Families of Missing Migrants:

Their Search for Answers and the Impacts of Loss

Lessons Across Four Countries

IOM
UN MIGRATION

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the report do not imply expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

Funding for this report has been provided by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the donor.

Publisher: International Organization for Migration
17 route des Morillons
1211 Geneva 19
P.O. Box 17
Switzerland
Tel.: +41.22.717 91 11
Fax: +41.22.798 61 50
Email: hq@iom.int
Internet: www.iom.int

Authors: Gabriella Sanchez, Marta Sánchez Dionis and Kate Dearden
Research coordination: Gabriella Sanchez
Project coordination: Kate Dearden and Marta Sánchez Dionis
Editors: Gabriella Sanchez, Kate Dearden, Marta Sánchez Dionis, Frank Laczko
Language editing: Laarni Alfaro
Art direction and data visualization: Roberta Aita
Illustrations: Salam Shokor with support from Serop Khachadourian and Hadir Dimassi from the (unbranded collective)
Layout: Mae Angeline Delgado

Cover photo: *Split.* "My sons were my hope. One died during an earlier migration [journey]. The second went to search for him and ... [h]e went missing as well. I am dying twice: [because] I lost them and [because] I lost hope." © IOM 2021/Salam SHOKOR

Required citation: Sanchez, G., M. Sánchez Dionis and K. Dearden, 2021. *Families of Missing Migrants: Their Search for Answers and the Impacts of Loss – Lessons Across Four Countries*. International Organization for Migration (IOM). Geneva.

ISBN 978-92-9268-070-1 (PDF)
ISBN 978-92-9268-071-8 (print)

© IOM 2021

Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 IGO License (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 IGO).*

For further specifications please see the Copyright and Terms of Use.

This publication should not be used, published or redistributed for purposes primarily intended for or directed towards commercial advantage or monetary compensation, with the exception of educational purposes, e.g. to be included in textbooks.

Permissions: Requests for commercial use or further rights and licensing should be submitted to publications@iom.int.

* https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/igo/legalcode

PUB2021/041/EL

Families of Missing Migrants:

Their Search for Answers and the Impacts of Loss

Lessons Across Four Countries

GMDAC
IOM Global Migration Data Analysis Centre

IOM
UN MIGRATION

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA
State Secretariat STS-FDFA
Peace and Human Rights

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication is the result of a collaborative effort involving several IOM offices and a team of independent researchers participating in the project "Assessment of the needs of families searching for relatives lost in the Central and Western Mediterranean", funded by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

The authors and editors would like to thank all the families who courageously shared their stories and all of the other research participants, who shared their time, knowledge and insights. We would like to extend special thanks to the members of our research team in the four countries: Carlos Arce (legal/policy analysis in Spain), Samuel Okyere (research with families in the United Kingdom), Sia Kondeh (legal/policy analysis in the United Kingdom), Myriam Cherti (editor, United Kingdom country report), Tekalign Ayalew Mengiste (research with families and policy/legal overview in Ethiopia), and Ringisai Chikohomero and Liesl Louw-Vaudran at the Institute for Security Studies (research in Zimbabwe). We are deeply grateful to Nadia Azougagh Bousnina, whose work in Spain inspired this research. We would also like to thank our IOM colleagues in Ethiopia, Spain, the United Kingdom and Zimbabwe for the close collaboration throughout the entire project: Mengistu Tadesse at IOM Ethiopia; Ana Dodevska, María Jesús Herrera and Oussama El Baroudi at IOM Spain; Abir Soleiman at IOM United Kingdom; Nhamo Muleya at IOM Zimbabwe; and Emmanuel Quarshie at the IOM Regional Office for Southern Africa.

