

APRIL 2021

"NAP PRAN KANNTÈ" *

Trends in irregular migration by sea

*We go by sea



Funded by
European Union
Civil Protection and
Humanitarian Aid

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As part of the project “Supporting vulnerable migrants in Haiti through improved protection”, funded by the European Commission’s Directorate General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has implemented a pilot maritime border monitoring activity entitled “Blue Border Monitoring”. In this framework, IOM seeks to examine and understand the migration flows observed in the North and North-West departments to establish migration trends and better understand the drivers of migration. This study provides information on observed migration flows, types of movements, the socio-economic profile of migrants as well as their main vulnerabilities, in order to better guide the protection interventions of IOM and its partners.

This document presents the main migration trends, the profiles of Haitian migrants and the sources of funding used by potential migrants.

The information provided below is based on results obtained from a field analysis through interviews with key informants, such as representatives of state institutions, leaders of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and actors involved in organizing this type of trip (migrants, boat captains, sailors, canvassers, etc.). This study was conducted in the North (Cap-Haitien, Limbé, Limonade) and North-West (Port-de-Paix, Jean-Rabel, Saint-Louis-du-Nord, Anse-à-Foleur) departments between March 1 and April 31, 2021.

The data collected made it possible to (i) analyze the socio-economic profile of the migrants as well as their expectations and fears; (ii) understand the sources and methods of financing the trip; (iii) identify the main risks and protection needs, and (iv) develop appropriate recommendations. These results are, therefore, to be considered as “trends” and not as factual data.

IRREGULAR MIGRATION TRENDS



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Type of migration: Seasonal
Expected duration: Temporary
Age range: 20 - 40 years
Population: men, mostly low class and rural

Type of migration: Educational migration (university)
Expected duration: Temporary
Age range: 18 - 30 years
Population: middle-class, educated men and women

Note: A significant increase in permanent economic and professional migration has been observed due to the deteriorating security situation in Haiti



- USA
- CHILE
- BRAZIL
- MEXICO
- OTHERS

Type of migration: Migration for family reunification
Expected duration: Permanent
Age range: 0 - 80 years
Population: middle-class, educated men and women

Type de migration: Step for the United States
Expected duration: Temporary
Age range: 10 - 60 years
Population: men and women

Type of migration: Economic and professional migration
Expected duration: Permanent
Age range: 30 - 50 years
Population: predominantly middle-class men, educated



- TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS
- BAHAMAS

Type of migration: Migration for family reunification
Expected duration: Permanent
Age range: 15 - 70
Population: male and female of modest and rural class

Type of migration: Subsistence economic migration
Expected duration: Temporary
Age range: 20 - 50
Population: predominantly rural and low class males

Type of migration: Step to the United States
Expected duration: Temporary
Age range: 15 - 70
Population: male and female, mostly of modest and rural class

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF MIGRANTS BY SEA

NAP PRAN KANNTÈ [We go by sea]

The word 'kanntè', coined in the 1970s, comes from the Creole pronunciation of the Japanese-made Mitsubishi Canter truck used in Haiti for public transportation. Today, the word refers to a frail, locally-made boat of about 20 to 30 feet that is used by undocumented Haitian migrants to travel to the Bahamas, Florida or the Turks and Caicos Islands. Those who take the kannté are called "botpipo" (English: boat people).

Immigration by sea is particularly relevant to individuals from the lower social classes, i.e., those who do not have the opportunity to immigrate to the United States through official channels. The magnitude of those flows reveals the willingness of many migrants to undertake the crossing by sea, even if it is done illegally and in a rush. The quality of the construction of some boats and the conditions of the crossing reveal the situation of poverty and of instability in the country of origin.¹

Emigration to the United States, the Bahamas, or other destinations is often a continuation of internal migration in stages. Indeed, 55% of migrants interviewed said they first tried to move to large cities such as the capital Port-au-Prince (in the south) and Cap-Haitien (in the north-west) or Port-de-Paix (in the north).

The importance of the relay function of local cities in the north & north-west of the country such as Cap Haïtien, Port-de-Paix and Saint-Louis-du-Nord² can be explained as much by their role as regional economic pole as by the capital's limited accessibility from the North-West and North departments. Consequently, would-be emigrants from these departments prefer direct emigration which increases the number of departure points for the exodus of boat people in these coastal areas.

