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► Labour Market Access for Migrants in Libya and the Impact of COVID-19

LIBYA

AUGUST 2021



mem appui à la
migration équitable
pour le maghreb
Travail Décent - Protection - Gouvernance

 **ITALIAN AGENCY
FOR DEVELOPMENT
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Labour Market Access for Migrants in Libya and the impact of COVID-19

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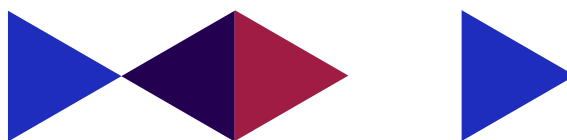
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About REACH

REACH is a program of ACTED. It strengthens evidence-based decision-making by humanitarian actors through efficient data collection, management, and analysis in contexts of crisis. ACTED is an international NGO. Independent, private, and non-profit, ACTED respects strict political and religious impartiality and operates following principles of non-discrimination, and transparency. Since 2011, ACTED has been providing humanitarian aid and has supported civil society and local governance throughout Libya, from its offices in Tripoli, Sebha and Benghazi. For more information please visit our website: www.reach-initiative.org.

► Preface

Through the present study entitled 'Labour market access for migrants in Libya and the impact of COVID-19', the International Labour Organization Office for Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia wishes to provide a better understanding of the labour market in Libya with a focus on the situation of migrant workers.

Commissioned under the project AMEM (Appui à la Migration Equitable pour le Maghreb) and financed by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), this study was conducted by the ILO in partnership with REACH.

While it is known that a significant share of the Libyan workforce are migrant workers, little is made available about their recruitment channels and working conditions. Extending the knowledge base on recruitment practices is a key step to support regulation, which in turn will strengthen decent work conditions and support compliance with ILO standards and principles.

In 2014, the ILO Fair Recruitment Initiative (FRI) was launched as part of the ILO Director General's call for a Fair Migration Agenda. Since its launch, the FRI has been critical to ILO's work on national and international recruitment of workers and has added renewed impetus and visibility to this important topic. In 2016, the ILO Governing Body approved the General Principles and Operational Guidelines on Fair Recruitment, developed by a tripartite meeting of experts, and derived from international labour standards and related ILO instruments. The term fair recruitment is generally understood to refer to recruitment carried out within the law, in line with international labour standards, with respect for human rights, without discrimination and including protection of workers from abusive situations. In 2018, these guidelines were complemented by the Definition of Recruitment Fees and Related Costs, helping to enforce the principle that no recruitment or related costs should be charged to workers.

The present study shows the close link between recruitment channels and working conditions. It specifically underlines the importance of regulating recruitment in line with international labour standards so that all workers, including migrant workers, are protected and fair recruitment principles are applied. Moving forward, it will be crucial to adopt policies and laws that regulate the roles and activities of recruiters and intermediaries, otherwise and in the absence of regulation, there is a considerable risk of falling into decent work deficits.

With the recent launch of the Fair Recruitment Initiative in Africa on 25 March 2022, the timely publication of this study contributes to increasing the knowledge base which will help put in place frameworks and tools to strengthen fair recruitment in accordance with the ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines on Fair Recruitment.

Rania BIKHAZI

Director

ILO Office for Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia

► Summary

Despite the protracted conflict and the country's strict immigration policies,¹ Libya continues to attract a large number of migrants.² Whether considering Libya as a transit point to Europe or an employment destination in itself, employment represents an important, often vital aspect for migrants in Libya. Previous research highlighted the reliance of the Libyan economy on foreign manpower, with migrant workers balancing out the labour deficiencies in key economic sectors.³

Migrants in Libya frequently engage in low-skilled and unstable forms of economic activities and benefit from little to no protection, and irregularity is a common feature of Libya's migrant population.⁴ As a result, and due to the absence of a legal framework safeguarding migrants' rights,⁵ migrants often find themselves prone to an array of protection concerns, both outside and inside the workplace.⁶

Previous assessments highlighted the important role of informal labour intermediation in migrants' access to the labour market in Libya.⁷ However, unregulated labour intermediation can lead to human rights violations by intermediaries, such as human trafficking and compulsory labour.⁸ Moreover, the already precarious living conditions of migrants in Libya further deteriorated following the onset of COVID-19 in the country and the imposition of precautionary measures against the spread of the virus.⁹ These measures represented an enormous economic risk for migrants in the country and hampered their ability to access livelihoods and employment opportunities.¹⁰ In fact, many migrant labourers lost their only source of income due to factors such as job loss or the closure of the business where they work, as found in a recent REACH study on the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable communities.¹¹

Previous research investigated labour migration dynamics in Libya. However, there is little granular and comprehensive information on how migrants access the labour market, the role intermediaries play in enabling them to access the labour market, and how the COVID-19 health crisis impacted migrants' ability to access employment opportunities and to sustain themselves.

To fill this information gap, this assessment, commissioned by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and conducted by REACH, aims to advance understanding of (1) migrants' access to employment and the role of labour intermediaries, (2) employment characteristics and conditions of migrant workers, and (3) the impact of COVID-19 on

¹ REACH/UNHCR, [Access to cash and the impact of the liquidity crisis on refugees and migrants in Libya](#), June 2018.

² International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), [Libya — Migrant report 36 \(March - April 2021\)](#), July, 2021.

³ REACH/UNHCR, [Access to cash and the impact of the liquidity crisis on refugees and migrants in Libya](#), June 2018.

⁴ The New Humanitarian, [In Libya, hard economic times force migrant workers to look elsewhere](#), February 2019.

⁵ United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), [Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the human rights situation of migrants and refugees in Libya](#), December 2018.

⁶ International Labour Organisation (ILO) - Asia Pacific Migration Network, [Migrant workers in Libya](#).

⁷ IOM, [Libya — Living And Working In The Midst Of Conflict: The Status Of Long-Term Migrants In Libya](#), March 2020.

⁸ ILO, [Fair recruitment initiative: regulating labour recruitment to prevent human trafficking and to foster fair migration: models, challenges and opportunities](#), 2015 & Conny Rijken, [Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for Labour Exploitation](#), February 2012.

⁹ IOM, [Assessment of the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Migrants and IDPs in Libya](#), March 2021.

¹⁰ UN OCHA, [Libya - Humanitarian needs overview 2021](#), December 2020.

¹¹ REACH, [Libya : Protection Monitoring During COVID-19, Round Two, 30 April-5 May 2020](#), May 2020.

migrant's ability to access the labour market in Libya and to sustain their livelihoods. Data collection took place in April and May 2021 in Tripoli, Misrata, and Sebha – three locations representing important economic hubs and hosting sizable and diverse migrant communities. This study is primarily based on 138 individual interviews (IIs) with migrants workers, 45 IIs with employers, 15 key informant interviews (KIIs) with labour market intermediaries, and 8 KIIs with national and local stakeholders.

Key Findings

Migrant's access to employment and the role of labour intermediaries

- **Predominantly, the majority of interviewed migrants reported using labour market intermediaries to find the main job they were occupying at the time of data collection.** Libyan nationals, compatriots, and (extended) family members were the most frequently mentioned types of intermediaries.
- **Reportedly, agreed-upon services/assistance with the intermediaries went beyond job placement and encompassed additional services such as access to accommodation, assistance with the obtention of a work permit, and transportation within Libya.** However, some interviewed migrants reported that the additional services promised by their intermediaries had not or only partially been delivered.
- **The findings emphasise the often informal nature of the intermediation process, with more than half of migrants interviewed stating that they had no oral or written agreement with the intermediary prior to employment,** potentially increasing the risk of exposure to abuses, deception, and exploitation by the intermediaries.
- **More than a fifth of the migrants interviewed reported having been charged fees in return for the intermediation and (additional services).** The latter was primarily reported by migrants from sub-Saharan Africa who were residing in Sebha and Tripoli and who mostly coordinated with migrant intermediaries from their country of origin to find work. Reported intermediation costs varied significantly, ranging from 150 to 3000 Libyan Dinar (LYD).
- **A minority of interviewed migrant workers who used intermediaries reported having experienced abusive practices at the hands of their intermediaries,** reportedly including restricted freedom of movement, retention of documents, and threats and intimidation, seemingly most commonly involving female domestic workers in Sebha and Tripoli.

Employment characteristics and conditions of migrant workers

- **When asked about their employment status, the majority of interviewed migrants reported being permanent workers** (went to work regularly with a predictable monthly salary). The remaining were either daily labourers or temporary workers. Those who reported engaging in daily labour were mostly employed in low-skill jobs and mainly came from West Africa.
- **Reported salary amounts varied greatly, ranging from less than 350 Libyan Dinar (LYD) to more than 3500 LYD per month.** Almost two-thirds of migrant worker respondents said they were paid less than 950 LYD per month. East African migrant respondents were found to be the lowest-paid migrants overall, while interviewed migrants from the MENA region were found to be the highest-paid.

- **Interviewed migrants were found to work long hours with minimum to no days to rest.** Interviewed migrant workers commonly reported working six, followed by seven, and five days per week on average. Employers' accounts aligned with those of interviewed migrants, with the majority reporting that migrants they employed worked six days a week, with a significant minority reporting that they work seven days a week. As for working hours, the most common answer was 10 hours, followed by 8 and 12, on average.
- **Work arrangements were found to often be informal, not involving any documented contracts.** In fact, the majority of migrant worker respondents revealed that they had oral contracts only or had no contract whatsoever with their employer. Not having a certified written contract exacerbates migrants' work vulnerability and increases the risk of abuses at the workplace going unnoticed and unreported.
- A relative minority of interviewed migrant workers reported feeling completely safe, while the majority reported feeling somewhat safe. Only five migrant workers, all of whom were based in Tripoli, reported feeling somewhat unsafe at work, and one respondent reported feeling unsafe.

Impact of COVID-19

- **Findings indicate that, for most interviewed migrants, COVID-19 did not hamper access to employment.** Only a minority of migrant workers who reported having been in Libya prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic reported that the COVID-19 situation had an impact on their workplace or ability to work. Interestingly, no interviewed migrant worker from Misrata reported that the COVID-19 crisis and the subsequent measures had an effect on their job.
- **Similarly, the majority of interviewed migrants reported no wage reduction as a result of COVID-19.** However, a considerable minority reported that wages were indeed reduced as a result of the pandemic, including nearly half of respondents from Sebha. Almost all of those who reported a wage reduction stated that this decrease slightly or somewhat hindered their ability to sustain themselves.
- **A considerable proportion of interviewed migrants, particularly in Sebha, who had reportedly been sending remittances prior to the pandemic reported that the outbreak had limited their ability to send remittances.** A majority of those respondents also reported that those remittances had been their family's main source of income. The decreased ability to send remittances is reportedly a consequence of increased money transfer fees, a decrease in income, and a decrease in mobility.
- **The vast majority of interviewed migrants reported that the pandemic had had no impact on their mobility intentions,** while only a minority reported that it had. According to reports, the change in intentions was caused by a variety of factors, including travel restrictions and worsening security, financial limitations, and the perception that there are relatively better opportunities in Europe in the aftermath of the pandemic.

► Contents

Summary	3
Key Findings.....	4
List of Acronyms.....	8
Geographical Classifications	8
List of Figures, Tables and Maps	8
Introduction.....	10
Methodology.....	13
Research framework	13
Key definitions	14
Assessment methodology.....	15
Population of interest and sampling.....	15
Data collection methods	16
Secondary data review	18
Data processing & analysis	19
Challenges and Limitations.....	20
Profiles of interviewed migrant workers	21
Profiles of interviewed employers.....	27
Profiles of interviewed intermediaries.....	28
Findings	30
Chapter 1: Migrant’s access to employment and the role of labour intermediaries	30
Means of finding employment: intermediaries widely used	30
Means of finding migrant employees	33
Initial contact with the intermediary and selection of migrant workers	33
Services provided by intermediaries.....	34
Types of agreements and documents required	35
Intermediation costs and payment types and modalities.....	36
Promises vs. reality.....	37
Information provided by the intermediary before starting the job.....	37
Maintaining contact with the intermediary	38
Protection concerns	39
Chapter two: Employment characteristics and conditions of migrant workers	40
Types and sectors of employment	40
Payment modalities.....	41
Salary amounts	42
Working hours and days	42

Work contracts.....	43
Work permit.....	44
Grievance or Complaints mechanisms	45
Workplace safety	45
Chapter 3: Impact of COVID-19.....	46
Impact of COVID-19 on livelihoods and income.....	46
The COVID-19 pandemic and remittance flows.....	49
Impact of COVID-19 on mobility intentions	50
Conclusion.....	51

List of Acronyms

CENSAD	Community of Sahel-Saharan States
CRMW	Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
DSAG	Data Saturation and Analysis Grid
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GPOG	General Principles and Operational Guidelines
ID	Identity Document
II	Individual Interview
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
KII	Key Informant Interview
LYD	Libyan Dinar
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SDR	Secondary Data Review
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission in Libya

Geographical Classifications

Region	Highest form of governance below the national level
Mantika	A major urban area made up of sub-districts known as Baladiyas

List of Figures, Tables and Maps

Box 1: International legal instruments surrounding labour intermediation	31
Box 2: The case of female domestic workers.....	40
Figure 1: Number of interviewed migrant workers by gender.....	21
Figure 2: Number of interviewed migrant workers per age bracket	22
Figure 3: Number of interviewed migrant workers by region of origin.	22
Figure 4: Length of stay in Libya of interviewed migrant workers, by number of interviewed migrant workers per region of origin and Mantika of residence	24
Figure 5: Employment status of interviewed migrant workers before arrival in Libya, by number of interviewed migrant workers per region of origin.....	25
Figure 6: Reported occupations of interviewed migrant workers in Libya, by region of origin and gender	26

Figure 7: Categories of employers interviewed, by number of interviewed employers per Mantika	28
Figure 8: Means of finding employment, by number of interviewed migrant workers per Mantika and region of origin	32
Figure 9: Reported means of finding migrant employees, by number of interviewed employers.....	33
Figure 11: Reported types of information received from intermediaries, by number of interviewed migrant workers.....	38
Figure 12: Types of employment of interviewed migrant workers, by Mantika and region of origin.....	41
Figure 13: Payment modalities used by interviewed migrant workers	42
Figure 14: Reported types of work agreements, by number of migrant workers per Mantika and region of origin	44
Figure 15: Number of interviewed migrants reporting holding a work permit, by gender .	45
Figure 16: Most commonly reported effects of COVID-19 and related restrictions on access to employment, by number of interviewed migrants' per location.....	47
Figure 17: Reported impact of reduced income due to COVID-19 on the ability to sustain oneself, by number of interviewed migrants.....	48
Figure 18: Reported impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the ability to send remittances, by the number of interviewed migrant workers who reported having sent remittances home prior to the pandemic, per Mantika	50
Map 1: Primary data collection sites.....	16
Map 2: Countries of origin of interviewed migrants	23
Table 1: Occupation and skill level categorisation according to ILO ISCO	15
Table 2: Data collection methods	18
Table 3: Most commonly reported agreed-upon services/assistance by number of interviewed migrants who had reportedly used intermediaries, by type of intermediary used	34

► Introduction

Libya's protracted conflict, which has taken the lives of thousands of civilians¹² and resulted in widespread humanitarian needs among the population,¹³ has not halted immigration flows into the country.¹⁴ The latest available estimates indicate that 591,415 migrants and refugees reside in the country, originating mainly from Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and North Africa, and 10% of whom are women.¹⁵ Despite the diversity and complexity of pull factors driving migration to Libya,¹⁶ since the mid-1990s, the focus has been on the country as a site of transit for migrants on their onward journey to Europe.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Libya remains to this day a destination for many migrants, drawn in by the country's attractive economic opportunities.¹⁸

Labour migration to Libya is not a recent trend. It dates back to the discovery of oil and hydrocarbon reserves in the late 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁹ The swift rise in oil revenues and the expansion of the petroleum industry allowed the country to endeavour in ambitious, large-scale economic and social programmes in the following decade, such as the enormous Great Man-Made River project.²⁰ These grand development schemes, combined with a labour deficit among the Libyan population, resulted in a need for migrant workers to fill jobs.²¹ The labour force gap was quickly filled by foreign workers originating mainly from neighbouring countries, such as Tunisia and Egypt, and to a lesser extent from Asian and Eastern European countries.²² This continued until 1992, a pivotal year in Libya's international relations, when the imposition of an air and arms embargo on Libya drove a switch in policies, from a pan-Arabist to a pan-African approach,²³ engendering a change in the country's foreign population composition.²⁴ This resulted in a series of bilateral and multilateral agreements with sub-Saharan African countries, such as the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CENSAD),²⁵ which translated into an open-door policy towards sub-Saharan African states, sparking an influx of migrants from these countries.²⁶ Since then, and despite the country's descent into civil war and the imposition of stricter migration policies, lucrative economic opportunities in Libya continued to attract foreign workers from Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and to a lesser extent, from South Asia, who are occupying jobs in key sectors of the country's economy.²⁷

¹² Karen McVeigh, [Steep rise in civilians killed or injured in Libya by explosive weaponry](#), The Guardian, January 2020.

