijada.pdf;jsessionid=DD17D003D3E9B47913757456944EE794?sequence=2, 183

[22] http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/no-solution-sight-mexico-michoacan-vigilante-problem

[23] https://rei.iteso.mx/bitstream/handle/11117/1482/Autodefensas+de+Michoac%E1n,+en+la+encrucijada.pdf;jsessionid=DD17D003D3E9B47913757456944EE794?sequence=2, 183

Lessons for Libya Programming

The example of vigilante groups demonstrates the potential of communities' own will to act and address local problems. This report does not suggest the arming of Libyan groups to tackle people smugglers and traffickers. Rather, it proposes designing and implementing interventions tailored to Libyan localities, based on local perspectives, and sustained by the momentum of local enthusiasm.

Libyan respondents proposed several ways to respond to the challenges of migrant smuggling. The community's engagement in this sense was an indication of its willingness to pursue win-win outcomes for locals and migrants, if certain concerns are addressed. Suggestions for local responses align with European Union objectives to discourage onward movement towards Italy, and increase the protection of migrants in transit.

Proposals centered on using international support for better regulation of migrant flows, and ways to facilitate migrants' integration into local communities:

- **Open regulated reception centres.** Like European populations, Libyans are often more concerned with the chaotic nature of unexpected arrivals than arrivals themselves. The opening of reception centres, with a health screening facility, would go a long way to allaying fears, especially in border towns such as Ghat.

- **Assess the potential for migrants to contribute to the community in new, perhaps unconventional ways.** Focus group participants took the initiative to suggest ways in which the local benefits of migration could be felt by the community. More conventional proposals were to regulate their employment in agriculture; more unexpected was the proposal to employ English and French-speaking migrants as community language teachers.

- **Involve 'destination countries' in addressing the challenges faced locally.** Most believed that push factors (at origin) and pull factors (at

destination) unfairly caught Libya in the middle. In what is seen as a problem created by non-Libyan actors, the international community is seen to have a duty to support such communities 'in the middle.'

- **Legal registration of migrants.** Repsondents were generally supportive of greater administrative oversight of the arrival and departure of migrants, indicating they might support a low-skilled labour migration regime of the sort in place before the 2011 revolution. This, in turn, would increase the legitimacy of migrant workers and strengthen their labor rights. More formally, it would allow civil society to more closely monitor the number of migrant workers present and their conditions.

- **The core merits of working with local communities, simply put, are efficacy and sustainability.** Community-based groups have the advantage of being self-sustaining. They do not incur the costs of standing armies and police forces. Communities take little time to organize and begin their work, function well in rural and isolated areas, and are familiar with local challenges with terrain, infrastructure, and culture. Most importantly, they are highly motivated because they hold the biggest stake in their own futures.

One respondent from Zuara said that a colleague from a neighboring town, Aljmail, asked for *"15 persons [from the Masked Men] to stop the chaos in [his] city!"*

He was told that this wouldn't be possible, and he needed to find people from his own community to do the work.

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Red lines and knowledge gaps

There is an ongoing risk that international interventions, particularly those associated with 'Europe', will alienate Libyan communities. Interventions may undermine their own objectives because they a) are perceived to prioritize EU policy objectives to the detriment of local interests; and/or b) they overlook existing, often successful, responses to the migration 'problem' such as the CCU' Many Zuaran respondents were understandably sensitive to the latter: Having created a demonstrably successful response, where was the national and international support?

Figure 2: Local residents, Ghat

Program design requires further scoping. Nevertheless, it is already evident that there are certain red lines not to be crossed by EU-funded interventions:

- **Funds should not support migrants to the exclusion of the local population.**

- **Interventions to support migrants should**

mitigate the 'pull factor' effect. Programs should be designed to offer support to migrants and communities already in Libya, but should not be seen to exacerbate the issue by encouraging more migrants to go to Libya.

- **Support for migrants should be gradually introduced and scaled up at a pace comfortable for the local community.** The community should continue to feel it is in control of projects.

- **Migrants who do not wish to remain in Ghat should be supported in returning to countries of origin or, where appropriate, third countries able to provide adequate protection.[24] Libya lacks the infrastructure to provide protection to non-economically active migrants.** Respondents were clear that their communities lacked capacity to support dependent migrants.