The migration flows of Haitians over the last three generations have created hundreds of thousands of transnational families within which important flows of capital and information circulate. Transnational families constitute the main framework for the establishment of unregulated migration dynamics by playing a leading role in the organization of clandestine trips: 85% of those interviewed stated that they had at least one family member abroad. And 65% of the migrants interviewed left thanks to the support of family or friends already in the country of destination.

¹ UDEBERT, Cédric. *The Haitian Diaspora: Migratory Territories and Networks*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2012.

² As a stepping stone before emigrating to the Bahamas, the Turks and Caicos Islands or Florida.



WHO UNDERTAKES THE JOURNEY BY SEA?



MEN

When family travel is not desirable, the family opts for the departure of a member whose age strength will allow him or her to find a job and send remittances or goods for the subsistence of the family back home.



WOMEN

In the absence of men in the home, it is the young women who undertake the journey, entrusting their children, who often become restavek, to family or close friends.

More and more women are choosing to leave as they have husbands who stay and take care of the children.



CHILDREN

Many children are also sent to live with a family member who has already settled abroad to give them a better quality of life and a better future.

It is common for unaccompanied minors to undertake the crossing with the hope that once they arrive at their destination, some members of Haitian families already there will be able to welcome them as restavek.

They are usually children from Tortuga Island.

Other children are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the sea from a very young age. Most of these children miss school to attend to sailing activities as apprentice sailors, earning a few coins.

3 Restaveks Def. Disadvantaged children placed with families other than the biological family on the basis of an oral contract that fuels informal domesticity

It is common for elderly people (>60 years old) to undertake the trip to reunite with family or to seek employment are not uncommon.

People with reduced mobility, physical health problems or mental disorders do not have the permission of the captain to embark for the trip, for safety reasons.



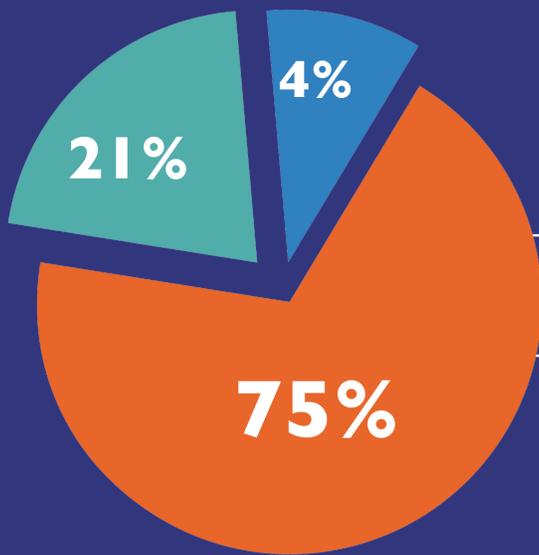


Figure 1 - Analysis by author based on figures of people repatriated from the Caribbean Islands and assisted by IOM and ONM, Haiti 2020-2021.

Men Women Children People with disabilities

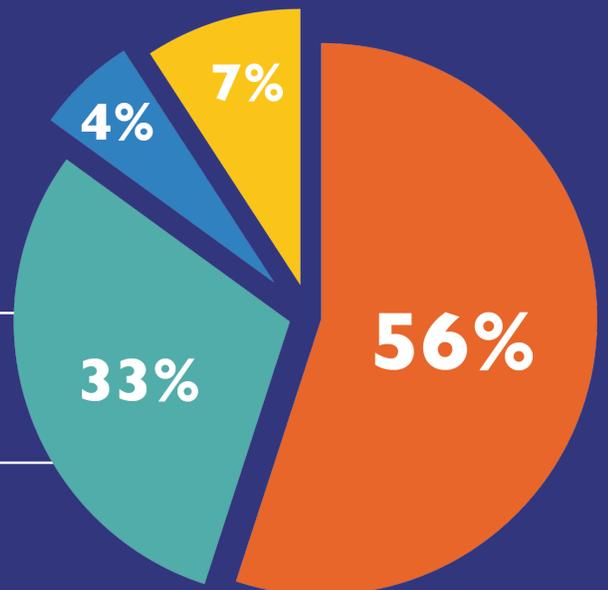


Figure 2 - Analysis by author based on figures of people repatriated from the Caribbean Islands and assisted by IOM and ONM, Haiti 2020-2021.