¹³ United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [Libya - Humanitarian needs overview 2021](#), December 2020.

¹⁴ International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), [Libya — Migrant report 36 \(March - April 2021\)](#), July, 2021.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ IOM DTM, [Labour Migration to Libya - Remittances Amidst Conflict and Pandemic - March 2021](#), April 2021.

¹⁷ Sara Hamood, [African transit migration through Libya to Europe: The human cost](#), The American University of Cairo, January 2006.

¹⁸ REACH/United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), [Access to cash and the impact of the liquidity crisis on refugees and migrants in Libya](#), June 2018.

¹⁹ IOM, [Migration in West and North Africa and across the Mediterranean: Trends, risks, development and governance](#), September 2020.

²⁰ Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) 4Mi, [Invisible Labour: Women's labour migration to Libya](#), December 2017.

²¹ IOM DTM, [Labour Migration to Libya - Remittances Amidst Conflict and Pandemic - March 2021](#), April 2021.

²² Sara Hamood, [African transit migration through Libya to Europe: The human cost](#), The American University of Cairo, January 2006.

²³ Giselle Lopez, [Responsibility to protect at a crossroads: The crisis in Libyan](#), Humanity in Action, February 2015.

²⁴ E-International Relations, [Interview - Matteo Capasso](#), April 2021.

²⁵ Solomon, Hussein, [Libya's Foreign Policy in Flux](#), African Affairs, July 2015.

²⁶ REACH/UNHCR, [Access to cash and the impact of the liquidity crisis on refugees and migrants in Libya](#), June 2018.

²⁷ Ibid.

Currently, a large proportion of the migrant population resides in the country irregularly and works in the informal sector.²⁸ This, coupled with the absence of legal instruments safeguarding migrants' rights,²⁹ exacerbates migrants' vulnerability to protection risks both inside and outside of the workplace and imposes additional barriers to accessing employment.³⁰ A previous assessment conducted by REACH,³¹ in 2017, found that the majority of migrants in Libya worked in lower-skilled informal jobs, often daily or temporary labour, in sectors such as construction, cleaning and the restaurant industry. A more recent International Organisation for Migration (IOM) study also showed that migrants frequently used intermediaries, mainly informal such as migrants from the same country of origin or Libyan social networks, to obtain information on and access employment in Libya.³²

Labour intermediaries in Libya often work outside of the legal framework.³³ Previous reports show that unregulated labour intermediation heightens the risk of human rights violations and lets acute protection abuses, such as human trafficking and exploitation, go under the radar.³⁴

Migrants' ability to access livelihoods and employment opportunities has been severely affected by the onset of the COVID-19 health crisis in Libya.³⁵ Following the spread of the pandemic to Libya in March 2020, several measures were introduced by the Libyan authorities aiming to contain the spread of the virus, such as curfews, movement restrictions, the banning of large gatherings, and the closure of all non-essential shops.³⁶ These restrictions presented an economic risk for certain segments of the population and made specific groups particularly vulnerable.³⁷ As a result of the restrictions, many migrant labourers have seen their only income sources vanish for reasons such as the loss of their jobs or the closure of the business where they operate, as highlighted by a recent REACH assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable communities.³⁸

While previous studies explored labour migration dynamics in Libya, little information exists on how migrants access the labour market, the role intermediaries play in enabling them to access the labour market, and how such dynamics differ by migrant communities, skill sets, and gender in Libya. Furthermore, following the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, an understanding of how the health crisis impacted migrants' ability to access employment opportunities, as well as their ability to sustain themselves, remains limited. In response to these information gaps, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), with support from REACH, conducted an assessment that aims to improve understanding of how migrants access the labour market in Libya, while zooming in on the role intermediaries play in the recruitment process. Additionally, the assessment explored the impact of COVID-19 on migrants' ability to access the labour market in Libya and to sustain their livelihoods. Data collection took place between April and May 2021 in Tripoli and Misrata in the west and

²⁸ The New Humanitarian, [In Libya, hard economic times force migrant workers to look elsewhere](#), February 2019.

²⁹ United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), [Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the human rights situation of migrants and refugees in Libya](#), December 2018.

³⁰ International Labour Organisation (ILO) - Asia Pacific Migration Network, [Migrant workers in Libya](#).

³¹ REACH, [Refugees and migrants' access to resources, housing and healthcare in Libya](#), December 2017.

³² IOM, [Libya — Living And Working In The Midst Of Conflict: The Status Of Long-Term Migrants In Libya](#), March 2020.

³³ World Bank Group, [Labour market dynamics in Libya, Reintegration for recovery](#), June 2015.

³⁴ ILO, [Fair recruitment initiative: regulating labour recruitment to prevent human trafficking and to foster fair migration: models, challenges and opportunities](#), 2015 & Conny Rijken, [Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for Labour Exploitation](#), February 2012.

³⁵ IOM, [Assessment of the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Migrants and IDPs in Libya](#), March 2021.

³⁶ Borzou Daragahi, [Libya war left unimpeded by coronavirus outbreak](#), Independent, March 2020.

³⁷ UN OCHA, [Libya - Humanitarian needs overview 2021](#), December 2020.

³⁸ REACH, [Libya: Protection Monitoring During COVID-19, Round Two, 30 April-5 May 2020](#), May 2020.

Sebha in the south - three locations representing important economic hubs and hosting sizable and diverse migrant communities.³⁹

The report is split into three sections. The first section presents the methodology adopted for this assessment and the demographic and socio-economic profiles of interviewed individuals. The second section details the assessment's findings, structured in line with the research questions, to explore the following areas: (1) migrants' access to employment and the role of labour intermediaries, (2) employment characteristics and conditions of migrant workers, and (3) the impact of COVID-19 on migrants' ability to access the labour market in Libya and to sustain their livelihoods. Key takeaways and recommendations will be presented in the third section of the report - the conclusion.

³⁹ IOM DTM, [Libya — Migrant report 36 \(March - April 2021\)](#), July, 2021.

► Methodology

Research framework

This assessment used mixed research methods to first investigate how migrants access the labour market in Libya while assessing the role and process of labour market intermediation for migrants in the country. Secondly, the assessment explored the impact of COVID-19 on migrants' ability to access the labour market in Libya and to sustain their livelihoods.

Through its findings, this assessment intends to:

1. Support the ILO and other relevant stakeholders in the process of developing a legal framework that will ensure the fair recruitment of migrant workers and the safeguarding of their rights;
2. Feed into ILO's work with the Ministry of Labour and Rehabilitation to identify opportunities to develop bilateral agreements with neighbouring countries and advocate for the fair recruitment of migrants;
3. Provide a general understanding of the Libyan economy's needs in regard to the migrant labour force;
4. Support migration actors and other relevant stakeholders in the planning of an efficient, evidence-based response.

The following research questions underpinned this study:

- RQ.1** How do migrants access the labour market in Libya?
- a. How do migrants access formal and informal jobs?
 - b. What sectors of work are migrants engaged in?
 - c. What role do labour market intermediaries play in facilitating migrants' access to the labour market for permanent and non-permanent labour?
 - d. How do migrants interact with the intermediaries, how do they build such contact, maintain, and use them, and vice versa?
 - e. How much do migrants pay intermediaries for facilitating jobs (i.e. do they undertake a one-off or regular payment? What guarantees are given? Are they indebted to intermediaries?)
 - f. What type of job stability/security do migrants enjoy? Are they under any type of contracts/verbal or written agreements? What is the duration of these contracts/agreements (long or short term)?
- RQ.2** What is the impact of COVID-19 on migrant's ability to access the labour market in Libya and its implication on migrants' ability to sustain their livelihoods?
- a. What is the impact of COVID-19 on migrants' ability to access the labour market and sectors of employment?
 - b. What is the impact of COVID-19 on migrants' ability to sustain themselves in light of disruptions to their livelihoods?
 - c. What is the impact of COVID-19 on migrants' ability to send remittances to their home country?
 - d. How is the mobility of migrants impacted by COVID 19? What is the impact of COVID-19 on movement intentions?

Key definitions

In line with the research questions outlined above, the design and analysis of this assessment builds on the following definitions:

According to the definition of mixed migration provided by the IOM: “Mixed flows have been defined as ‘complex population movements including refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants and other migrants. Unaccompanied minors, environmental migrants, smuggled persons, victims of trafficking and stranded migrants, among others, may also form part of a mixed flow’”.^{40,41}

Labour migrants: The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families defines a migrant worker as “a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a state of which he or she is not a national”.⁴² Based on this definition, the term migrant worker is not only limited to economic workers and can encompass other profiles of individuals in mixed migration flow, who have not necessarily left their countries of origin intending to find work. (Please see box 1 for more details The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.)

Labour Intermediary/recruiter: As defined by ILO. The term “labour recruiter” refers to “both public employment services and to private employment agencies and all other intermediaries or sub-agents that offer labour recruitment and placement services”.⁴³ Private entities can take many forms: formal (e.g. registered under commercial or other law) or informal (not registered, such as informal sub-agents), profit-seeking (e.g. fee-charging agencies) or non-profit (e.g. trade union hiring halls).

Recruitment: According to ILO’s general principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment (GPOG),⁴⁴ the term “recruitment” encompasses “the advertising, information dissemination, selection, transport, placement into employment and – for migrant workers – return to the country of origin where applicable.” This involves both jobseekers and individuals engaged in an employment relationship.

Informal and formal employment: A person occupying an informal job often⁴⁵ has no formal contract with his employer, has no systematic work conditions, receives irregular and uneven payment, has no forum to express his grievances, has no fixed hours of work and is not covered by any kind of social security system and often has poor knowledge about the need to protect themselves, both socially and economically. Whereas, **formal employment** refers to employed individuals who are not in informal employment that is identified through the above criteria.

⁴⁰ MHub, [What is Mixed-Migration?](#).

⁴¹ Throughout this document and unless the distinction is clearly made, the word “migrants” will be used to refer to all individuals involved in the mixed migration flows.

⁴² The UN General Assembly, [The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, Article 2](#), Adopted by General Assembly resolution 45/158 of 18 December 1990 and entered into force on 1 July 2003.

⁴³ ILO, [Findings from the global comparative study on the definition of recruitment fees and related costs](#), 2018, p. 8.

⁴⁴ ILO, [General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment and definition of recruitment fees and related costs](#), May 2019, p. 12.

⁴⁵ Teodora MIHĂILĂ, [Considerations on the distribution of informal economy in the European Union](#), 2016.

Another crucial component of understanding labour and variations among workers is **skill level**. For this, ILO's International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) classifies and aggregates the different kinds of occupations and associated skill levels, as indicated in one table below:

Table 1: Occupation and skill level categorisation according to ILO ISCO

Broad skill level	Occupations according to ISCO-08⁴⁶	Occupations according to ISCO-88
Skill levels 3 and 4 (high)	1. Managers	1. Legislators, senior officials and managers
	2. Professionals	2. Professionals
	3. Technicians and associate professionals	3. Technicians and associate professionals
Skill level 2 (medium)	4. Clerical support workers	4. Clerks
	5. Service and sales workers	5. Service workers and shop and market sales workers
	6. Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	6. Skilled agricultural and fishery workers
	7. Craft and related trades workers	7. Craft and related trades workers
	8. Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	8. Plant and machine operators and assemblers
Skill level 1 (low)	9. Elementary occupations	9. Elementary occupations
Armed forces	0. Armed forces occupations	0. Armed forces

Assessment methodology

The assessment adopted a mixed-methods methodology, involving structured individual interviews (IIs) with migrants and employers, as well as semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) with labour intermediaries and other key national and local-level stakeholders. Data collection was conducted in three Mantikas in Libya, which were selected based on the size and composition of the migrant population they host, variations in labour dynamics, and ILO's programmatic priorities. The selected locations were Tripoli, Misrata, and Sebha.

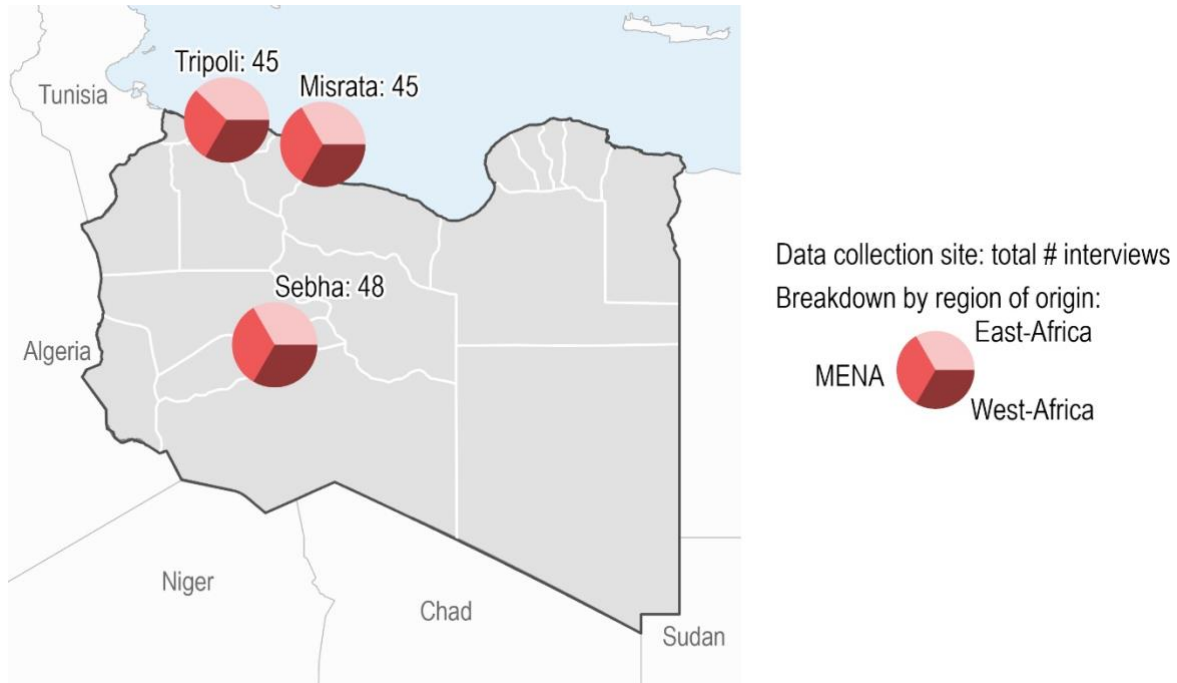
Population of interest and sampling

The study targeted adult migrant workers (aged 18 and over) residing in urban locations in three Mantikas in western and southern Libya. These locations helped provide snapshots of the situation of migrants in two different economic hubs in Libya – the South (primarily Sebha) being one of the first entry points for migrants in Libya, while West Libya includes the most important economic hubs where migrants are present for labour work (Tripoli, Misrata).

⁴⁶ The ISCO-08, created in 2008 is a revision of the 1988 ISCO-88. However, due to the extensiveness of certain occupational categories of the ISCO-88 and its suitability to the Libyan labour market, this classification was used for this assessment.

Migrants were identified through purposive sampling, primarily based on their region of origin, the length of their stay in Libya (to establish whether or not they resided and worked in Libya prior to the COVID-19 pandemic), and gender.

Map 1: Primary data collection sites



Data collection methods

Primary data was collected following a mixed-methods approach, as follows:

Structured individual interviews with migrant workers

REACH conducted **138 structured IIs with adult migrant workers** residing in urban locations in Tripoli, Misrata, and Sebha, to understand how migrant workers in these three Mantikas access the labour market in Libya while zooming in on the role intermediaries play in facilitating that. Additionally, findings from the IIs with migrant workers helped explore the impact of COVID-19 on their ability to access the labour market in Libya and to sustain their livelihoods. Respondents in each location were sampled purposively based on :

- **The regions from which they originate.** Since East Africa, West Africa, and the MENA region are the main regions of origin (for the largest migrant populations) in Libya, only migrants from these regions were sampled for this assessment.
- **How long they have been residing in Libya.** A key component of this assessment was to understand the impact of policies and restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic on migrant labour. Therefore, it was important to establish how long migrant respondents have been in the country. Those who had been in the country longer than 12 months, were asked a specific set of questions about the impact of the pandemic on their work.

- **Their gender.** While gender does not represent one of the main sampling criteria, REACH tried to ensure gender representativeness, in order to capture the full range of nuances between the experiences of migrant men and women.⁴⁷

While the sampling strategy was not based on the following criteria, the received data was disaggregated on the basis of:

- **Migrants' skill sets.** REACH looked into migrants' educational backgrounds and past employment experiences both in Libya, their countries of origin and/or in transit countries when analysing the data.
- **The type of work they are engaged in.** REACH selected migrants occupying jobs in different employment sectors and industries, involving low, middle, and high-skilled work. This helped to understand if the means used to access employment and the process of labour market intermediation vary depending on the sector/nature of employment. The type of work that migrants are engaged in is also important when considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Structured individual interviews with employers

REACH conducted **45 structured IIs with businesses and individuals who employ migrant workers** in the selected locations, to provide a different perspective on migrants' access to the labour market to examine whether the current recruitment processes fit the needs of the employer in terms of finding the workforce and skills they require. For data collection with employers, REACH sought to cover the main sectors and industries in which migrants are employed, as identified through the secondary data review (SDR) and the initially received IIs with migrant workers.