We would like to sincerely thank all the reviewers for their constructive feedback on the draft chapters, and the project's advisory board members for their guidance and feedback on the report. We are also grateful to the following IOM colleagues: Julia Black, Andrea García Borja and Jorge Galindo (IOM GMDAC); IOM's Media and Communications Division, particularly Natalie Oren, Pau Saiz Soler and Hiyas Bagabaldo for their work producing all the audiovisual communication materials for this project, as well as Safa Msehli and Paul Dillon for their unwavering support; the entire IOM Publications team, led by Valerie Hagger, particularly Laarni Alfaro for the editing, Mae Angeline Delgado for the layout and Frances Solinap for the administrative support; Tristan O'Shea and Paulina Kluczynska (IOM GMDAC) as well as Michael McCormack, Dragos Prodan, Hania Mir, Lisa Rauscher and Marina Lehmann (IOM Germany) for their precious administrative support. We particularly wish to thank Roberta Aita for the art direction of this report, and Salam Shokor for illustrating the findings of the research in such a sensitive and beautiful way.

We are especially grateful to the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs for enabling us to carry out this research project.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had disproportionately negative effects on people already in vulnerable situations, including those with missing migrant relatives. It has exacerbated the struggles that the families discuss in this report.

This report is dedicated to the families of all people who have gone missing or died on migration journeys while seeking safety, dignity and better opportunities.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements iii

Figure and text box vi

Abbreviations vii

Assessment of the needs of families searching for relatives lost in the Central and Western Mediterranean ix

Executive summary xi

Chapter 1 – Introduction and context 1

1. Introduction 1
2. Methodology 4

Chapter 2 – Findings 6

1. Contextualizing the decision to migrate 7
2. The search process and its sources 9
   - 2.1. Searching within networks of friends, family members and the diaspora 11
   - 2.2. Smugglers, brokers and other facilitators of migrants' journeys 12
   - 2.3. The role of community members, civil society and other community-based organizations 12
   - 2.4. Social and mass media 14
   - 2.5. Humanitarian/rescue organizations 15
   - 2.6. State and State-affiliated agencies 17
   - 2.7. Other sources or search mechanisms 17
3. Challenges related to the search for a missing migrant 20
   - 3.1. From disinterest to intimidation, abuse and disrespect: Interactions with State authorities 21
   - 3.2. Lack of legal and policy frameworks applicable to cases of missing migrants 23
   - 3.3. The lack of immigration status and its intertwining with race and ethnicity 25
   - 3.4. Criminalizing families and civil society advocates 28
   - 3.5. Crime: Scams and extortion 29
4. Impacts of disappearances on families left behind 30
   - 4.1. Missing migrants and gender dynamics 31
   - 4.2. Shame and stigma 35
   - 4.3. Legal impacts and socioeconomic precarity 36
   - 4.4. Emotional and psychological challenges 38

Chapter 3 – Conclusion 40

Bibliography 45

FIGURE AND TEXT BOX

Figure 1. Assessment of the needs of families searching for missing migrant relatives xiii

Text box 1. The impact of COVID-19 on the search for missing migrants 19

ABBREVIATIONS

APDHA	Andalusian Association for Human Rights (Spanish: Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de Andalucía)
FRA	European Union Fundamental Rights Agency
GMDAC	Global Migration Data Analysis Centre
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	non-governmental organizations

ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES SEARCHING FOR RELATIVES LOST IN THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