0-18 18-35 35-65 >65

EXPECTATIONS

- The migrants interviewed in this pilot study explained that their main goal is to help their families in Haiti by sending them money.
 - 75% of the migrants interviewed established contacts in the country of destination before starting their journey by sea.
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- There is a strong sense of solidarity among Haitian communities living abroad.
 - Once they arrive abroad, most are welcomed by friends or family members, and even by unknown compatriots.
-
- They do not leave with a guaranteed job, but they are convinced that once they arrive in the country of destination, they will find a job easily.
 - **Men** often work as gardeners, farmers, mechanics, masons, for compatriots or for foreign companies.
 - They earn between 60 and 150 USD/day, for jobs paid on a daily basis
 - Sometimes the employer regularizes some of the most talented and loyal employees by giving them a temporary residence permit.
 - Women perform simple tasks in bars, restaurants and hotels when they have a work permit.
 - Irregular migrant **women** tend to become concubines for local men in exchange for favors and housework.
 - Those who cannot find any means of subsistence decide to engage in prostitution. They are called Lavè-boutey.
 - 70% of repatriated migrants interviewed said that they did not intend to settle abroad permanently, but to go back and forth: work, save money and return.

FEARS

- Some migrants interviewed live hidden in the forest, in makeshift habitats to escape migration controls.
 - Migrants who live illegally in the host countries have to hide permanently.
 - If they do not have family, neighbors or friends in the host country, they often return to Haiti by being flown back for free by migration agents.
-
- Women who have practiced prostitution while abroad, once they return to Haiti, are subject to discrimination and stigma from their communities back home
 - Men who did not succeed in their journey, who were not able to save money or who did not regularly send money back to their families of origin with frequency are considered "losers"
 - When the intention to travel becomes concrete, they don't communicate it to anyone, because of superstition and fear that someone could denounce them, arrest them or convince them not to leave.

The existence of human trafficking networks cannot be ruled out, even though reports of this type of crime have not been recorded in this study.