Semi-structured interviews with KIIs with labour intermediaries

REACH conducted **15 semi-structured KIIs with labour intermediaries** to dig deeper into the process and role of intermediaries in Libya and capture the types and modalities of interactions they have with migrants and employers from their points of view. As the term "labour market intermediary" could refer to any individual, business, or institution that facilitate migrants' placement into jobs, the specific profiles of intermediaries interviewed were determined based on a preliminary analysis of the migrant workers and employers interviews.

Semi-structured KIIs with national and local stakeholders

Finally, REACH also carried out **8 semi-structured KIIs with key national and local stakeholders and subject-matter experts**. KIIs were selected among non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and local and national authorities, including representatives of local councils, labour offices and the Ministry of Labour and Rehabilitation (MoLR). Findings from these KIIs helped capture an overall macro picture of labour migration dynamics in Libya and were particularly useful and necessary to respond to the following sub-research questions:

- How is intermediation regulated in Libya?
- What is the perception of ministries on the role of intermediaries?

⁴⁷ In fact, gender distribution of migrants in Libya is disproportionately skewed in favour of men, with adult female migrants representing 10% of the migrant population in the country. Additionally, previous REACH data collection experience has shown that female migrants tend to be more difficult to identify and approach, making setting fixed sample sizes for female migrants challenging.

To summarise, the table (table 2) below provides a breakdown of the number of interviews conducted in each assessed location per data collection method and respondent group:

Table 2: Data collection methods

Data collection method	Tripoli	Misrata	Sebha	Total
Individual interviews with migrant workers	45 (15 Females / 30 Males)	45 (9 F / 36 M)	48 (16 F / 32 M)	138 (40 F / 98 M)
Individual interviews with employers	15 (3 F / 12 M)	15 (3 F / 12 M)	15 (1 F / 14 M)	45 (7 F / 38 M)
Key Informant interviews with intermediaries	5 (2 F / 3 M)	5 (M)	5 (M)	15 (2 F / 13 M)
Key Informant interviews with national and local stakeholders	3 (1 F / 2 M)	2 (M)	3 (M)	8 (1 F / 7 M)
Total	68	67	71	206

Data collection was conducted through partner organisations and enumerators who adhered to data collection regulations designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the country while following IMPACT's standard operating procedures (SOPs) and guidelines on data collection during COVID-19.

Before the start of data collection, the enumerators received thorough training on the research objectives and data collection methods, how to use the KoBo tools for data collection, and the ethical and security measures to be followed during data collection. Similarly to the data collection activities, considering the health risks and travel restrictions, the training was conducted remotely, using the online learning platform Moodle.⁴⁸

Enumerators were directly supervised by REACH field staff in Libya, who acted as a liaison between the assessment team and the enumerators during follow-up; facilitated access to the data collection sites; and ensured that quality data was submitted promptly. Briefing and debriefing sessions were carried regularly out to ensure the smooth running of the fieldwork to quickly identify and resolve any problems that may arise. General supervision of the data collection was done by the REACH assessment team in Tunis.

Secondary data review

A secondary data review (SDR) was carried out with the aim of compiling the findings of relevant studies and news articles recently carried out on labour migration in Libya and contextualising and triangulating the results of primary data collection. The secondary

⁴⁸ Moodle is an online learning platform that allows trainees to read materials, listen to audio, and watch videos. It can also be moderated to check that people have completely gone through each resource and has chat functions that allow trainees to ask questions and interact with each other. After going through all the training material, the enumerator teams in each location took a final quiz to ensure that the content of the training had been fully assimilated.

sources thus consulted were used in a two-step process. Firstly, they helped guide the definition of research questions and overall methodology, the definition of key terms (please see box 1 for an overview of the key definitions used in this assessment), the choice of indicators and the development of data collection tools. Secondly, at the analysis and output production stages, they were contrasted with findings from the primary data collection and used for triangulation purposes. Up until the analysis stage, the assessment team continued to update the list of the secondary literature with new relevant studies and articles, if released, to ensure that the most accurate and up-to-date information is used to triangulate the primary data collection's findings.

Data processing & analysis

- For IIs with migrants and employers, data was collected through a Kobo software⁴⁹ survey using mobile or computer devices.⁵⁰ The data collected was entered by the enumerators and compiled and cleaned by the assessment team/project officer as it was collected.
- For KIIs with intermediaries, other stakeholders and subject-matter experts, data was collected using questionnaires filled out manually by the enumerators or REACH field staff in Libya and transcribed using Word or Excel software.

All incoming data was reviewed and cleaned daily by the research team to ensure data quality and to address any potential problems promptly, following IMPACT's Data Cleaning Minimum Standards Checklist.

The analysis of quantitative data was done using the software Excel. The results of this analysis were reported on all migrant respondents. Where possible and where nuances are noted, a disaggregated analysis was conducted according to gender, regions of origin, length of stay in Libya, skill sets, type of work engaged in, and spoken languages.

Qualitative data processing and analysis followed IMPACT's Minimum Standards for Qualitative Data Analysis Checklist and involved producing a Data Saturation And Analysis Grid (DSAG) throughout data collection.⁵¹ The analysis was done using Excel based on the following criteria:

- **Frequency:** the analysis took into account the number of times a piece of information has been reported by respondents. Given the non-probability nature of the sample, this will be considered only as an indication of the extent to which information is distributed among respondents.
- **Specificity and extensiveness:** While taking respondent bias into account, interviews that contain undetailed accounts that contradict other information collected during

⁴⁹ KoBo is the most widely used toolkit in humanitarian emergencies for collecting and managing data and is particularly used in challenging, hard-to-reach environments. KoBo applies a strict data privacy and protection policy. For more information, please see:

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/applications/kobotoolbox/privacy-policy>

⁵⁰ Data collection was primarily conducted remotely, through phone calls. However, considering that migrants tend to be more reluctant to participate in phone interviews, and challenges and delays faced when conducting phone interviews, some surveys were carried out face to face, while respecting the applied governmental measures and IMPACT's SOPs and guidelines on data collection during COVID-19, and ensuring that all the necessary precautionary health measures are followed.

⁵¹ As transcripts were submitted, the research team incrementally developed The DSAG by thematically categorising and counting answers to each questionnaire question (discussion topic). Once the totality of interviews is received, the total number of references for each discussion point were tallied up and a summary of findings for each discussion topic was developed. By creating the DSAG, the research team ensured that saturation was reached through the received data (no new concepts/themes produced) and that the most commonly emerging themes and perspectives are accounted for when drawing insights and presenting the findings.

primary data collection and that could not be supported by secondary sources were treated as less relevant than exhaustive and verifiable statements.

All data cleaning, processing and analysis was performed following IMPACT's guidelines and SOPs.

Challenges and Limitations

- This assessment adopted non-probabilistic sampling methods. The findings are therefore to be considered indicative only and cannot be generalised for the whole population of migrants in Libya.
- Interviewed migrant workers originated from the MENA region, East Africa, and West Africa, which are the regions of origin of the majority of migrants in Libya. This implies that the views and experiences of migrants from other regions, such as South Asia, also present in relatively important numbers, are not represented in the findings.
- This assessment focused on the situation of migrant workers in Western and Southern Mantikas in Libya. Considering the different political, economic, and labour dynamics in east Libya, findings cannot be generalised for the whole country and experiences of migrant workers in the West are not included.
- When designing the research and analysing the data, the research team made sure to account for factors that are likely to shape migrant workers' experiences, such as gender, their skill level, and employment background. However, to avoid having an excessive survey length and to be considerate of participants' time, the research team decided to focus only on the key factors that could influence migrants' employment experiences. Other factors, for instance, languages spoken and roles within households in Libya, were not considered.
- The data collection team in Sebha faced difficulties identifying and conducting surveys with East Africans, one of the assessed groups in the study. East Africans are less present in the area and are known for being less visible than other migrant groups. As it was deemed necessary to ensure their representativeness in the study, the data collection period was extended to allow for further scoping and identification of East African nationals. While the partner organisation managed to conduct the entirety of the planned interviews in time for them to be included in the analysis, the anticipated end date of data collection was exceeded.

Respondents' profiles

This section presents a brief overview of the profiles of interviewed migrant workers, employers, and labour market intermediaries, to ease reading and contextualisation of findings.

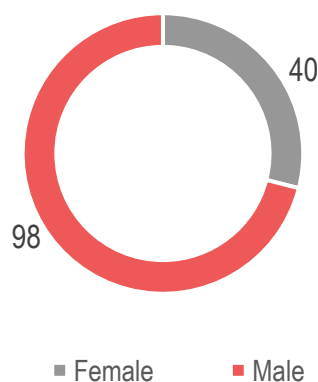
Profiles of interviewed migrant workers

Age and Gender

The majority of migrant workers interviewed for this study were male and aged between 18 and 64 years old. Although the sample of respondents is not representative, these results mirror the demographics of the largest proportion of the migrant population in Libya, as found by IOM's Data Tracking Matrix (DTM).

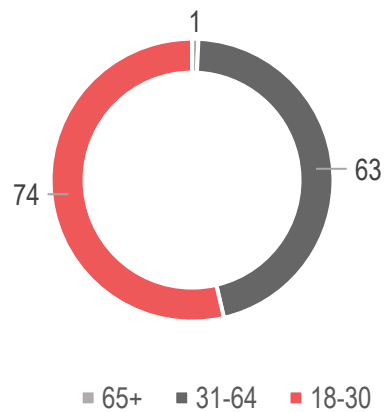
Adult female migrants, representing only 10% of the migrant population in Libya,⁵² are considered among the most vulnerable subgroups and are subject to specific gender-based protection incidents and abuses, outside and inside the workplace, as a result of which they are often less visible and are more difficult to approach. REACH, in coordination with the enumerators, strived to interview as many migrant women as possible from each region of origin, to ensure that their voices and experiences are represented in this study. Across all assessed locations, a total of 40 female migrant workers were interviewed.

Figure 1: Number of interviewed migrant workers by gender



⁵² IOM DTM, [Libya — Migrant report 36 \(March - April 2021\)](#), July, 2021.

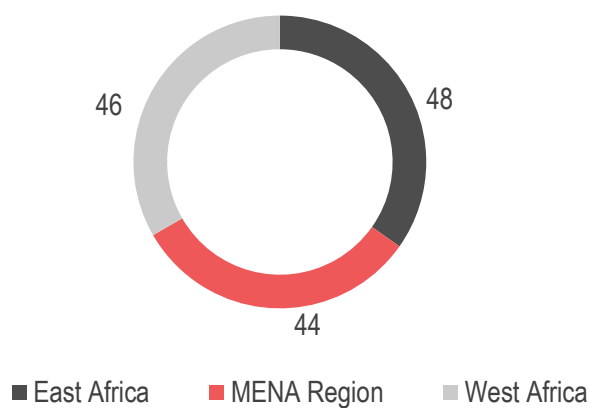
Figure 2: Number of interviewed migrant workers per age bracket



Regions and countries of origin

According to IOM's DTM,⁵³ migrants in Libya mainly originate from sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and the Middle East, in the order given. Overall, 21 countries of origin⁵⁴ from the aforementioned regions were represented in the assessment. Considering the socio-cultural differences across sub-Saharan African countries, which are likely to shape the migratory and living experiences in Libya, East and West Africans were treated as two separate communities. In contrast, North Africans and Middle Easterners were considered as one group.

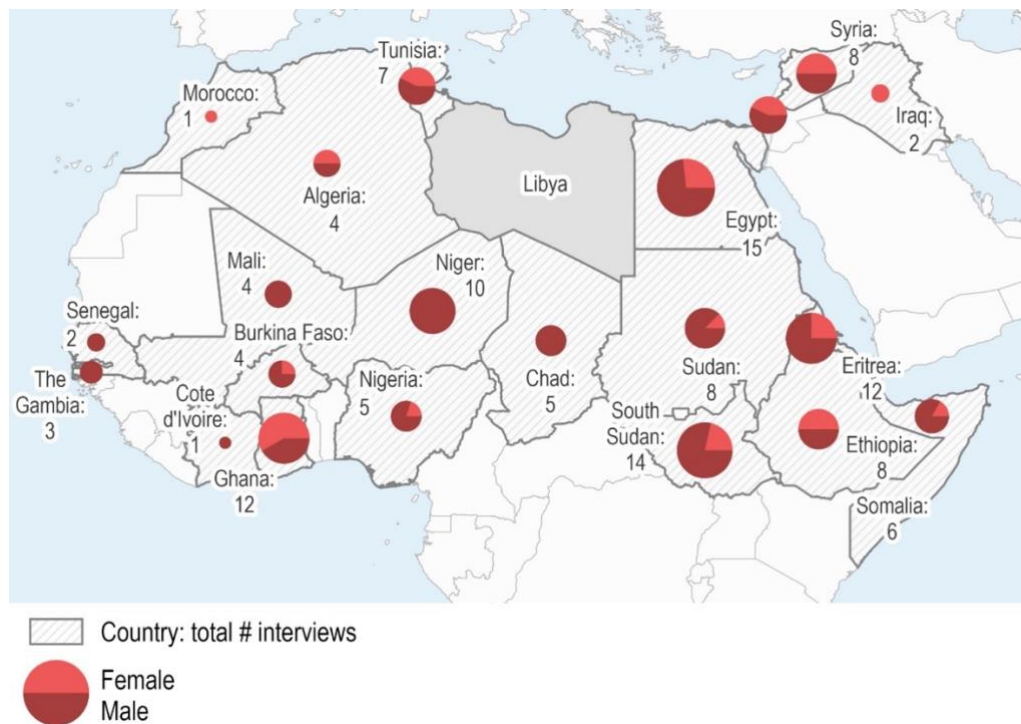
Figure 3: Number of interviewed migrant workers by region of origin.



⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Specifically, East African nationals represented in this study originate Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan. West Africans interviewed came from Burkina Faso, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and The Gambia. As for the MENA region, interviewed migrants were nationals of Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia.

Map 2: Countries of origin of interviewed migrants



Length of stay in Libya

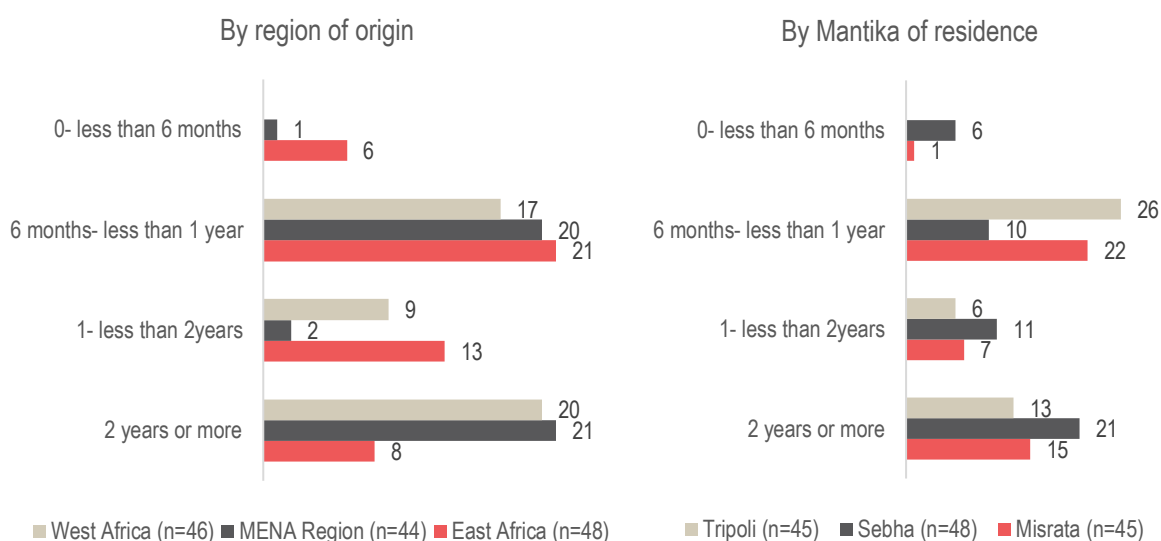
More than half of interviewed migrant workers (73/138) had been residing in Libya for one year or more at the time of data collection, the majority of whom had been in the country for two years or more (49/73). The remaining interviewed migrant workers arrived in the country recently⁵⁵, most of them had been living in Libya for periods ranging from 6 months to less than 12 months. Overall, East African respondents represented the largest subgroup of recent arrivals⁵⁶, in contrast with interviewed West Africans, who constituted the majority of those who had been in the country for one year or more. While accounting for the sampling bias, these results are coherent with findings from other studies, which documented the transient aspect of East African migrants, who often intend to continue their migratory journeys northward to Europe.⁵⁷ Geographically, coastal Mantikas hosted the largest proportion of recently arrived interviewed migrants. Conversely, most of those who had been in Libya for one year or more at the time of data collection resided in Sebha.