76
FAMILIES

4
COUNTRIES

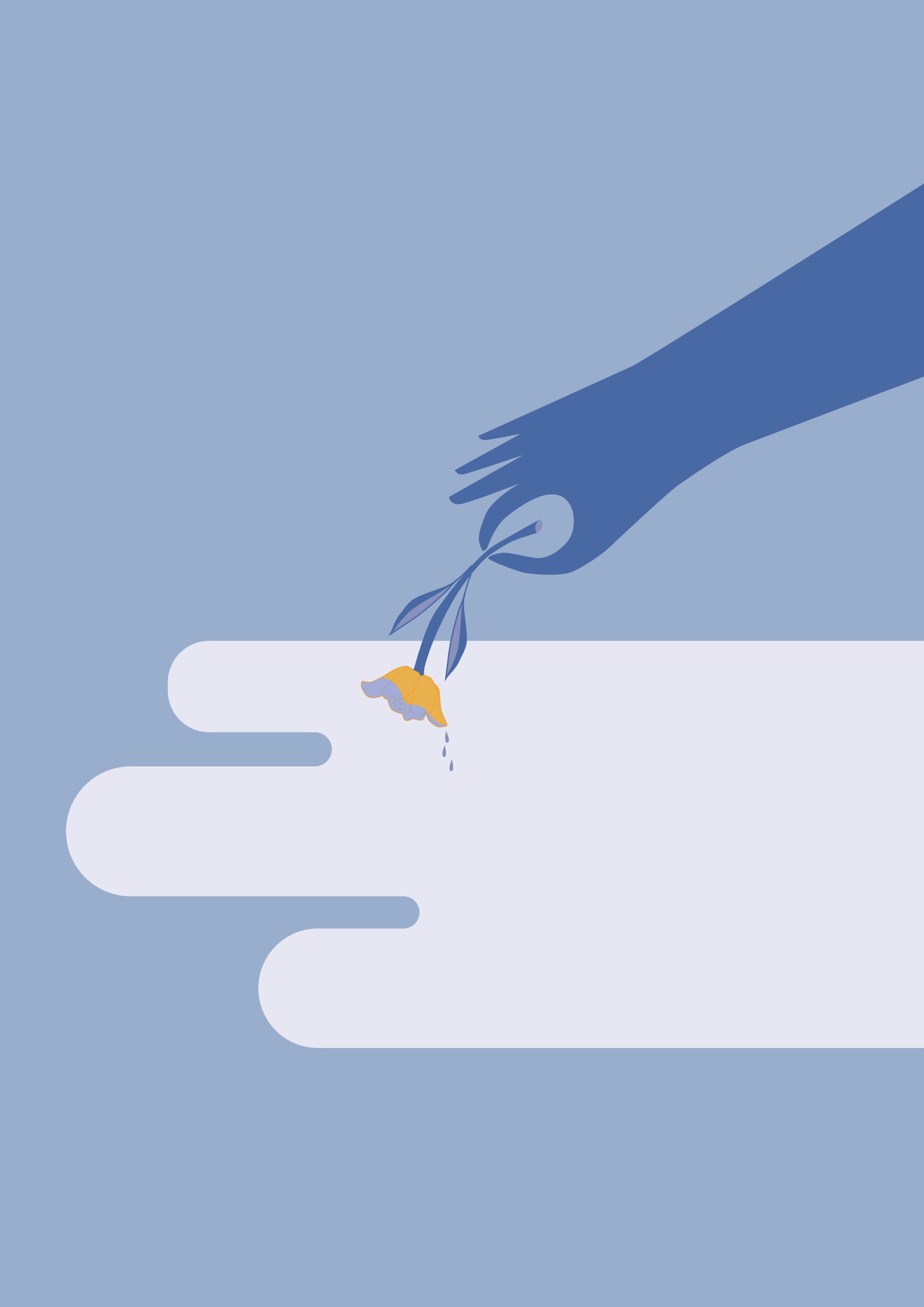
More than
30
STAKEHOLDERS

Between April 2019 and March 2021, IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC), through its Missing Migrants Project, carried out a research project that aimed to document the experiences of families searching for missing relatives lost in the context of migration journeys in the Central and Western Mediterranean. Since 2014, IOM's Missing Migrants Project has recorded more than 40,000 deaths and disappearances during migration around the world. The death or disappearance of each person included in IOM's records has reverberating effects on the family and community surrounding them. With support from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, IOM GMDAC conducted research in Ethiopia, Spain, the United Kingdom and Zimbabwe to better understand the experiences and the challenges that families face while searching for loved ones lost during migration. The project aimed to capture such situations in places of migrant origin, transit and destination.

The project was a highly collaborative effort involving several IOM offices and a team of independent academics and researchers who are migrants themselves and/or who work closely with migrant communities in the countries that participated in the study. An advisory board formed by key international and civil society organizations and academics working with families of missing migrants around the world provided input at different stages of the project.