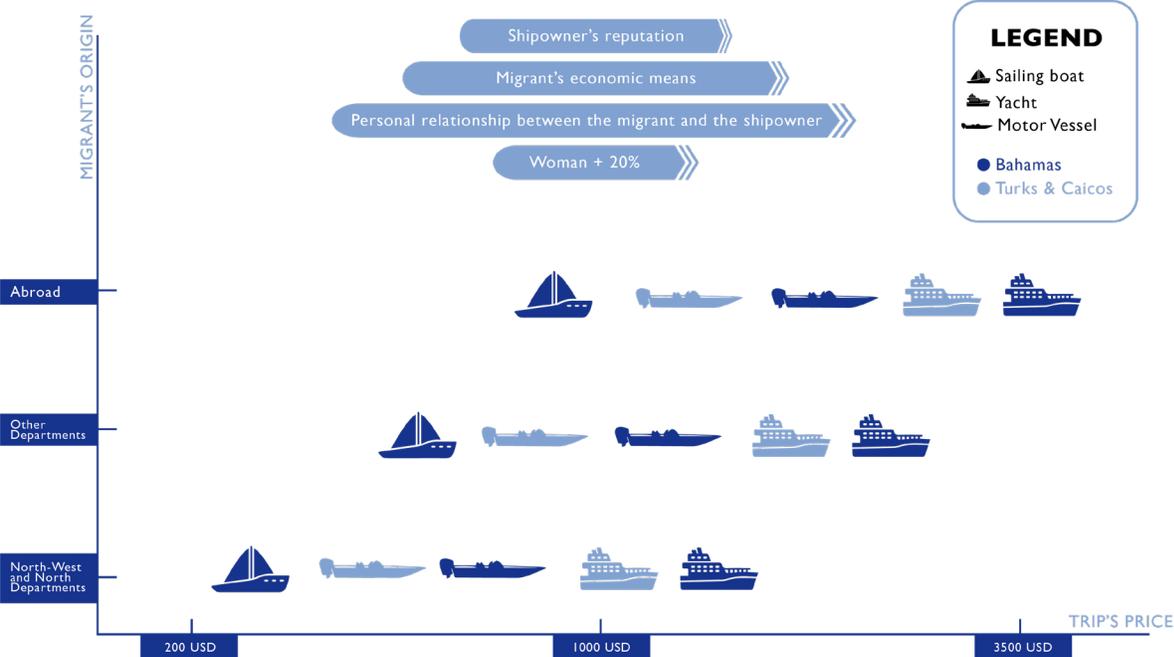
SOURCES OF FUNDING AND METHODS OF PAYMENT FOR THE PROSPECTIVE MIGRANT

The price of the trip per candidate depends on different variables

The main motivation of the actors who organize clandestine trips is the enormous profit that can be made: the price of a crossing generally varies between 200 and 5,000 USD (the average price/person lies around 350/500 USD). This needs to be multiplied by tens or even hundreds of passengers for every boat (the average number of passengers is 90). According to the analysis made on the basis of the information provided by the US Coast Guard, it is estimated that an average of two boats per month leave from Haiti. It is also important to note that more than half of the boats departing from Haiti are loaded with smuggled drugs - according to the Brigade against the Traffic of Narcotics (BLTS in its French) and the statements of boat captains consulted. When you add it all up, the turnover of these companies soars.

The price charged for a clandestine trip depends on several factors, such as:

- The applicant's place of departure: The rates, valid for those who are from the northern and north/eastern departments, remain lower than the rates for travelers who come from other departments of the country.
- Depending on the type of boat: **Sailing boats**, in which up to 200 people are crammed at the risk of their lives, charge lower rates than foreign-made **yachts** that accommodate a dozen migrants in better conditions and services.
- Depending on the date: the closer the departure date, the lower the rates if the organizer has not managed to fill the boat.
- The nature of the relationship: Preferential pricing occurs if: (i) the applicant is close to the owner or captain; (ii) if the applicant is an unaccompanied minor under 15 years of age; or (iii) if the applicant is/was a member of the crew.
- Gender of the applicant: Generally, women pay a higher price because they have more needs during the trip (they get sick more easily, they need better hygienic conditions, etc.).



TO FUND THE CROSSING, THE APPLICANT MUST GENERALLY:

- Apply for a loan from friends or close family members to be repaid once the candidate has found a job abroad;
- Loan money from a shark who will seek compensation from the candidate's family back in Haiti;
- Sell their goods: house, land, cattle, furniture, motorcycle, even clothes;
- Save for years to cover the trip without going into debt;
- Sometimes the travel expenses are covered by the family directly from the destination country, especially for female candidates.

FUNDING SOURCES

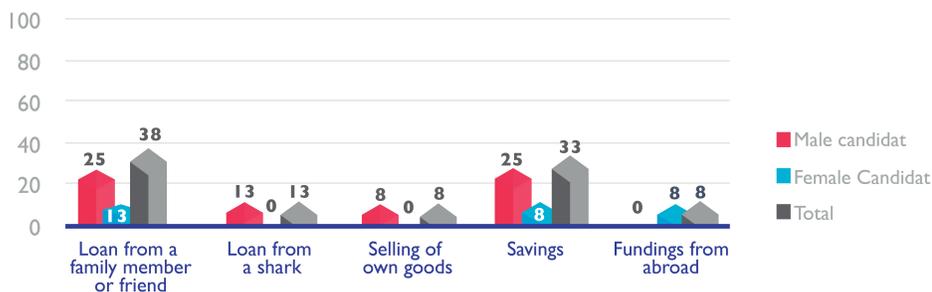


Figure 4 - Analysis based on data collected by author: 13 migrants interviewed

Payment methods and refunds:

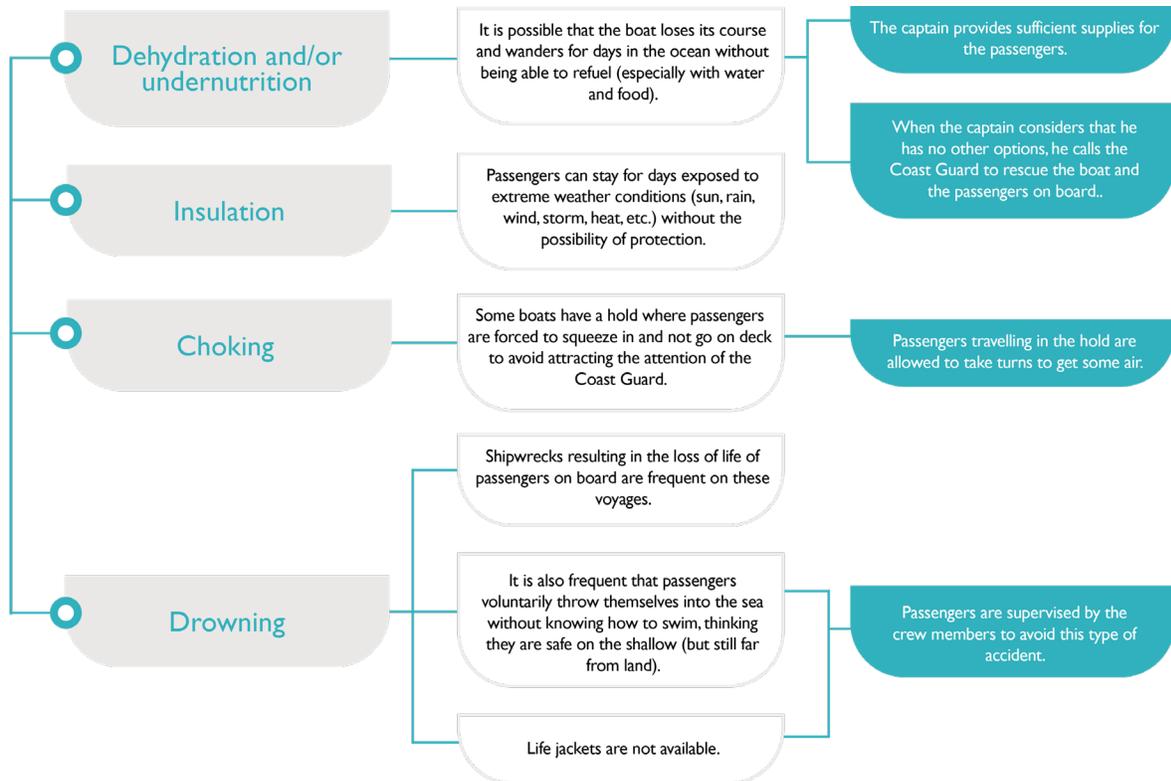
- Generally, the candidate pays in cash: 50% before the trip, 50% upon arrival;
- The candidate may have the option to pay back through free services or work;
- If the trip does not reach the final destination, there is no refund, however, the shipowner may decide to offer a second trip at a better price;
- Candidates may find themselves traveling by sailboat although they had paid for their journey by yacht.

MEANWHILE, IN THE NORTHWESTERN DEPARTMENT...

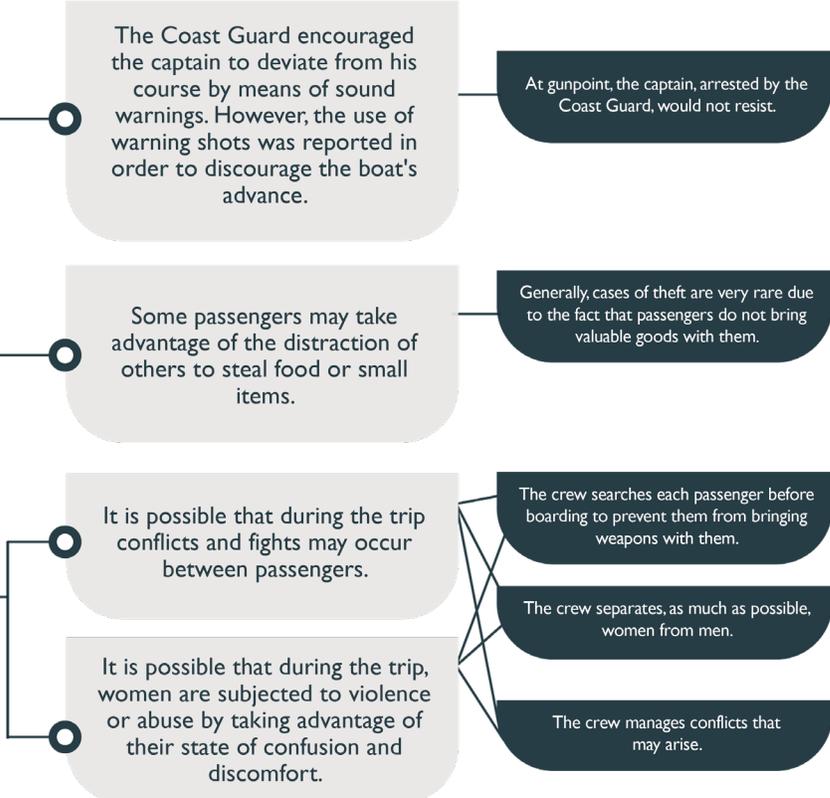
- According to several key actors interviewed, the economic well-being of the average family is based on financial transfers or other assets provided by the diaspora living abroad, especially in Florida or the Bahamas.
- 85% of respondents said they had at least one family member living abroad (Florida or Bahamas).
- According to local customs, the migrant abroad is 'successful' when his/her family can afford a large house in his hometown.
- The people of Tortuga Island are so detached from the rest of the country that some consider Nassau their capital rather than Port-au-Prince.