⁵⁵ For this study, recently arrived migrants were defined as those who had been in Libya for less than 12 months at the time of data collection.

⁵⁶ Those who reported having been in the country for less than one year.

⁵⁷ UNHCR, [From hand to hand: the migratory experience of refugees and migrants from East Africa across Libya](#), April 2019

Figure 4: Length of stay in Libya of interviewed migrant workers, by number of interviewed migrant workers per region of origin and Mantika of residence



Education

Around two-thirds of interviewed migrant workers reportedly attained no to basic levels of education (have not completed secondary education)⁵⁸. Out of those who did not receive any formal education, almost two-thirds reported being illiterate, most of whom were West Africans. The majority of those who have completed some or all tertiary education (27/138) or specialised vocational training (9/138) were from the MENA region. Most reported fields of tertiary education were economics, management and commerce (7/27), engineering (5/27) and medical and dental sciences (4/27). As for vocational training, migrants interviewed mainly studied personal services (2/9), mechanics, process, energy, and electrical engineering (2/9), and business, administration, and law (2/9).

Employment status before arrival in Libya

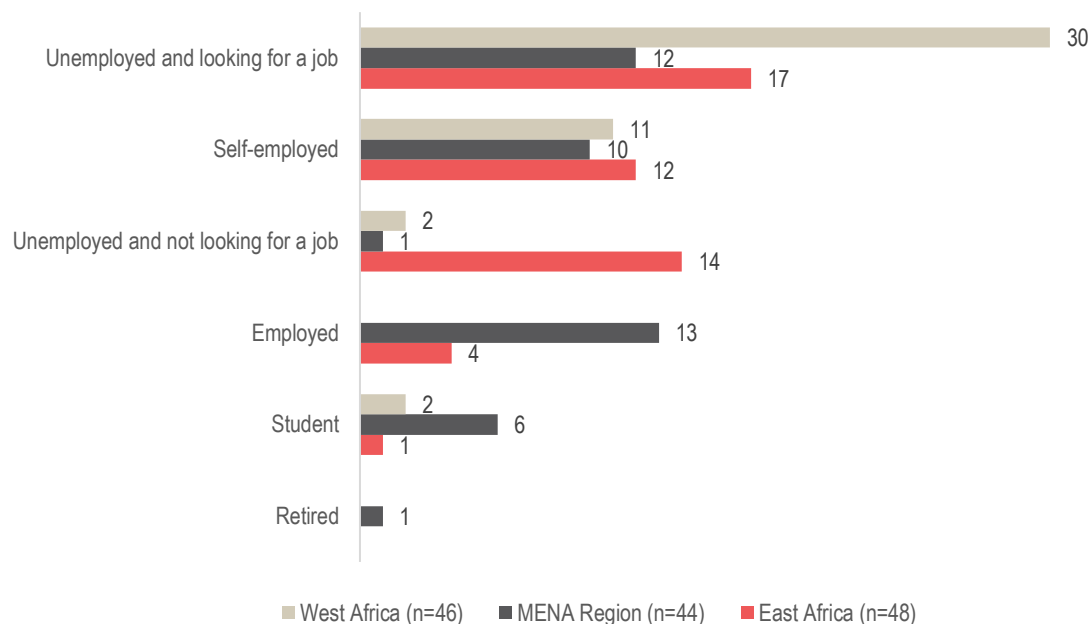
The largest proportion of interviewed migrants (76/138) had reportedly been jobless before coming to Libya – mostly the case for males from Sub-Saharan Africa. Among them, the vast majority were job hunting before arriving in Libya (59/76). Those who were (self-) employed (50/76) worked in various sectors/industries. Construction, water supply, electricity and gas (12/50), education (11/50), restaurant industry (7/50), and agriculture, pastoralism, fishing and food industry (6/50) were the most reported employment sectors.

Within the reported sectors/industries, interviewed migrant workers who were reportedly (self-) employed mainly occupied medium to high-skilled roles/positions, such as service workers and shop and market sales workers (11/50), professionals (10/50) and technicians and associate professionals (8/50). High-skilled roles were mostly filled by interviewed migrants from the MENA region. In contrast, low-skilled positions, consisting of elementary roles, such as cleaners and construction workers (7/50), were predominantly occupied by migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. All but five respondents had practised their professions for more than one year before arriving in Libya, with two to three years (14/50), and four to

⁵⁸ Education levels were determined based on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s [International Standard Classification of Education \(ISCED\)](#).

five years (13/50) of experience being the most cited. Nine interviewed migrants were still studying before departing to Libya.

Figure 5: Employment status of interviewed migrant workers before arrival in Libya, by number of interviewed migrant workers per region of origin⁵⁹



Employment in Libya

Interviewed migrant workers were asked about their main profession/occupation in the Mantika in which they resided at the time of data collection. As migrants could be involved in multiple economic activities, the main occupation was defined and explained as the job to which they devote most of their time. In Libya, migrants most commonly reported engaging in low to middle-skilled jobs in the construction, water supply, electricity, and gas sectors (32/138), domestic work (26/138), and agriculture, pastoralism, fishing, and food industries (20/138). Occupations in construction, water supply, electricity and gas were mainly filled by males and West African nationals, whereas females and East Africans represented the majority of those who were hired for domestic work.

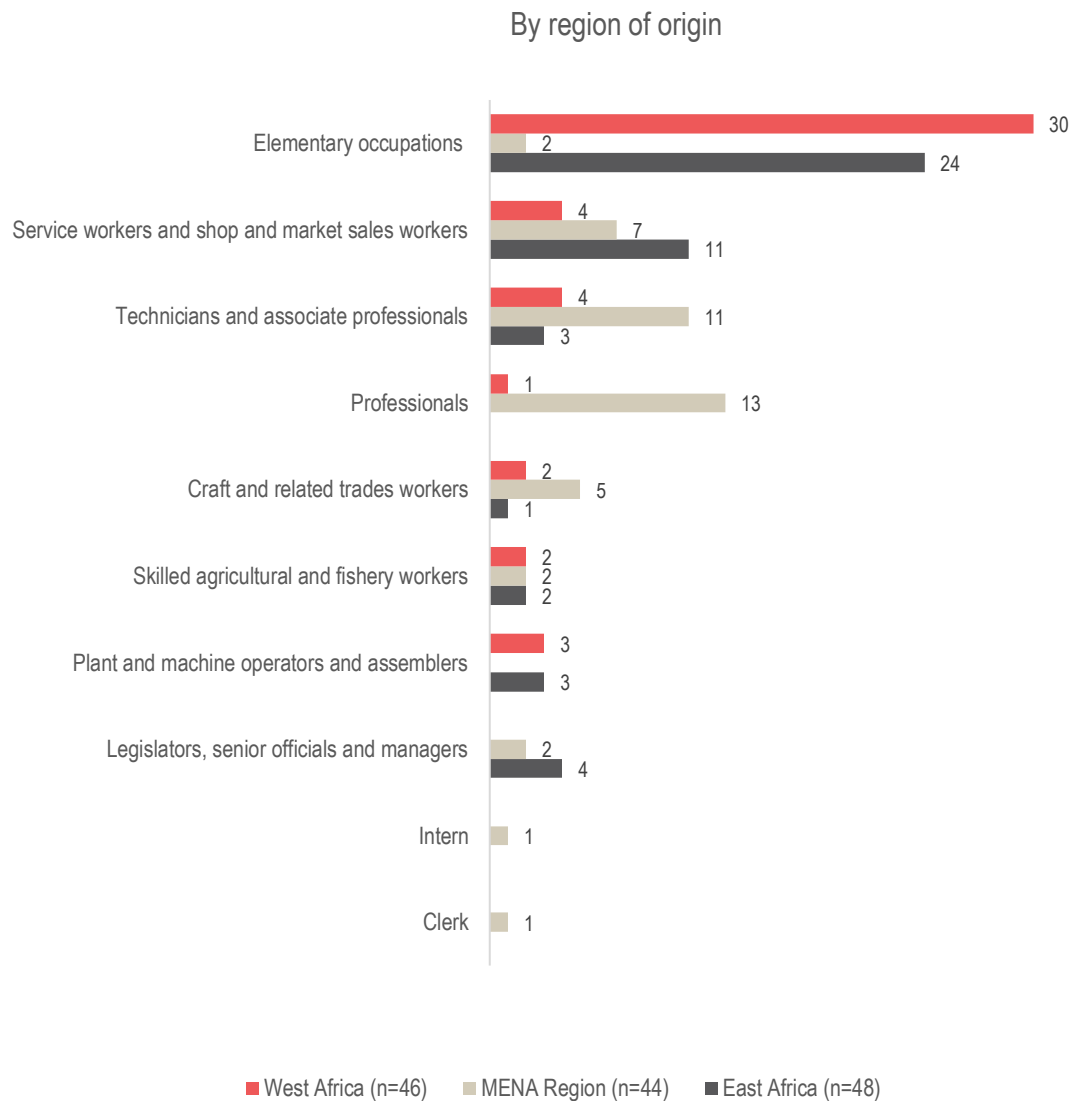
Reported sectors of employment were consistent with those in which both local and national-level stakeholders mentioned that there is a concentration of migrant workers. Additionally, KIs from the MoLR highlighted that these sectors specifically (and in general sectors that tend to involve more manual labour) represent a gap in the Libyan workforce that is usually filled by foreign workers. A KI from the local labour office in Libya stated: "Foreign labour is the main driver of [...] the local economy, as most of the workforce in the market is composed of foreigners, whether it is for agricultural work, construction work or other manual labour. Yes, there is Libyan manpower available, but it alone cannot cover the requirements of the local market."

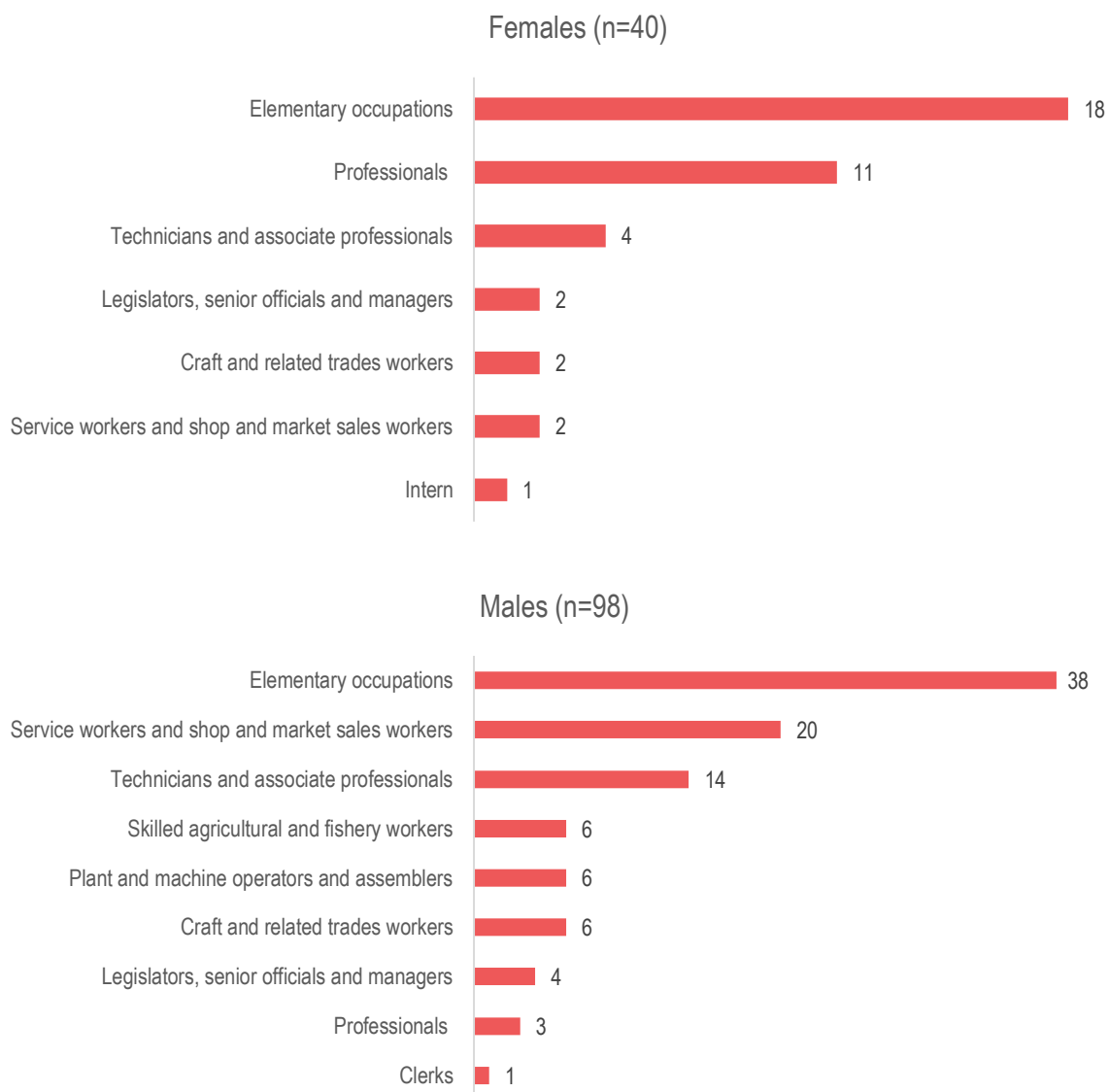
The roles assigned to interviewed migrants in their main job generally matched the highest attained level of education they reached, with those who had reportedly reached low education levels occupying elementary roles, such as cleaners, helpers, construction

⁵⁹ Please note that two respondents did not answer this question.

workers, and other low-skill daily jobs – the most commonly reported type of occupation. Interviewed migrants who completed college/university filled high-skill occupations such as health and education professionals. Most of those who were employed before coming to Libya continued working in the same sectors. No strong variations in the sectors of employment were noted across the three assessed Mantikas.

Figure 6: Reported occupations of interviewed migrant workers in Libya, by region of origin and gender





Profiles of interviewed employers

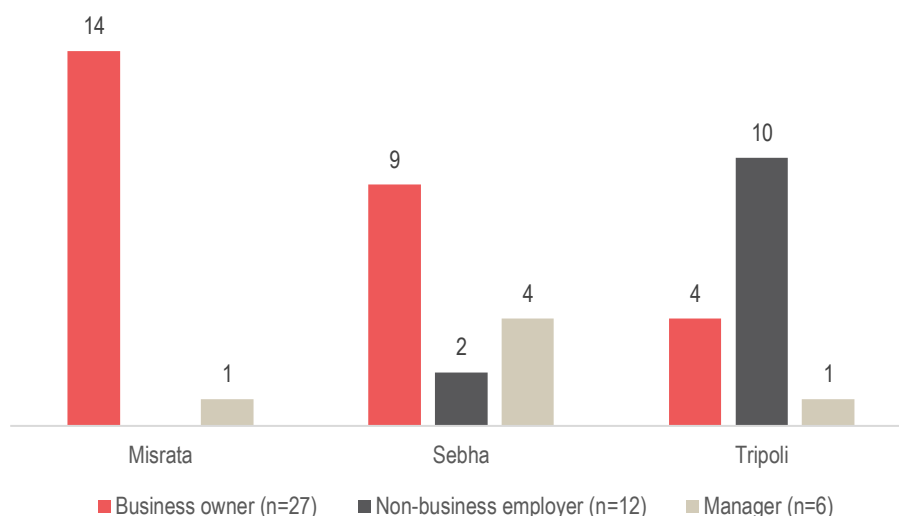
The 45 IIs with employers conducted for this assessment were divided equally across the three assessed locations. Interviewed employers were mainly Libyan (42/45)⁶⁰ males (38/45). Additionally, most employers were business owners or managers (33/45)⁶¹ whose businesses operated in the private sector (31/33)⁶². Business industries varied and generally aligned with the industries in which interviewed migrants reported working. The most commonly cited industries were agriculture, pastoralism, fishing, and food industries (5/33), the restaurant industry (5/33), health care (4/33) and education (4/33).

⁶⁰ The three remaining respondents respectively originate from Morocco, Nigeria and Syria.

⁶¹ The remaining were non-business employers who employ migrants mostly for domestic work purposes (i.e. cleaners, housekeepers, guards, etc.).

⁶² Two respondents reportedly worked in the non-profit/humanitarian sector.