The research team spent time with 76 families in their communities across four countries, having in-depth conversations with them. The team prioritized listening to what is important to the families, allowing them to drive the knowledge that was created with the project. Thus, the voices of the research participants, who are all missing family members in the context of migration to another country, are at the centre of the project's findings and reports. The experiences of families were complemented with interviews with more than 30 stakeholders to assess the institutional, legal and policy framework applicable to cases of missing migrants in the contexts studied.

Based on the research findings and in consultation with the project's advisory board, a series of policy implications and recommendations were developed to drive action to support families of missing migrants in searching for their relatives and dealing with the impacts of their loss. They are aimed at different actors – in government, international organizations, and community and migrant support organizations – and can be found in the last chapter of each of the reports.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report synthesizes the main findings from a research project conducted between April 2019 and March 2021 by IOM's Missing Migrants Project about the challenges and experiences of families of missing migrants in Ethiopia, the United Kingdom, Spain and Zimbabwe. The research builds on the work of IOM's Missing Migrants Project, based at IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre, which has documented over 42,000 deaths and disappearances on migratory routes worldwide since 2014. Due to continued data collection challenges, these deaths represent a minimum number of missing migrants. For this research, a "missing migrant" refers to a person whose fate after leaving to migrate to another country is unknown by their family.

Families of missing migrants feature in Objective 8 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which, along with saving lives and preventing migrant deaths and injuries, commits States to "identify those who have died or gone missing, and to facilitate communication with affected families". However, so far relatively little attention has been paid in policy and public discourse to the families of people who went missing or died on migration journeys. Applicable obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law, calling on States to investigate all incidents of death or disappearance and to notify families of the fate of their loved ones, have been left unfulfilled.

The research for this project, conducted in Ethiopia, the United Kingdom, Spain and Zimbabwe by a team of experts and coordinated by IOM, aimed to document families' experiences of searching for their loved ones, how they obtain information and develop their own options for action to find their missing family members. A key goal of the project was to bring the voices of families left behind to the fore. The qualitative research methods used allowed families to identify what was significant to them in their experiences, including what changes would improve their situations. Across four countries, 76 families with missing relatives and over 30 stakeholders (including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), activists, government authorities, international organizations and academics) were interviewed. The aim was not to be representative of the experiences of all families of missing migrants, but to highlight different contexts in which people find themselves to be part of the "family of a missing migrant" and to assess the policy, legal and institutional responses to cases of missing migrants in the four countries of research.

The project also builds on previous research which has illustrated the multidimensional and far-reaching impacts of having a loved one go missing. Research in the contexts of conflict, disaster and enforced disappearances has demonstrated the concrete legal, financial and psychological effects that the death or disappearance of a loved one can have on individuals, families and communities. This research contributes to the relatively little body of knowledge specifically covering the experiences of the families of missing loved ones in the context of migration, and how they search for information from their home countries, while being in transit, or after they have already settled in another country themselves.

The findings of the report are structured around three main lines of enquiry. The first section describes how families search for their relatives. The research demonstrated that families are not passive victims: While they have to live every day without knowing the fate of their children, siblings, partners, parents or friends, they search for information in any way they can. However, with virtually no structural support from government authorities and other actors, they have few options to effectively conduct a search. The second section describes the barriers they face in their search for answers, including when it comes to approaching State authorities about their cases. The final section describes the more general impacts of loss, and demonstrates not only similarities across the research contexts, but also how they differ within and between such contexts.

Overall, six significant themes emerged from the research:

1. The search experiences of families of missing migrants are shaped by different intersecting factors, including gender, age, class, race and migration status. This report identifies how inequalities shaped by these factors play out in the context of search processes through interactions with authorities, community members and within families themselves.

2. Traditional law enforcement approaches and legal and administrative procedures for searching for missing persons do not meet the needs of missing migrants' families, as the existing framework is not adapted to address the particular dynamics of deaths and disappearances during migration. As a result, authorities do not effectively respond to these cases, which have a transnational component, and families face multiple structural constraints while trying to navigate the existing system.

3. Faced with the lack of responses by the State, the vast majority of families receive meaningful support in their search only from informal networks, including other migrants, activists, and grass-roots and community-based associations.