- **Communications efforts will be necessary to ensure interventions are not misconstrued.** Libyan communities may be wary of the intentions behind internationally-funded initiatives, even if broadly supportive of their substance.

- **Scoping must take fully into account the political economic situation of Libya.** The drafting of a new constitution, peace processes brokered by the UN, France, Italy, Egypt, dialogue of municipalities, all have the potential to shift public opinion.

"The understanding now is that you have to be part of the problem to [get international support]."

Zuara stakeholder interview

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[24] This could include IOM Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programs and the UNHCR-run Emergency Transit Mechanism and resettlement.

Annex 1 - Methodology

Seefar conducted a multi-sited pilot study in Zuara and Ghat using qualitative research methods, namely focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.

This was accompanied by a programming scoping exercise completed in May 2017. The exercise involved staff visits to Tripoli, Zuara, Sabratha, Ghat, Sabha, and Ghatrun to assess possibilities for migration programming and addressed questions including physical access and infrastructure, and community attitudes to non-local Libyan and international staff.

The research objectives were to:

- Understand the circumstances which led to Zuara effectively ending the town's role in migrant smuggling

- Understand the extent to which similar community-based initatives might be replicable elsewhere on the smuggling route, with a case study on Ghat.

Stakeholder interviews in Zuara

Five in-depth interviews were conducted in Zuara with members of the Counter Crime Unit (Masked Men), the Zuaran coastguard, and community elders. All interviews were conducted by Libyan researchers in Arabic. Transcripts were anonymised before analysis and some names of people and places were retracted.

Participants were aware of the purpose of the research and supportive of it. They gave informed verbal consent to take part and were given the option of viewing transcripts.

Focus group discussions in Zuara & Ghat

A total of four focus group discussions (FGDs) with a total of 22 participants (between five and seven participants per group) were conducted in Ghat (2)

and Zuara (2). FGDs were conducted by a Libyan from the community.

All FGDs were conducted by facilitators bilingual in Arabic and local languages. Participants were divided by age, with an over 34s group and under 34s group in each location. Participants described themselves as having the following qualifications:

Zuara: medical professional, media professional, NGO employees, journalist, community elders.

Ghat: social activist, academic, police officer, migrant smuggling expert, Tuareg community elder, law professor, NGO director.

All participants described themselves as being 'native' to the towns in which focus groups took place.

Participants were aware of the research purpose and were supportive of it. They gave informed written consent to take part and were given the option of viewing transcripts. Participants were reminded at discussion intervals that they were free to withdraw at any point.

Due to the sensitivity of the topics and the security situation in Libya, discussions were not recorded; instead, a scribe took detailed notes in Arabic, and these were subsequently typed in English and shared with analysts based in Tripoli, Tunis, and London.

An equal number of women and men took part in the FGDs. Although the original plan was to hold discussions in gender exclusive groups, practicalities meant that groups were often mixed. Practical considerations included the fact that some people were unable to travel at the time assigned to them, arriving instead at other FGDs. Researchers assessed that it was better to include participants in such circumstances.

Annex 2 – Key sources

Key sources produced in 2016-17 informing this study are included in the table below. Note this list is not an exhaustive bibliography.

Title	Author	Available at
Where do we go from here? Irregular migrants from the Horn of Africa in Libya. August 2017.	Seefar	On request, info@seefar.org
From destination to transit: Irregular migrants from West Africa in Libya. August 2017.	Seefar	On request, info@seefar.org
Human Conveyor-belt: Smuggling in Libya, March 2017	Global Initiative Against Transnational Crime	http://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/global-initiative-human-conveyor-belt-human-smuggling-in-libya-march-2017.pdf
Mixed Migration Trends in Libya, July 2017	Altai Consulting	http://www.altaiconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Mixed-Migration-Trends-in-Libya-Executive-Summary-Web.pdf
Leaving Libya: Rapid Assessment of Municipalities of Departures and Migrants in Libya	Altai Consulting	On request.
Central Mediterranean Research Initiative, Autumn 2016	Save the Children, CESVI & Danish Refugee Council	On request.
Displacement tracking matrix (DTM) reports: Libya round 11; Niger flow monitoring report	IOM	http://www.globaldtm.info/
Child Alert, A Deadly Journey for Children	UNICEF	https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/EN_UNICEF_Central_Mediterranean_Migration.pdf

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