Figure 7: Categories of employers interviewed, by number of interviewed employers per Mantika



The average percentage of migrant employees/workers that interviewed employers reportedly hired was 70% of the company's workforce, with a minimum of one migrant worker and a maximum of ten. Permanent male workers from West Africa constituted the most commonly reported group recruited, according to the interviewed employers. Migrants hired by employers mostly engaged in elementary occupations or worked as services and shop and market sales workers, or skilled agriculture and fishery workers. In total, all employers combined had reportedly 146 migrant workers hired at the time of data collection, occupying nine different types of positions/occupations.⁶³

Profiles of interviewed intermediaries

Considering the broadness of the definition of labour intermediaries provided by ILO, the wide array of intermediary profiles that it encompasses and the significant difference in how they operate, the profiles of intermediaries to be selected were decided on once preliminary findings from the IIs with migrant workers and employers were drawn (based on what profile of intermediaries they resorted to the most). Tools were tailored to each of the selected intermediary profiles in order to capture the variations and specificities of their intermediation process.

Based on the findings from the IIs with migrant workers and employers, three different categories of labour intermediaries were selected; Libyan intermediaries, migrant intermediaries, and job placement agencies/ brokers. To clearly make the distinction between the three profiles, each category was defined as follows:

- **Libyan intermediary** - Any Libyan national who had been informally providing migrants with labour intermediation services/ assistance for more than one year and for whom this had not been a main economic activity. This could be for-profit or pro bono.
- **Migrant intermediary** - Any migrant who had been informally providing other migrants with labour intermediation services/ assistance for more than one year, and

⁶³ Reported occupations included all those presented in the ISCO-88 classifications, except for clerical workers. Additionally, one employer reported employing an individual who collects and delivers humanitarian aid, a position that did not fall under any of the categories of the ILO classification.

for whom this had not been a main economic activity. This could be for-profit or pro bono.

- **Job placement agency/broker** - Any agency or individual whose main economic activity, either officially or non-officially, is to match employers to employees. For the purpose of this assessment, to be regarded as a job placement agency/broker, agencies or individuals also had to have been operational in Libya for more than one year.⁶⁴

In each location, two Libyan intermediaries, two migrant intermediaries, and one job placement agency representative or broker⁶⁵ were interviewed. All but two intermediary KIs were males. The 6 interviewed migrant intermediaries originate from Egypt (2/6), Sudan (1/6), Nigeria (1/6), Morocco (1/6) or the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) (1/6).

⁶⁴ The one-year period criterion was added so that respondents would be able to discuss the potential variations in the labour and intermediation dynamics before and after the COVID-19 outbreak in Libya.

⁶⁵ Specifically, two private employment placement agency representatives and one broker working informally were interviewed across the three locations.

► Findings

Chapter 1: Migrant's access to employment and the role of labour intermediaries

This chapter explores the findings on how migrants access the labour market and the role played by intermediaries. It addresses how migrants find employment and how employers find migrant workers, beyond moving on to look at the process of intermediation. It is mainly based on IIs with migrant workers, IIs with employers and KIIs with intermediaries.

Means of finding employment: intermediaries widely used

In order to find the main job they were occupying at the time of data collection,⁶⁶ the majority of interviewed migrants reported having used intermediaries (113/138). The most cited types of intermediaries were Libyan nationals (43/113), compatriots⁶⁷ (36/113), and (extended) family members (12/113). Interviewed migrants in Sebha were found to rely the most on other migrants from their countries of origin (20 of the 48 migrants interviewed in Sebha). On the other hand, interviewed migrants in Misrata reportedly mainly used their Libyan social network (28 of the 45 migrants interviewed in Misrata), potentially indicating a better integration within the host community. Interviewed migrants who found employment without resorting to the support of an intermediary (25/138) were either directly contacted by an employer recruiting for particular skills (12/25) or found their job at recruitment sites or other meeting points (main junctions or roundabouts) and waiting to be approached and picked up by an employer (13/25). The latter was only reported by male migrant workers, likely because of the security risk associated with waiting in the streets for female migrants. In fact, all local-level stakeholder KIs highlighted that female migrants are more exposed to security concerns in Libya, imposing an additional barrier to access to employment for this subgroup. High-skilled workers in western Mantikas were the only group who reportedly relied on government officials to find employment. Contrastingly, smugglers⁶⁸ as labour market intermediaries were only reported by interviewed low-skilled workers in Sebha. In fact, Sebha has been a major hub for the smuggling of migrants,⁶⁹ representing one of the main crossing points along the route to northern Mantikas.⁷⁰ Migrants moving through smuggling networks in Sebha and whose stay in the Mantika is often brief,⁷¹ are likely to engage in low-skilled daily jobs, if needing to work. Four female migrants reported dealing with private employment agencies, two of who reported that the agencies are based in their country of origin.

Most intermediary KIs specialised in specific sectors of employment (13/15). The most commonly cited sectors were construction, water supply and/or electricity (8/15), domestic work (5/15) and agriculture, pastoralism, fishing and/or food industry (2/15). The two

⁶⁶ The main job was defined and explained to interviewed migrants as the job to which they devoted most of their time.

⁶⁷ Individuals holding the same nationalities as interviewed migrants.

⁶⁸ For this study, a smuggler is defined as any individual who facilitates irregular migration for financial or other forms of benefits. Activities performed by smugglers may not be limited to facilitating border crossings and could encompass the provision of services such as accommodation and transportation.

⁶⁹ UN Habitat, [City profile of Sebha, Libya](#), October 2018.

⁷⁰ REACH, [Sebha Area-based assessment](#), March 2021.

⁷¹ Mixed Migration Centre, [Mixed migration and migrant smuggling in Libya: the role of non-Libyan smuggler intermediaries](#), June 2021.

private employment agency KIs specialised in domestic work. The employment sectors in which intermediary KIs reported specialising aligned with the sectors most interviewed migrants reported working in.

The findings in this section highlight the pivotal role that labour intermediaries play in the recruitment process of migrant workers and indicate their significance to the Libyan labour market. Additionally, intermediaries that interviewed migrant workers reported using many forms, but were mainly individuals who were operating informally or unlawfully. Informal labour intermediation could exacerbate migrants' vulnerability to exploitation, deception, and other forms of human rights abuses.⁷²

Box 1: International legal instruments and guidelines surrounding labour intermediation

The key international legal instrument that concerns labour intermediation is: "The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CRMW)". This was adopted by the UN general assembly in 1990 and accessed by Libya in 2004.

The convention establishes minimum standards for migrants and their families, with an overall aim of eliminating exploitation in the migration process and establishing respect for migrants' human rights (Cultural survivor, [Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families](#)).

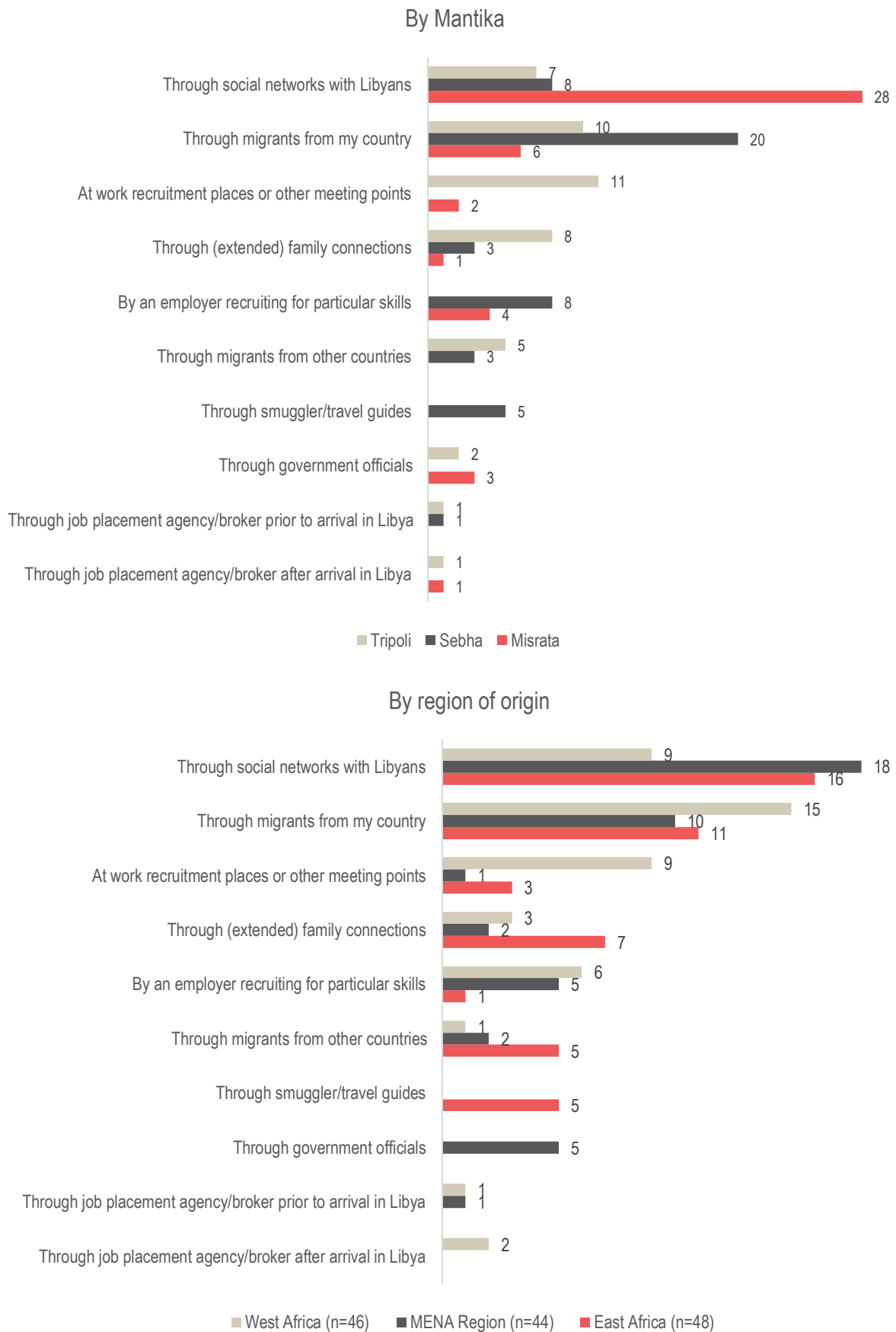
It stresses that migrants, whether regular or irregular, must have access to a degree of protection and have their rights respected, which includes receiving accurate information regarding their employment and their rights as workers regardless of their place of origin.

Other international legal instruments surrounding labour intermediation include the ILO "Private Employment Agencies Convention (No. 181)", which establishes clear protections for jobseekers and stresses on the need to protect workers against abuses. Specifically, the convention contributes to the creation of an appropriate economic and legal environment in which all stakeholders in the private employment agencies industry are guided by the same rules and have an equal opportunity to operate. Notably, Libya has not ratified this convention (ILO, [Private Employment Agencies Convention](#)).

In addition to the Convention 181, the ILO issued in 2019 general principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment. This document builds on internationally recognised human rights, including those expressed in international labour protocols to set the standards for a recruitment process that takes place in a way that respects, protects and fulfils the rights of all workers, including migrants and to foster fair recruitment of practices (ILO, [General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment](#))

⁷² ILO, [Fair recruitment initiative: regulating labour recruitment to prevent human trafficking and to foster fair migration: models, challenges and opportunities](#), 2015

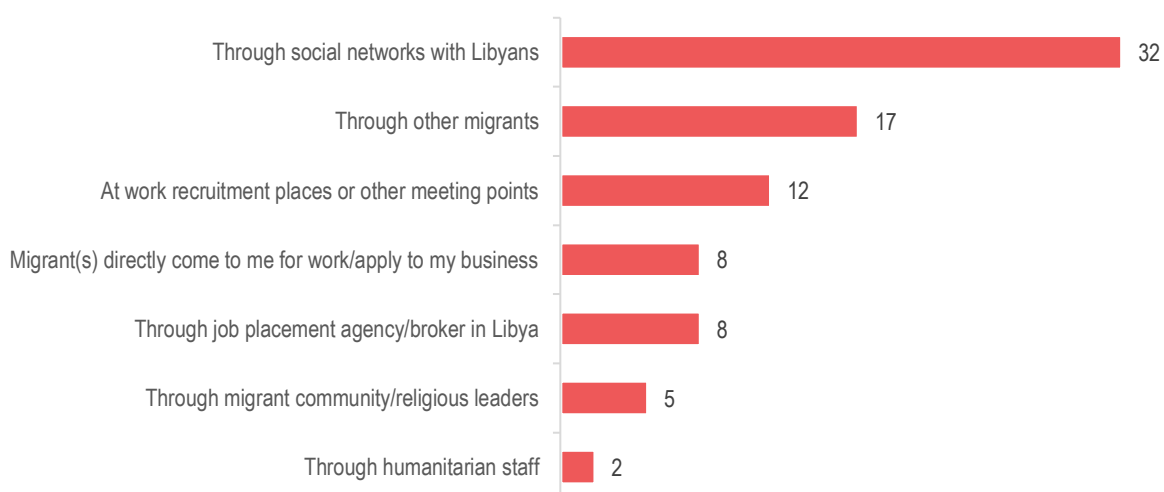
Figure 8: Means of finding employment, by number of interviewed migrant workers per Mantika and region of origin



Means of finding migrant employees

Interviewed employers were asked about how they found the migrant workers they were employing at the time of data collection. Employers could select more than one type of intermediary and were asked separate labour intermediation-related questions for each type of intermediary they selected. Mostly, answers aligned with those provided by interviewed migrants. Seeking support from Libyan nationals (32/45) or other migrants (17/45) and/or recruiting workers directly at main gathering points (12/45) were the most commonly reported means used by employers to find migrant workers.⁷³ Some interviewed employers (8/45) also reported finding migrant workers through private employment agencies, which was particularly commonly reported in Tripoli (7 of the 8 employers reporting using private agencies). The majority of those who dealt with intermediation businesses heard about the agencies mainly through their Libyan social network (5/8). Four employers explained that they resorted to private job placement agencies because of their expertise in supplying female domestic workers, who reportedly tend to be more difficult to find than other profiles of migrant workers.

Figure 9: Reported means of finding migrant employees, by number of interviewed employers



Initial contact with the intermediary and selection of migrant workers

Aside from interviewed migrants who reported using family connections to access employment (12/113), the rest (101/113) were asked about how they came into with the intermediary. Introduction to the intermediary occurred in various ways: friends or family (42/101), face to face contact (28/101) or smugglers (13/101) were the most commonly reported ways through which interviewed migrants initially got in contact with the intermediary. Smugglers were mainly reported by male migrants in Sebha. They reportedly helped introduce them to migrant intermediaries or other smugglers who found them a job.

Most intermediary KIs reportedly chose the nationalities and profiles of migrants whom they dealt with (10/15). Besides five intermediary KIs who reported not dealing with migrants from particular regions/countries (three of whom were located in Sebha), the remaining KIs mentioned that they primarily provided intermediation services/assistance

⁷³ Interviewed employers could select more than one option.

to migrants of specific origins. Originating from the same region, and therefore sharing common socio-cultural characteristics, emerged as one of the factors influencing the choice of profiles of migrant intermediaries dealt with. In fact, half of the informal Libyan and migrant intermediary KIs (6/12) who originate from the MENA region (including Libyans) primarily dealt with migrants from the same region, most reportedly Egyptians (6/6). Other mentioned nationalities were Sudanese (by 3 KIs in Sebha and Tripoli), and Chadians (by 2 KIs in Sebha and Tripoli). Both private employment agency representatives worked mainly with West African migrants.

Intermediaries explained that the proficiency/experience or interest in the employment sector in which they provided intermediation services (4/10), the availability of migrant workers in the area (2/10), and the relationships and trust developed with migrants from certain communities (3/10) were factors that influenced their selection process. One Tripoli-based private job placement agency KI who reported dealing with migrants from West Africa stated that this is because they had contacts in the countries of origin who facilitated migrants' visa obtention processes.

Services provided by intermediaries

As reported by more than half of the migrant workers interviewed (76/113), agreed-upon services/assistance with the intermediaries were not only limited to job placements. Intermediaries reportedly offered packages of services, with access to accommodation (34/113), assistance with the obtention of a work permit (13/113), and transportation within Libya (11/113) being the most cited additional services.⁷⁴ In addition, among interviewed employers, professional skills development was the second most commonly reported provided service, following the facilitation of access to work/residency permits for the selected migrant workers. Findings from the IIs with migrant workers suggest that Libyan intermediaries might generally offer the highest amount of additional services, followed by migrant countrymen/women.

Table 3: Most commonly reported agreed-upon services/assistance by number of interviewed migrants who had reportedly used intermediaries, by type of intermediary used

Type of intermediary	Most reported services/assistance
Job placement agency/broker after arrival in Libya (n=2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection inside the workplace (2/2) • Access to accommodation (1/2) • Obtaining a work/residency permit (1/2) • Transfer of remittances to home country (1/2)
Job placement agency/broker prior to arrival in Libya (n=2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining a work/residency permit (2/2) • Access to accommodation (1/2) • Travel arrangements (visa, passport, flight booking, border crossing, etc.) (1/2)

⁷⁴ Interviewed migrants could select more than one service.