4. The focus on combating smuggling and irregular migration is resulting in the criminalization of humanitarian support provided by civil society and of families' search efforts. The pressure to control irregular migration has impacted searches for missing migrants, as they are construed by the authorities not as missing-person cases, but as investigations into migrant smuggling operations.

5. While the help provided by friends and communities is a source of great emotional, financial and moral support, it has its limitations, particularly when factors such as gender and community expectations come into play.

6. Along with States, international agencies working on development and humanitarian issues have not effectively begun to tackle the issue of missing migrants.

Complementing this paper are four country reports, based on the research in Ethiopia, the United Kingdom, Spain and Zimbabwe. Drawing from the testimonies of families and stakeholders, each of these country reports makes recommendations to develop specific and targeted responses to the needs of the families of missing migrants, which will allow them to access and exercise their right to information and justice.

Figure 1. Assessment of the needs of families searching for missing migrant relatives

ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES SEARCHING FOR MISSING MIGRANT RELATIVES: PROJECT OVERVIEW

OBJECTIVE 8
of the Global Compact for Migration commits States to "identify those who have died or gone missing, and to facilitate communication with affected families".

4 COUNTRIES
The research was carried out in the United Kingdom, Ethiopia, Spain and Zimbabwe.

76 FAMILIES
with missing relatives.

30+ STAKEHOLDERS
including NGOs, activists, government authorities, international organizations and academics.

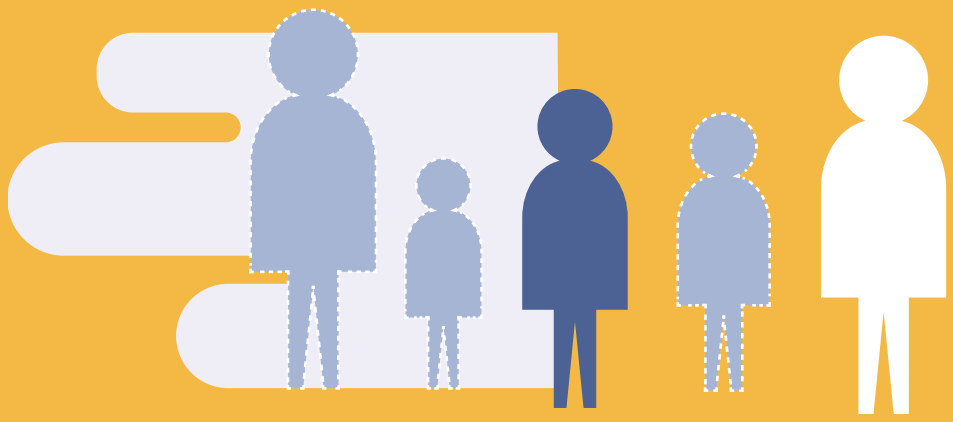
MAIN FINDINGS

- The search experiences of families are shaped by different intersecting factors, including gender, age, class, race and migration status.
- Traditional law enforcement approaches and legal and administrative procedures for searching for missing persons do not meet the needs of missing migrants' families.
- The vast majority of families receive meaningful support in their search only from informal networks, including other migrants, activists, and grass-roots and community-based associations.

Note: The maps are for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction and context



1. Introduction

Around the world, there are tens of thousands of families living in limbo, unaware of the fate of their loved ones who left seeking safety and better opportunities in another country. They do not know why their partners, children, siblings, parents or other loved ones lost touch or even whether they are dead or alive. Some of these missing loved ones may be among the more than 42,000 lives lost on migration journeys since 2014, as documented by IOM's Missing Migrants Project, or among the thousands more recorded by NGOs and journalists in the last three decades.[1] Still, these figures fail to capture the real magnitude of migrant deaths and disappearances both en route and in destination countries, which generally are the result of the risks that people must take to travel or to live abroad without legal or certain migration status. Behind these missing migrants are families and communities looking for answers and coping with their absence.