MAIN RISKS AND PROTECTION NEEDS DURING IRREGULAR TRAVEL BY SEA

1.



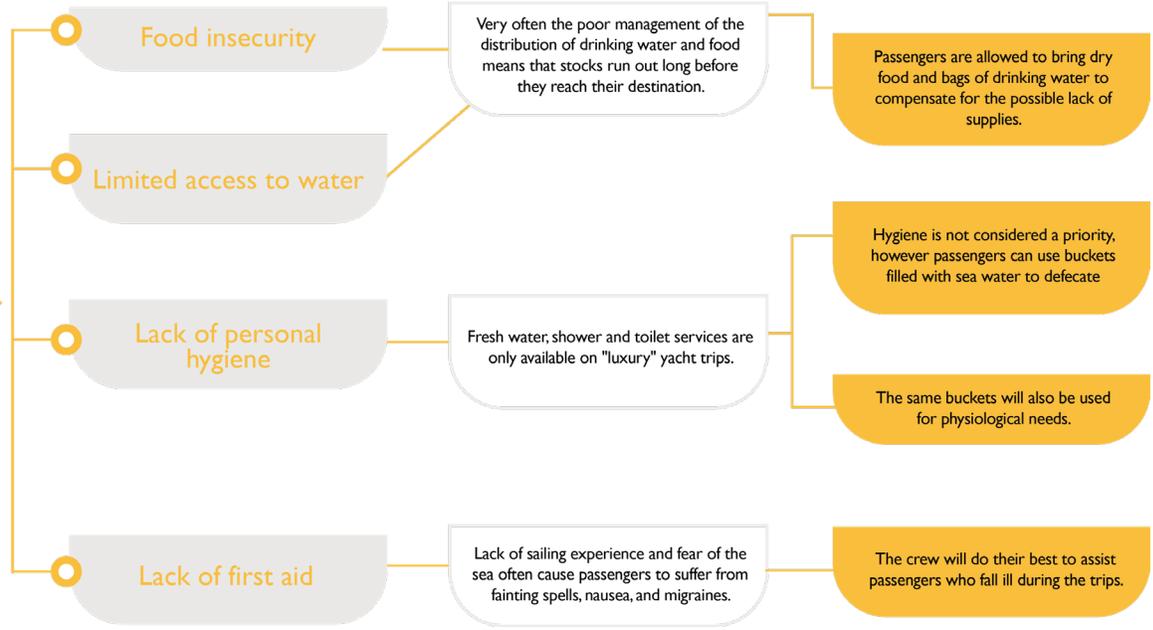
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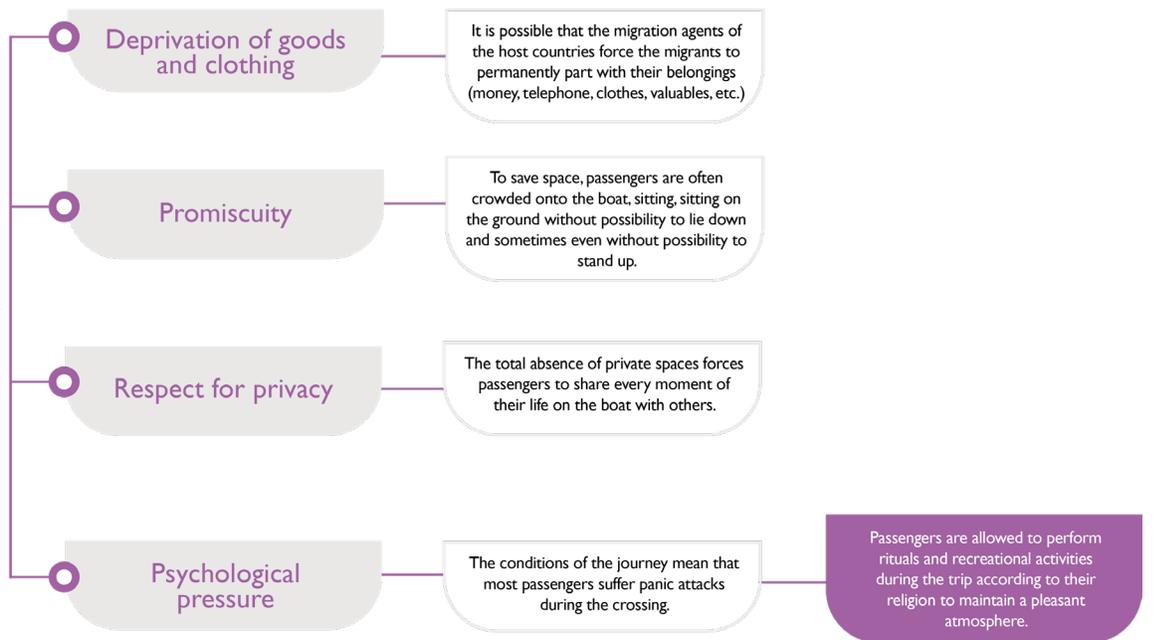
3.