Government officials (n=5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining a work/residency permit (3/5) • Facilitating integration within the host/migrant community (1/5)
Smuggler/travel guides (n=5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to accommodation (4/5) • Transportation within Libya (4/5) • Access to food and non-food items (4/5)
Migrants from other countries (n=8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to accommodation (1/8) • Professional skills development (1/8)
(Extended) Family connections (n=12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to accommodation (4/12) • Obtaining a work/residency permit (1/12) • Transportation within Libya (1/12)
Migrants from my country (n=36)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to accommodation (15/36) • Facilitating integration within the host/migrant community (7/36) • Transfer of remittances to home country (4/36)
Social networks with Libyans (n=43)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to accommodation (5/43) • Obtaining a work/residency permit (6/43) • Access to basic services (healthcare, education) (5/43)

Aside from six intermediary KIs who reported only facilitating access to employment, the rest also discussed the variety of services they offered. Protection inside and/or outside the workplace (7/9), transportation within Libya (5/9), transfer of remittances (4/9) and travel arrangements (4/9) (mostly reported by job placement agency/broker KIs (3/4)) were the most cited services they offered.⁷⁵ Reportedly, Tripoli-based intermediaries offered the least amount of additional services, in contrast with those in Misrata, who reportedly offered up to eight complimentary services.

Types of agreements and documents required

Findings highlight the often informal aspect of the intermediation process, with more than half of migrants interviewed stating that they did not have any oral or written agreement with the intermediary (67/113).

Oral agreements were reported by more than a third of the interviewed migrants (40/113), whereas written contracts (mainly with government officials and Libyan citizens) were only cited by six individuals. The latter mainly originate from the MENA region (4/6) and were located in Misrata (4/6) and Tripoli (2/6). Contracts however did not always clearly state all the services/assistance agreed on with the intermediary. Two migrants highlighted that only some (1/6) or none (1/6) were included.

Employers were also asked about the type of agreement they had with each type of intermediary that facilitated their access to migrant workers. In total, employer respondents reported working with 64 intermediaries, with 50 of whom they reportedly did

⁷⁵ Intermediaries could select more than one service.

not have any sort of agreement⁷⁶ and 13 of whom they had reportedly agreed with them orally.

Findings from the intermediary KIs further verify those from the IIs. Only two intermediaries – a job placement agency KI and a broker KI – reported signing written contracts with migrant workers. The remaining KIs stated that they either had oral agreements (7/15) or did not have any kind of agreement/contract with the migrant workers they dealt with (6/15). Most KIs (11/15) reported not requesting any documents from the migrant workers to find/place migrants in jobs. The rest reported necessitating passports (4/4), resumes (1/4), birth or health certificates (1/4) and/or residence/work permit (1/4). Two KIs further detailed that the needed documents depended on the nature of the business, the type of job and the required skills. For example, private and public clinics/hospitals and pharmacies reportedly ask for the migrant worker's health certificate and ID, whereas cleaning or retail jobs do not require any documentation.

Guidelines published by the ILO for the fair recruitment of migrants⁷⁷ stressed the importance of documented contractual agreements between migrants and labour market intermediaries, backed up by legislative policies and regulations, to prevent human rights violations and exploitation of migrant workers and to reduce their work vulnerability.

Intermediation costs and payment types and modalities

More than a fifth of interviewed migrants (25/113), mainly from Sub-Saharan Africa (19/25), reported paying for the intermediation (and the additional) services. All were located in Sebha and Tripoli, and most of them reportedly used migrants, mostly compatriots, to find employment. Reported amounts charged by intermediaries varied drastically and fluctuated between 150 and 3000 Libyan Dinar (LYD),⁷⁸ and averaged more than 900 LYD. Findings show that, often, the costlier the services (e.g. travel arrangements) appeared to be, the more expensive the intermediary's fees were. Further analysis showed that 8 out of the 25 intermediaries who requested to be paid for their services did not offer any services/assistance besides job placement.

Interviewed migrants who reported having paid for intermediation services commonly mentioned that transactions were done in cash in instalments (9/25), or as a single payment before (9/25) or after (7/25) the provision of the services/assistance. Eight migrant workers reported still being indebted to the intermediary at the time of data collection; they commonly reported facing some difficulties paying the remaining amount (6/8). All but one of those whose intermediation cost was deducted from their salaries (6/25) were female domestic workers. Notably, all female domestic workers who reported that the intermediation costs were deducted from their salaries reported being subject to protection abuses at the hands of their intermediaries.

On the other hand, out of the total of 64 intermediaries with whom interviewed employers reported dealing, employers stated not being charged for intermediation services by almost

⁷⁶ Employers could select more than one type of intermediary who facilitated their access to the migrant workers they were employing at the time of data collection. In the labour intermediation section of the survey, interviewed employers were asked the same set of questions for each category of intermediaries they selected and answered intermediation-related questions for each type of intermediary they dealt with. In total, 18 out of the 45 interviewed employers reported having used more than one type of intermediary. Only one respondent reported that migrants directly came to them for work/applied to work in their business, meaning that no labour intermediation was involved in the recruitment process. Hence, the total of responses is above the total of 45 employers who participated in the present assessment.

⁷⁷ ILO, [General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment and Definition of recruitment fees and related costs](#), 2019.

⁷⁸ As of 31 March, one United States Dollar (USD) equaled 4.5412 LYD in the official market and 4.95 LYD in the parallel market. For more information, please see the [website of the Libyan Central Bank](#) for the official rate and [Ewan Libya](#) for the parallel market rate.

all the intermediaries (54/64). Those who had to pay intermediation fees mainly dealt with private employment agencies and had to pay amounts varying from 800 to 3000 LYD in return for the job placement services and other additional services offered by the intermediary.

When it comes to intermediaries, the majority of those interviewed reported offering their services to migrant workers for free (9/15). The rest reportedly took a cut from the migrant's compensation (3/6), varying from 5% to 15%, and/or charged a fixed fee amounting to up to 750 LYD (4/6). Almost half of the intermediary KIs mentioned getting paid by employers in return for their services (7/15). Reported intermediation fees for employers varied substantially and ranged between 500 and 2000 LYD for fixed amounts and 5% to 10% of the overall compensation for the job for percentage-based fees. The highest amount charged was reported by the private employment agency KI in Misrata. Only one migrant intermediary KI reported charging employers for their services.

Promises vs. reality

Services promised by the intermediaries were not always fulfilled in reality; eight interviewed migrants reported that none or only some of the agreed-upon services were delivered by the intermediaries. This was mostly the case for sub-Saharan Africans (8/8) who reportedly relied on other migrants from their countries of origin to find a job (5/8). Four out of those respondents had already paid for the agreed-upon services. When asked about the services that were not provided as agreed, the most commonly cited services were access to accommodation (3/8), protection inside the workplace (2/8) and access to food and non-food items (2/8).⁷⁹ Victims of these scams were mainly based in Sebha (7/8) and were mostly engaged in elementary occupations (6/8). Additionally, all except one intermediary KI reported not providing any guarantees to migrant workers, in case they are not able to provide them with the services/assistance as agreed. Only one job placement agency KI from Tripoli explained that they provided accommodation and food until they would find a job for the individual.

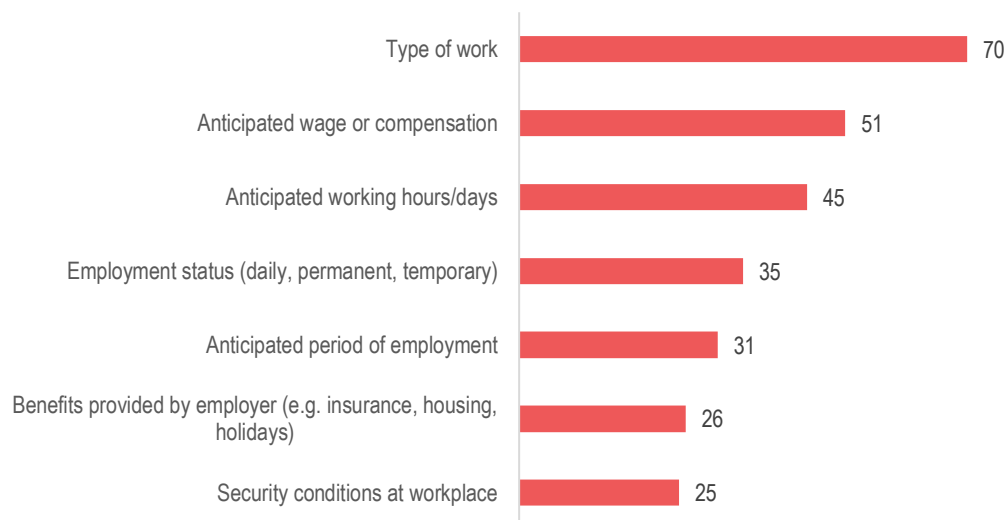
Information provided by the intermediary before starting the job

Interviewed migrants who reported having used an intermediary to access their main job in Libya were provided with a list of job-related information and were asked whether the intermediary supplied this information before starting their main job. Almost a fifth of interviewed migrants reported not having received any type of job-related information (25/113). As for those who have (88/113), they mostly cited information on the type of work (70/88), the anticipated wages or compensation (51/88), the anticipated working hours/days (45/88), and the employment status (daily, temporary or permanent) (35/88).⁸⁰ These were also the same types of information that employers reported providing to the intermediaries, in addition to the skills expected from the migrant worker. Only 25 out of 113 interviewed migrant workers mentioned having received information about security conditions in the workplace.

⁷⁹ Respondents could select more than one option.

⁸⁰ Respondents could select more than one option.

Figure 10: Reported types of information received from intermediaries, by number of interviewed migrant workers



Before placing them in a job, the most commonly reported information intermediary KIs provided migrant workers with concerned the type of work (12/15), the anticipated wage or compensation (10/15), and the anticipated period of employment (8/15). Other details provided covered the security conditions in the workplace (6/15), the anticipated working hours/days (5/15), and the employment status (5/15).

When asked whether the information provided by intermediaries turned out to be accurate, some interviewed migrants stated that it was not always the case. Largely, the reported erroneous information concerned the anticipated working hours (17/45), security conditions at the workplace (13/25) and the type of work they would be doing (10/70).⁸¹

Maintaining contact with the intermediary

Most interviewed migrants who had used an intermediary reported having lost contact with the intermediary after having started their job (80/113). Those who were still in touch with the individuals who facilitated their access to employment at the time of data collection mainly reported contacting them weekly (12/33), monthly (5/33) or bi-weekly (5/33) on average. Interviewed migrants further elaborated by explaining that they mainly contacted the intermediaries for casual conversations (15/33), to discuss work-related topics (9/33) or to ask for advice or information (4/33). Maintaining contact was mostly observed with migrant workers who had reportedly relied on members of their migrant community to find employment.

Two-thirds of the intermediary KIs (10/15) reported maintaining contact with migrant workers after employment. Reasons for this were mainly to monitor the quality/progress of the work (4/10) and to continue providing the agreed-upon additional services (3/10). One private employment KI in Tripoli specified that they usually contact the migrant worker at the end of each employment period to discuss future job opportunities.

⁸¹ The totals 45, 25 and 70 respectively represent the number of migrants who reported having received each piece of information from the intermediary.

Protection concerns

Overall, 14 out of 113 interviewed migrants who had used intermediaries reported having experienced abusive practices at the hands of their intermediaries. The most commonly reported violations were restrictions on the freedom of movement (9/14), retention of identity documents (5/14), and threats and intimidation, including verbal and psychological abuse (5/14).⁸² Additionally, two migrants reported being victims of compulsory labour. Most of the rights violations were reported in Tripoli (6/14) and Sebha (5/14) by female migrant workers who were engaged in domestic work (8/14) (Please see box 2 for more information on the situation of female domestic workers in the MENA region).

Similarly, more than half of the intermediary KIs reported being aware of protection incidents/rights violations affecting migrants that occurred at the hands of labour intermediaries (8/15). The three most commonly reported types of abuse were the retention of identity documents (4/8), threats and intimidation, including verbal and psychological abuse (4/8), and forced labour (2/8). Additionally, one KI said that they were aware of incidents of physical and sexual violence. In contrast, two Libyan intermediary KIs in Misrata mentioned that intermediaries rather play the role of protectors and ensure that migrant workers' rights are safeguarded. These findings draw attention to the possible paradoxical practices of labour market intermediaries – while some can pose a threat to the safety of migrant workers they deal with, others may act as caretakers, protecting migrants from violations that can occur inside and outside the workplace.

One KI from a local NGO in Sebha drew attention to the many protection-related incidents committed by labour market intermediaries in the area. He explained that practices such as deceiving migrants, threatening and intimidating them, restricting their movement and forcing them into hazardous work are commonly seen. He cited: “some intermediaries [...] bring migrant labourers at the request of some organised crime groups specialised in theft to work in dangerous and illegal work, including the theft of cables and electric wires that they would turn into copper. They force workers to work on dismantling the electrical wires, which puts them in mortal danger.”

The KI also added that migrants often fall for the trap of “fake brokers”; individuals who deceivingly promise migrants job placement and additional services, ask for advance payments in return for these services, and then end up deceiving them for money.

Both intermediary and local and national stakeholder KIs, including representatives from the MoLR, reported that there are no statutory laws and governmental bodies that regulate the roles and activities of labour market intermediaries, or not knowing whether or not there are such laws. The absence of the law presents fertile ground for human rights violations, increasing the risk of exposure to abuses at the hands of intermediaries and making it difficult to prevent such abuses.⁸³ Further investigation on the most efficient ways to reduce protection concerns of migrant workers in Libya and on how to strengthen referral systems could foster fairer recruitment practices and prevent human rights violations.

⁸² Respondents could select more than one option.

⁸³ ILO, [Fair recruitment initiative: regulating labour recruitment to prevent human trafficking and to foster fair migration: models, challenges and opportunities](#), 2015.

Box 2: The case of female domestic workers

In this assessment, most of the migrant respondents who reported experiencing abuse by the intermediary were female domestic workers – which mirrors a regional trend. Since the 1970s, the MENA region has seen a large influx of migrant domestic workers, most of whom are women from Africa and Asia (ALNAP, [COVID-19 Impact on Female Migrant Domestic Workers in the Middle East](#)). Migrant workers, particularly domestic workers, are known to be some of the most vulnerable groups in the region (IOM, [The Other Migrant Crisis: Protecting Migrant Workers Against Exploitation in the Middle East](#)). Migrant domestic workers, who are usually sponsored by families and found through intermediaries, are often entirely dependent on these individuals for their livelihood and residency. This power imbalance, combined with a lack of legal protections, leaves them exposed to exploitation and risks, such as gender-based violence (GBV). This dynamic has been likened to human trafficking for labour exploitation (ALNAP, [COVID-19 Impact on Migrant Domestic Workers](#)).

Domestic workers play a crucial economic and social role in these societies, including helping to raise young children and care for older people, but their contribution often goes unrecognised (ILO, [Migrant domestic workers](#)).

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 led to growing concerns that the situation for domestic workers in the MENA region would worsen, leading to a potential curtailment of their freedoms, pay and benefits, while also having to bear the brunt of the psychological impact the situation was having on families they worked for (Human Rights Watch, [Domestic Workers in Middle East Risk Abuse Amid COVID-19 Crisis Governments have a responsibility to protect foreign domestic workers](#)). Indeed, cases from 2020 showed that domestic workers' workload had increased alongside salaries potentially decreasing. The pandemic also heightens their exposure to GBV and sexual exploitation, due to loss of work as a result of the pandemic. (ALNAP, [COVID-19 Impact on Migrant Domestic Workers](#))

Chapter two: Employment characteristics and conditions of migrant workers

The second chapter explores the findings related to employment characteristics and conditions. It looks at payment, working hours, contracts and work permits, before going on to consider grievance mechanisms and workplace safety. The findings presented here are based on IIs with migrant workers and employers, as well as KIIs with intermediaries and local and national stakeholders.

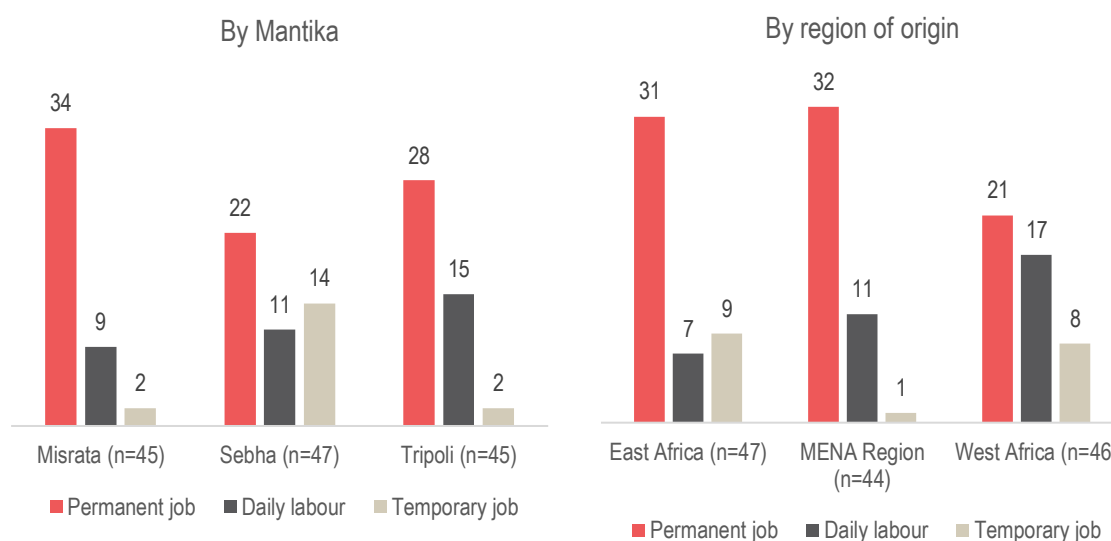
Types and sectors of employment

Reportedly, around a fifth of interviewed migrants worked for more than one employer at the time of data collection. When inquiring about conditions and employment, migrant workers were asked to refer to the job to which they devoted most of their time.