Although public policy attention on the impacts faced by families of missing migrants has been rather limited, there are several important international agreements that call for action towards ending migrant deaths and disappearances and to support the families of the missing. Significantly, Sustainable Development Goal 10.7 calls on States to facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. Objective 8 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration urges States to save lives and to establish coordinated international efforts on missing migrants.[2] Alongside these commitments, States are also subject to international human rights obligations. As human beings, regardless of their migration status, migrants and their families are entitled to the rights enshrined in international human rights law. This includes the obligation to uphold the right to life, which includes the right for all people to be treated with dignity after death and mandates all States to effectively investigate deaths when their cause is uncertain, to identify the deceased, and to provide information to their families. The right to life and all other human rights obligations must be upheld in a nondiscriminatory manner, irrespective of the victim's race, ethnicity, national origin, gender or other status.

[1] See for example the records compiled by UNITED for Intercultural Action, available at www.unitedagainstracism.org/campaigns/refugee-campaign/working-with-the-list-of-deaths/.

[2] Objective 8 of the Global Compact for Migration specifically calls on States to "cooperate internationally to save lives and prevent migrant deaths and injuries through individual or joint search and rescue operations, standardized collection and exchange of relevant information, assuming collection responsibility to preserve the lives of all migrants, in accordance with international law". They must "further commit to identify those who have died or gone missing, and to facilitate communication with affected families" (UNGA, 2018).

Negative Family Portrait. Around the world, there are tens of thousands of families living in limbo, unaware of the fate of their loved ones who left seeking safety and better opportunities in another country. They do not know why their partners, children, siblings, parents or other loved ones lost touch or even whether they are dead or alive. © IOM 2021/Salam SHOKOR

Research and advocacy on behalf of missing migrants and their families is a growing area in the field of migration. Over the years, multiple reports and academic articles have identified the challenges and debates emerging from migrant disappearances (e.g. Heller and Pécoud, 2019; IOM, 2017). Many of these have traced migrant deaths and disappearances to criminal activity, as well as to migration governance and control (Kobelinsky, 2019; Last et al., 2017; APDHA, 2021). There have also been important contributions documenting the financial and psychosocial implications derived from the loss or disappearance of a loved one during migration. Some studies have sought to identify families' specific needs. For example, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has carried out needs assessments among families of missing migrants in several countries and regions (including Senegal and Central America in 2013 and 2015, respectively, and Zimbabwe in 2020),[3] and it has often organized meetings where families of the missing have joined. The Mediterranean Missing Project in 2016 provided evidence-based recommendations based on interviews with migrant families from the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and Tunisia. Some work has also delved into how the friends and family members of missing migrants cope emotionally with loss (Kobelinsky, 2017 and 2019).

[3] See: ICRC, 2013 and 2015. The needs assessment carried out by ICRC with families of missing migrants in Harare, Bulawayo, Gwanda and Masvingo (Zimbabwe) in 2020 will be published as a report in 2021.

Combined, these and other studies have provided an important framework to understand the experiences of families of missing migrants, helping identify specific structural needs and institutional gaps. Yet to this day, few studies have specifically allowed families to articulate what they consider as barriers to searching for their missing loved ones and priorities for coping with their absence. While some research has documented challenges in countries of origin, there is scant knowledge about how friends and families, as migrants themselves, search for their missing loved ones in transit and in countries of destination, amid the national and/or local legislation in these places. Most importantly, while previous work with families whose relatives have disappeared has provided an understanding of the emotional and psychological toll of the disappearances on their lives, efforts to frame how inequalities shaped by race, class, age and gender play out in the context of search processes through interactions with authorities, community members and within families themselves have been limited. Furthermore, little effort has been made to identify the ways in which families of missing migrants challenge institutional barriers and the lack of official mechanisms to support the search for the missing.