LACK OF ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES



4.

DIGNITY



5.



Detention centers for illegal immigrants

Passengers are considered irregular migrants and therefore sent to a detention center before being repatriated.

The conditions in its detention centers are acceptable (food, drinking water, access to toilets and showers, mattresses to lie on, separation between men and women).

Imprisonment

When the Coast Guard manages to identify the crew among the passengers, they are taken to the prison and serve between 10 months and 5 years.

The crew identifies themselves as passengers at the time of arrest to avoid being identified.

6.



False travel

Fake journeys exist where the crew never really leave the Haitian coast and returns to the point of departure without any reimbursement to the passengers.

Migrant smuggling

There is a minor risk of human trafficking by sea. However, it is possible that passengers who have not been able to pay for their journey in full may be forced to perform services to repay their debt to the shipowner.

Human trafficking

These types of irregular travel by sea are considered by law as human trafficking. However, for most citizens it would be a service offered to the most vulnerable.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE MIGRANT

Before the trip

Awareness raising

Conduct awareness raising activities along the north coast to inform about the risks of crossing using community spaces (school, church, cultural centers, etc.);

Legal Migration

Support the state services in the decentralizing legal migration procedures: obtaining birth certificates, passports, visas, etc. ; Support local initiatives to promote alternatives to irregular migration, in partnership with local and regional authorities and civil society;

Multi and bilateral dialogues

Promote high-level multi- and bilateral dialogue with key host governments for coordinated action to protect migrants and combat human trafficking.

During the trip

Sea survival kits

Strengthen the technical and organizational capacities of local and national authorities in order to better protect migrants and minimize dangers and fatal accidents at sea, through specific training such as the fight against human and drug trafficking, assistance at sea.

Support to national security authorities

Assist the security authorities with equipment and means of movement in order to be able to intervene quickly and adequately; To make available survival kits at sea (drinking water and food ration, life jackets, hypothermic survival blankets, etc.) and first aid kits to migrants whose departure is unavoidable.

Upon arrival at destination

Assistance on arrival

Install reception points for direct medical, psychological and legal assistance to migrants along the coasts favored by illegal landings;

Awareness raising

Provide a basic set of information to migrants on the country of arrival and repatriation procedures; Ensure the respect of migrants' rights by implementing training and awareness workshops for migration and security agents in host countries.

After repatriation

Data management and tracking

Improve the collection, management and analysis of data on returnees in collaboration with ONM and IHSI by facilitating the sharing and cross-referencing of information with the Coast Guard and foreign migration agents (including USA, Bahamas, Turks and Caicos Islands), and its integration into a national monitoring system;

Reception and primary assistance

Strengthen the reception and primary assistance system for returnees by providing them with basic services and goods (food, medical and psychological support, transportation services, etc.);

Long-term assistance

Offer support in the labour market through professional training, agreements with local companies and personalized follow-up on the long term.





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"They demanded their right to a better life and freedom... a freedom they did not hesitate to seek across the seas at the risk of their lives"

(Cédric Udebert)



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