The largest proportion of interviewed migrants (84/138) were reportedly permanent workers (went to work regularly with a predictable monthly salary), whereas 35 out of 138 were daily labourers and the remaining were temporary workers. Most daily workers were engaged in low-skilled jobs (22/35) and originate from West Africa (17/35). When it comes to the assessed locations, Tripoli hosted the largest number of daily workers among

interviewed migrants, in contrast with Misrata, where the majority of migrants interviewed reported/ being permanent workers.

Figure 11: Types of employment of interviewed migrant workers, by Mantika and region of origin⁸⁴



As for the economic sectors, the majority of interviewed migrants reported being employed in the private sector (115/138). Those who reported being employed in the public sector mainly originated from the MENA region (6/12) and East Africa (5/12), and mainly worked in education.

Payment modalities

All but one interviewed migrant reported being paid for their job through cash payments. In addition to monetary payments, some migrant workers reported also receiving in-kind compensation in the form of food and non-food items. One respondent in Sebha who reported working for a smuggler stated that they were working for free to cover the expenses of travelling to Tripoli. Salary payments were mostly done in cash (130/145), through bank transfers (9/145) or a combination of both. Those who received their wages through bank transfers were mostly public sector employees from the MENA region. Only six migrant workers highlighted that all or a proportion of their salaries were paid by the intermediaries who had facilitated their access to the job, instead of directly by their employers.

These answers were largely mirrored by employers. Interviewed employers were asked to provide each position filled by migrants they employed at the time of data collection and answered questions relating to employment conditions for each of the selected positions. Combined, 62 positions filled by migrant staff were selected by interviewed employers,⁸⁵ with employers reporting that, for 50 of the selected positions, migrants were paid cash in hand. Other payment modalities included payment through the employment agency (5/62),

⁸⁴ One East African respondent from Sebha reported not knowing their employment type.

⁸⁵ When designing the survey tool for employers, the research team took into account the fact that employers could employ multiple migrant workers for different roles/positions. Work conditions relating to each position could be drastically different (for example, a health professional at a healthcare facility is likely to have a completely different employment experience than a cleaner in the same facility. Therefore, employers were asked to select each role/position they were employing migrants for at the time of data collection. For each occupation category selected, respondents were asked the same set of questions on employment characteristics and conditions. In total, 20 out of the 45 interviewed employers reported employing migrant workers for more than one role/position. Hence, the total of responses exceeds the total of 45 employers who participated in the present assessment.

certified cheque (4/62) and in-kind payment (2/62). For the latter option, the in-kind payment consisted of food and non-food items. For this response, some employers selected more than one payment modality.

Figure 12: Payment modalities used by interviewed migrant workers⁸⁶



Salary amounts

Reported salaries varied substantially and fluctuated between less than 350 LYD to more than 3500 LYD per month. Almost two-thirds of interviewed migrant workers mentioned getting paid less than 950 LYD. Overall, nationals of East African countries were found to be paid the least, whereas the highest-paid migrants originated from the MENA region. Out of the three assessed Mantikas, interviewed migrants who were based in Sebha appeared to generally receive the lowest salaries when compared to the two other locations. The amounts paid did not always match the skill level associated with the position filled by migrant workers. In some instances, reported salaries received for low-skilled jobs (elementary occupations) were higher than those obtained for high-skilled occupations (for example, health and education professionals). These significant variations in salaries per occupation type were also found when analysing the interviews with employers. For example, the four employers who hired legislators, senior officials and/or managers (high-skilled) reported drastically different salary ranges for these positions, going from between 550 and 750 LYD to between 1550 and 1750 LYD.

Employers who hired both Libyan and migrant workers were asked whether migrants and Libyans who occupied the same position were paid the same amount. For the most part, wages received by Libyans and migrants filling the same position were reportedly the same, according to the interviewed employees.

Working hours and days

When asked how many days a week they work, the most widely reported answer among migrant worker respondents was six (60/138), followed by seven (36/138) and five (33/138) days a week on average. This was echoed by employers, the majority of whom reported that

⁸⁶ One respondent did not respond to this question. Respondents could select more than one option

migrant employees work six days a week (34/45), with a notable minority reporting that they work seven days a week (17/45).

Alongside the number of days, migrants interviewed were also asked about the number of hours worked on average. For interviewed migrant workers, the most common answer was 10 hours (31/138), followed by 8 (26/138) and 12 (21/138). In general, male migrant workers reported working longer hours than female respondents. With most men reporting that they work 10 hours or more a day, and the majority of women reporting that they work less than 10 hours per day. However, the answer to this question may have been shaped by the types of work commonly performed by these respondent groups, rather than the amount of labour done. Further analysis showed that interviewed migrant workers who reported not having a written employment contract and/or a work permit worked longer hours, often exceeding 11 hours, than those who had signed work contracts or held a work permit.

Again here, the responses of workers were mirrored by the responses of employers, who commonly reported that, for the 62 positions they were hiring migrant employees for, migrant staff generally work 10 hours (18/62) or 8 hours (13/62) per day.

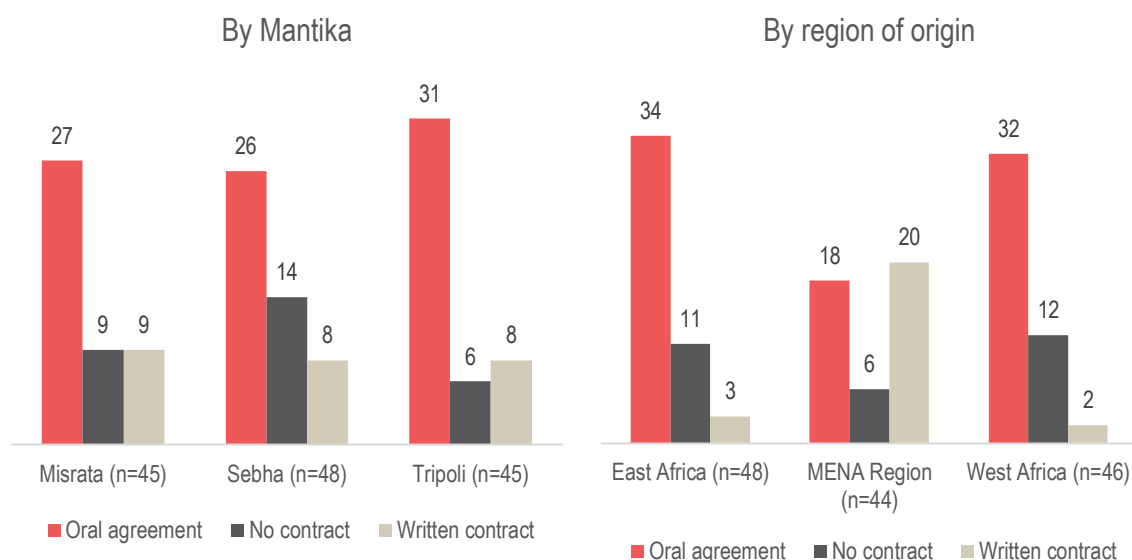
Work contracts

Having a written contract increases the chances that the worker's rights will be respected and strengthens their job security, often including the provision of protections, such as social insurance. The majority of migrant worker respondents revealed that they had oral contracts only (84/138) or had no contract whatsoever (29/138) with their employer. Only a small minority of interviewed migrants (25/138) stated that they have written contracts for their current work. Among those who had written contracts, the majority (15/25) reported that the document had been certified by a notary.⁸⁷

There was notable variation by region of origin in terms of reported work agreements. Most East (34/48) and West (32/46) Africans reported that they had an oral contract, whereas the most common response among interviewed migrant workers from MENA was that they had written contracts (20/44) with their employer. Indeed, almost all interviewed migrants who reported that they had a written contract came from MENA, and this answer was only reported by a very small number of East (3/48) and West (2/48) African respondents.

⁸⁷ According to consultations with REACH field staff, non-certified employment contracts are not legally recognised.

Figure 13: Reported types of work agreements, by number of migrant workers per Mantika and region of origin



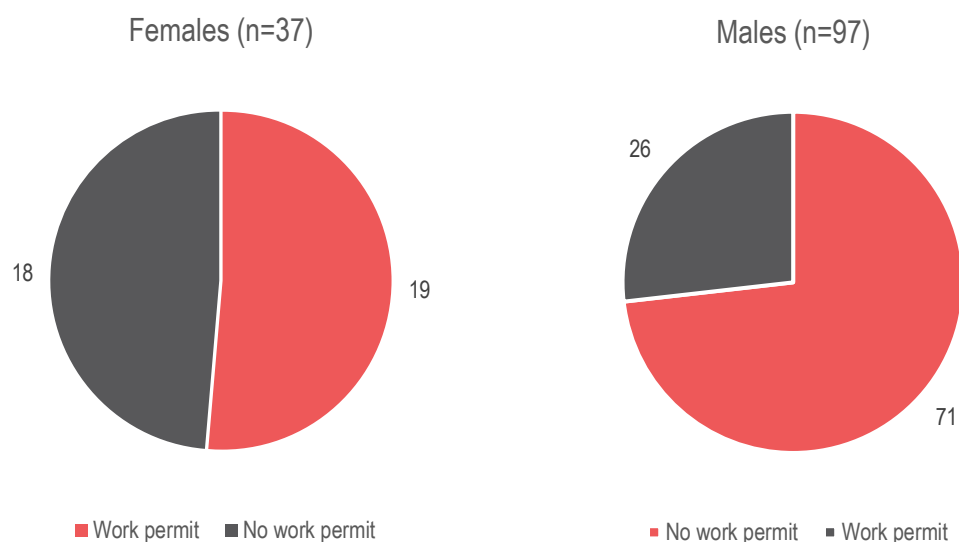
Employer respondents' answers reflected that oral contracts are by far the common setup for migrants in the assessed locations, with the majority of employer respondents reporting that for most of the positions they were hiring migrants for (43/62), the agreements with the migrant workers were oral. In a different manner, some employers either reported that they have no contract (8/62) or a written contract (10/62). Some employers added that, while they did have written contracts with migrants they employed, these contracts were not certified by a notary (6/10).

Migrant worker respondents were also asked if they were covered by a social security system or another form of social protection programme. Only one respondent reported that they were; this person reported being covered by a private social security scheme. The lack of coverage in social security or protection systems was also highlighted by employers, almost all of whom reported that, for 59 out of the 62 positions filled migrants working for them, migrants were not covered by any type of programme. Two migrant workers reported that they were not aware whether they were covered by a social security/protection system or not.

Work permit

As with work contracts, a similar trend emerged for work permits. Most interviewed migrant workers from the MENA region reported that, at the time of data collection, they had a valid work permit (30/44), while this was only reported by a minority of East Africans (8/48) and West Africans (6/48). The majority of respondents from both these migrant population groups (40/48 for East Africans and 40/46 for West Africans) noted that they did not have a valid permit at the time of data collection. In contrast, the majority of employers reported that their migrant employees had valid work permits (35/45), with a sizable minority stating that they did not (19/45), or that they did not know (6/45).

Figure 14: Number of interviewed migrants reporting holding a work permit, by gender⁸⁸



Grievance or Complaints mechanisms

Complaint mechanisms are essential for identifying malpractice in the workplace. They allow workers to air grievances and report concerns, providing an added layer of protection from potential abuses. For this assessment, the majority of migrant respondents reported that they did not have access to complaints mechanisms through their workplace (78/138), however, a considerable minority (49/138) reported that they did. Notably, having access to a complaint mechanism was more commonly reported in Sebha and Misrata than it was in Tripoli; it also appeared to be more widely reported by migrants from the MENA region (23/44) than migrants from West (15/46) or East Africa (11/48). Only a minority of those who reported having access to a complaint mechanism reported that they had used it (12/49).

Findings from the IIs with employers indicate a somewhat different situation and suggest that, while many employers feel their migrant staff have the ability to make complaints, many employees do not necessarily think that the mechanisms are in place for them to do so, with some employers reporting believing that (some of) their migrant staff had access to a complaint mechanism (30/45), while 30 out of 45 reported the opposite (one respondent was not aware whether or not their staff could access such mechanisms).

Workplace safety

Finally, migrant workers were asked whether they felt safe in their workplace. A relative minority of interviewed migrant workers reported feeling completely safe (43/138), while 66 migrant workers reported feeling somewhat safe (66/138), which was particularly commonly reported by migrant workers in Misrata (33/45) and Sebha (24/48). Only five migrant workers, all located in Tripoli, reported that they felt somewhat unsafe in their workplace, and one respondent reported feeling unsafe. Interestingly, all five respondents who reported feeling somewhat safe did not hold a work permit, highlighting the importance of regularising labour migration in safeguarding migrants' rights and reducing their work vulnerability.

⁸⁸ Four migrants chose not to respond to this question.

Interviewed migrants who reported feeling somewhat or completely unsafe were asked to elaborate on their answers to explain why. The reported reasons included a lack of documentation making it difficult for them to travel, a lack of protection, general insecurity in Libya, and fear of arrest. Two migrant worker respondents did not want to expand on their answers.

Considering the sensitivity of the topic, this assessment did not delve into specificities of the protection incidents and concerns of migrants at the workplace. Further research on the topic could be of value to support migration and labour rights' actors' protection response.

Chapter 3: Impact of COVID-19

Libya reported its first case of COVID-19 in March 2020. The policies and restrictions aimed at limiting the spread of the virus have had a well-documented impact on the living standards of already vulnerable groups,⁸⁹ especially those who rely on seasonal, daily, or temporary work. The findings discussed in this chapter are primarily based on interviews with migrant workers who were in Libya prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (73/138) and employers who are business owners/managers whose businesses had been operating since before the spread of the pandemic (33/45). When relevant, findings from the KIIs with intermediaries were used to triangulate and complement the findings from the IIs.

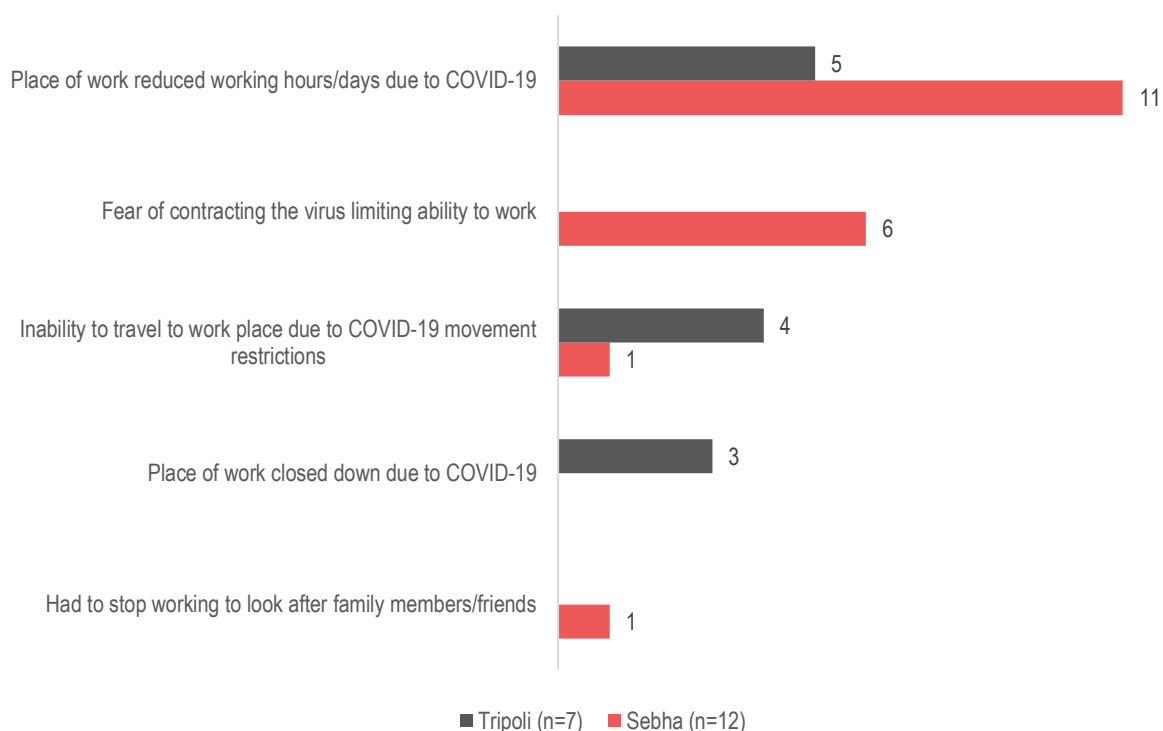
Impact of COVID-19 on livelihoods and income

Out of those migrant workers who reported that they were in Libya prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (73/138), which is the subset used for this chapter, only a minority reported that the COVID-19 situation had had an impact on their workplace or their ability to work (19/73). Interestingly, no migrant worker from Misrata reported that COVID-19 had impacted their work. Alongside this, migrants from the MENA region (9/23) slightly more commonly reported that the pandemic had had an impact on their work than migrants from East (5/21) and West Africa (5/29), which might be partially due to the fact that interviewed migrants from sub-Saharan Africa were also more commonly engaged in unstable, often daily forms of employment than their counterparts from the MENA region. Those interviewed who reported COVID-19 had impacted their work elaborated to say that the impact included reduced working hours (16/19), fears of contracting the virus limiting their ability to work (6/19), travel restrictions (5/19), and workplace closures (3/19).⁹⁰ Notably, all interviewed migrants who reported that COVID-19 negatively impacted their access to employment stated that work represented their main (17/19) or one of their main (2/19) sources of income.

⁸⁹ REACH, [Libya : Protection Monitoring During COVID-19, Round Two, 30 April-5 May 2020](#), May 2020.

⁹⁰ Respondents could select more than one option.

Figure 15: Most commonly reported effects of COVID-19 and related restrictions on access to employment, by number of interviewed migrants per location⁹¹



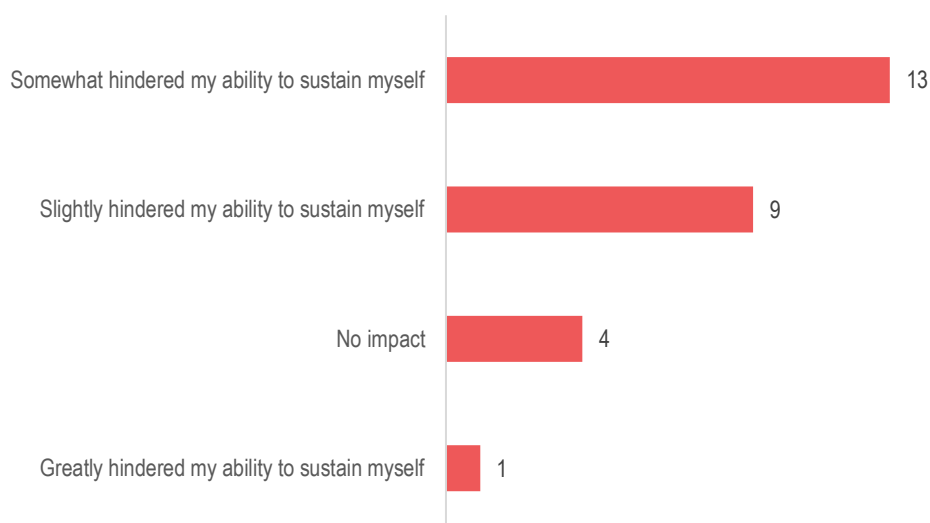
Interviewed employers who were business owners/managers (33/45) were asked about the impact of COVID-19 on their businesses. As with migrant workers, the majority of interviewed business owners/managers reported that the pandemic had no impact on their business operations (21/33). For those who did report an impact (12/33), the most commonly mentioned was – as with migrant worker respondents – a reduction in working hours (9/12). Other answers selected were reduced operations or production (7/12), reduced staff (3/12), reduced profitability (3/12), and the business having to temporarily close down (3/12).⁹² One business owner reported that there had been a significant demand reduction.

Migrant worker respondents were also asked whether the number of migrants at their workplace had reduced since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the majority (45/73) reported perceiving that the number had not changed, a considerable group (19/73) did report perceiving reduced numbers. Notably, almost all of these respondents (16/19) were from Sebha, indicating that the pandemic might have had a greater impact on migrant employment in Sebha compared to the other two assessed locations. Coupled with the reduction of migrant workers, migrants interviewed were also questioned on whether the pandemic has led to a reduction in their wages. The majority (45/73) reported not having experienced a wage reduction due to COVID-19. However, a notable minority (27/73) reported perceiving that wages were indeed reduced in the light of the pandemic; including almost half of respondents (15/32) from the city of Sebha. This answer was also more commonly given by interviewed migrant workers from the MENA region (14/23) when compared to migrants from either East (5/21) or West (8/29) Africa who had been in Libya before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁹¹ 12 interviewed migrants from Sebha and 7 from Tripoli reported reduced access to work due to COVID-19 and the consequent restrictions.

⁹² More than one answer could be selected.

Figure 16: Reported impact of reduced income due to COVID-19 on the ability to sustain oneself, by number of interviewed migrants



All employer respondents were asked what impact the COVID-19 pandemic and consequent restrictions had on the migrants they were employing. The majority (34/45) reported believing that COVID-19 had no impact on their migrant employees. Those who did reportedly believe that migrant employees had been impacted (9/45), reported that the impact included a reduction in wages for some migrant workers (8/9), some migrant workers being laid off (6/9), migrant workers being unable to travel due to restrictions (3/9) and, finally, migrant workers resigning or stopping working due to the pandemic (2/9). The employers who reported having to lay off migrant employees during the pandemic were located in Tripoli (3/6) and Sebha (3/6).

Findings from intermediary KIs reflected those from the conducted IIs. More than half of the intermediary KIs reported noticing that COVID-19 had led to reduced access of migrants to the labour market. These KIs most commonly contributed this to the closure of businesses and public institutions (5/8), reduced wages (3/8), and the reduced availability of job opportunities (7/8), which was particularly reported in Sebha (3/5) and Tripoli (4/5). Conversely, most KIs in Misrata reported believing that COVID-19 did not have any impact on migrants' access to the labour market (4/5). Three intermediary KIs added that daily workers were affected more than others. When it comes to gender, one female and one male KIs explained that, since female migrants tend to be employed in permanent jobs and/or in sectors that were not as affected by the COVID-19 restrictions as others, such as domestic work, women were generally less impacted than men. Considering the often "invisible" aspect of female domestic workers, undermining the ability to accurately assess the impact of COVID-19 on this group, further focused investigations should be carried out to explore the experiences of female domestic workers and the impact of COVID-19 on them. Two employment agency KIs in Tripoli and Misrata reported that the closure of borders as a result of the pandemic hampered their ability to bring foreign workers to the country (2/9). These two KIs were part of the nine intermediary KIs who reported that COVID-19 and the consequent restrictions reduced their ability to act as intermediaries.

Intermediary KIs were asked about the impact of COVID-19 on the availability of the migrant workforce in the Mantikas where they operate. Two-thirds of the intermediary KIs (from Sebha and Tripoli) noticed that there was a decrease in the available migrant workforce as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19. This was reportedly due to the decrease in available

job opportunities (5/10), fears of contracting the virus (3/10) and increased stigma against migrants (1/10). Two KIs in Tripoli added that several migrant workers moved to other cities, potentially where restrictions are looser. Two other KIs explained that this decrease was mostly felt in 2020, and three KIs reported perceiving that there was actually an increase in the number of migrant workers in 2021 compared to previous years. The improvement of the labour and economic situation at the local and national levels was also highlighted by MoLR and local council KIs. A KI from the MoLR stated that, due to the loosening of the COVID-related restrictions and the country adjusting to the situation and moving towards political stability, available job opportunities increased drastically.

The COVID-19 pandemic and remittance flows

The onset of COVID-19 led to concerns about a severe reduction in remittance flows – which can provide critical support to poor families across the world; however, recent work by the World Bank found that, globally, remittance flows remained strong throughout 2020, defying expectations.⁹³ In fact, according to a UN article (May 2021), migrants commonly prioritised their families, spending less and drawing on their savings to send money to keep remittances home flowing.⁹⁴ In contrast, results from a recent IOM study⁹⁵ on the impact of the conflict and pandemic on migrants' remittances in Libya show that COVID-19 not only resulted in a reduction in the number of migrants sending remittances home, but also a significant decrease in the amounts remitted for those who still managed to send remittances following the onset of the pandemic.

For this assessment, a considerable minority (31/73) of migrant workers interviewed reported that, prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, they had been sending remittances home to their families. A majority of those respondents also reported that those remittances had been their family's main source of income (20/31). This was most widely reported by West African migrant workers (12/20).

Findings from the individual interviews with migrant workers corroborated those from the IOM study.⁹⁶ In fact, a considerable share of interviewed migrants who reported having sent remittances prior to the pandemic reported that the outbreak had decreased their ability to send remittances (12/31).⁹⁷ Interestingly, this was most widely reported by migrant workers residing in Sebha (9/12). When asked how their ability to send remittances had decreased, the majority said they were sending less money (10/12), including almost all respondents from this subset in Sebha. The reduced ability to send remittances is reportedly due to increased fees for money transfers (8/12), a reduction in income (6/12), and a reduction in mobility (3/12).

⁹³ The World Bank, [Defying Predictions, Remittance Flows Remain Strong During COVID-19 Crisis](#), May 2021.

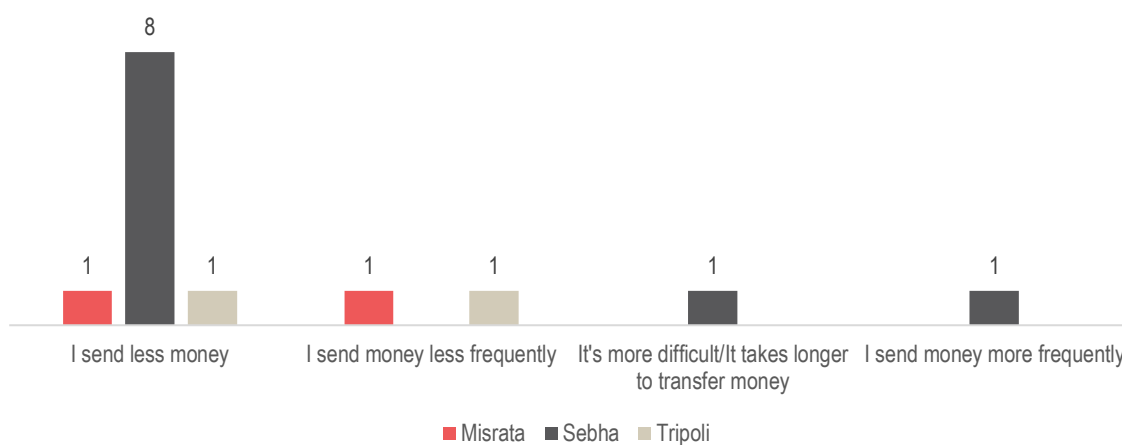
⁹⁴ UN News, ['Families came first' for remittances in year of pandemic](#), says Guterres, June 2021.

⁹⁵ IOM DTM, [Labour migration to Libya, remittances amidst conflict and pandemic](#), March 2021.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ None of those interviewed migrants reported that they had completely stopped sending remittances home as a result of the pandemic.

Figure 17: Reported impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the ability to send remittances, by the number of interviewed migrant workers who reported having sent remittances home prior to the pandemic, per Mantika



Impact of COVID-19 on mobility intentions

The COVID-19 pandemic, related mobility restrictions and their economic impact, have disrupted migrants' intentions across the region.⁹⁸ For this assessment, migrant worker respondents who reported that they had been in Libya since before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (73/138) were asked about their mobility intentions prior to the pandemic. The two most common responses were: staying in Libya for some time but eventually continuing to another destination (21/73) and returning to one's home country (21/73). Other common answers were staying in Libya indefinitely (17/73) and continuing to a different destination as soon as the opportunity would arise (11/73).

Following this, migrant worker respondents were asked if and how their intentions had changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, to which a large majority (62/73) responded that the pandemic had not impacted their intentions, while 11 respondents reported that it had altered their intentions. A change in intentions was reportedly due to various reasons, including travel restrictions, a worsening security situation, a reduction in funds, as well as the perception of there being relatively better opportunities in Europe in the wake of the pandemic. Two Sebha-based sub-Saharan African migrant worker respondents who were planning to continue their journey to another destination as soon as possible decided to remain in Libya instead. They explained that this is due to the inability to save up enough money to finance the journey, coupled with the increased control over border crossings.

⁹⁸ MMC, [Impact of COVID-19 on refugees and migrants, COVID-19 Global Update #3](#), May 2020.

► Conclusion

A decade of conflict and instability has not prevented Libya from being a major country of transit and destination for migrants from across Africa and the MENA region. While previous studies have examined the labour market for migrants in Libya, there has only been a limited understanding of how migrants access work, what role intermediaries play, and how this varies among Libya's highly diverse migrant population. This assessment has sought to address this information gap, while also providing additional findings on what impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on migrants' access to labour in Libya.

Labour market intermediaries used by most interviewed migrants

From the findings, it is clear that intermediaries play an integral role for migrants finding work in the country. Not only do these actors facilitate employment, but they also offer a range of additional services, such as housing or transportation. The nature of these relationships appears to be largely informal arrangements without written contracts. Moreover, only a minority of migrant workers, particularly from sub-Saharan Africa reported that they paid the individual to find work for them, further highlighting the casual nature of intermediaries' role. Findings suggest that intermediation is largely unregulated, potentially exposing migrant workers to rights violations. Although such violations were only reported by a minority of interviewed migrant workers, the existence of such cases highlights the potential risk of informal labour intermediation.

Precarious working conditions

Findings brought forward in the second chapter, which examined the work characteristics and conditions of migrant workers in Libya, further reflected a lack of basic protections for migrant workers. Many migrants reported working 6 or more days per week for 10 hours or more. Alongside this, most interviewed migrant workers reported only having oral contracts with their employer, not having access to any form of social insurance, and not having a work permit. Although it should be noted that there were strong regional variations with these findings, with migrants interviewed from MENA countries more commonly reporting having contracts and other types of documentation than interviewed migrants from West or East Africa. Nevertheless, the findings from this chapter indicate that migrant labour – especially for migrants from East and West Africa – is often highly informal and unregulated in the country.

Migrant workers' overall resilience to the economic impact of COVID-19

Another key aim of this study was to decipher what impact policies and restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic have had on migrants' access to labour and their work conditions. Only a minority of migrant workers and employers reported that the pandemic had a negative impact on their work, including workplace closures, pay reductions, and job losses. Likewise, only a minority of those migrant worker respondents reported having sent remittances prior to the onset of the crisis, said that the outbreak had reduced their ability to do so. Alongside this, the majority of migrants reported that the COVID-19 situation had not altered their migratory intentions. Collectively these findings suggest that, while the crisis certainly did have an impact on livelihoods and mobility for a minority of interviewed

migrants, many have been able to continue as before, largely unhindered. As the COVID-19 virus continues to spread and affect all populations in Libya, we are not yet able to fully estimate the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations, and its effects might change over time.

Areas for further investigation

Findings from this assessment shed light on the labour dynamics and conditions of adult migrant workers. Previous assessments found that migrant children also engage in economic activities in Libya,⁹⁹ often finding themselves in exploitative and dangerous working conditions.¹⁰⁰ Children on the move are considered among the most vulnerable groups in Libya and are subject to acute risks of human trafficking, forced labour, and physical and sexual abuse.¹⁰¹ Given the lack of information regarding migrant children labour in Libya, it would be relevant to investigate the conditions and characteristics of employment of migrant children in the country, with a focus on potential protection risks and rights violations that occur in the workplace.

The majority of interviewed migrants who reported being subject to abuse at the hand of intermediaries were female domestic workers. Some of them came to Libya through job placement agencies located in their countries of origin. While female domestic workers are relatively underrepresented in this study, these findings mirror a much larger regional trend of abuse experienced by female house workers. Additionally, previous studies¹⁰² highlighted the precarious, often, employment conditions of female migrant workers in Libya. Further research efforts could focus on the particular journeys, challenges and protection concerns of female migrant domestic workers.

This assessment brought forward some of the protection concerns faced by migrant workers in Libya. However, there is a need for further research focusing on protection incidents faced by migrants inside the workplace and the most effective ways to alleviate abuses faced by migrant workers in Libya, as well as how to strengthen referral systems, with a goal of fostering fairer recruitment practices and preventing human rights violations.

⁹⁹ United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), [A Deadly Journey for Children: The Central Mediterranean Migration Route](#), February 2017.

¹⁰⁰ IMPACT Initiatives, Solitary journeys of unaccompanied and separated children in Libya (not published), December 2018.

¹⁰¹ Humanitarian response, [Libya Child Protection Working Group](#).

¹⁰² Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) 4Mi, [Invisible Labour: Women's labour migration to Libya](#), December 2017.