Seeking to address these gaps, the Missing Migrants Project based at IOM GMDAC conducted a 24-month research project (April 2019–March 2021) with families of missing migrants in Ethiopia, the United Kingdom, Spain and Zimbabwe. Rather than relying on a single predesigned survey or questionnaire as the data collection tool, researchers – following coordination meetings with family members, activists and key informants in each of the countries – built a series of guiding questions. This more flexible strategy allowed researchers to privilege the knowledge and insight of the families, who identified during the conversations what was important to them – both the barriers that they had found in the search process and the ways in which they had countered them. To further understand the contexts shaping the experiences of families, the team also examined the legal, policy and programmatic structures concerning missing migrants in Spain, the United Kingdom and Ethiopia.[4] This information, further supplemented through desk research and interviews with key informants, provides an overview of policy and legislative mechanisms that are or could be potentially available to families of missing migrants.[5] Combined with the insights gained from the families, the research offers specific details into the structural, institutional, cultural, political and gender dimensions that shape the experiences of families in Ethiopia, Spain, the United Kingdom and Zimbabwe (Chikohomero et al., 2021; Mengiste, 2021; Okyere and Kondeh, 2021; Sánchez Dionis et al., 2021).

This report brings together the findings from all four countries, through which six significant themes emerge: (a) the way in which gender, class and race define the experiences of families of missing migrants, including decision-making and the search processes; (b) how traditional law enforcement approaches and legal and administrative procedures for searching for missing persons do not meet the needs of missing migrants' families; (c) the criminalization of humanitarian support provided by civil society and of families' search efforts – and its impacts; (d) the role of informal networks in the search process for missing migrants; (e) that while the help provided by friends and migrant communities is a source of great emotional, financial and moral support, it has limitations; and (f) along with States, international agencies working on development and humanitarian concerns have not effectively begun to tackle the issue of missing migrants.

Building on the project's findings in Ethiopia, the United Kingdom, Spain and Zimbabwe, as well as the research in other contexts with families of the missing, this report points to the continued and urgent need for specialized State-funded support that allows the families of missing migrants to safely report their cases and access information about their loved ones, while also addressing their need for social protection and economic assistance. Most importantly, it highlights the importance of creating permanent solutions that eliminate the structural barriers separating families from learning the fate of their loved ones, and address the pain caused by migrant deaths and disappearances worldwide.

[4] Such legal and policy analysis was not conducted in Zimbabwe due to limitations linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.

[5] This is found as a separate chapter in the country reports on the United Kingdom, Ethiopia and Spain. See: Mengiste, 2021; Okyere and Kondeh, 2021; Sánchez Dionis et al., 2021.

2. Methodology

The project involved the collection of qualitative data in multiple sites across four countries: Bristol, Nottingham and London in the United Kingdom; Hadiya and Addis Ababa in Ethiopia; Almería in Spain; and Chipinge and Chimanimani districts in Manicaland province in Zimbabwe. The countries were selected given their roles as important origin, transit and destination countries. They were also chosen because they encompass a vast range of migration dynamics and migrant populations.

The research did not aim to be representative of the experiences of all migrants, nor to reflect the understanding or perspectives of all families of missing migrants. Instead, from the onset, the research sought to reflect the complexity and different contexts of the experiences of people with missing migrant relatives. To document this in depth, the research team interviewed a diverse group of participants. The researchers met with families in their communities in the countries of origin and also with family members who were migrants themselves and had recently arrived in Europe; with friends and relatives who lived irregularly within Europe, and others who had obtained legal/certain migration status; with senior members of the diaspora as well as young migrants; and with women who had migrated on their own and those who were accompanied by their families. In total, the research team spent time with 76 families who have lost a relative in the context of their migration journey. While relying on specific research questions, the research team allowed families to drive the direction of the conversations/interviews and ultimately the content and analysis present in the reports. Thus, the knowledge of the families lies at the centre of the project's findings and recommendations. The insights provided by families were supplemented by interviews with more than 30 stakeholders who provided institutional, legal and policy know-how applicable to missing-migrant cases in all four research countries.

The project was supported by the work of a team of researchers who are nationals of the countries of research, members of the diaspora, and/or migrants themselves and who had long-term interactions and relationships of trust with local civil society, first responders and migrant communities.[6] The research team spent time with families not only to collect details on their experiences, but also to build a more holistic understanding of the dynamics and impacts of having a missing family member on their everyday lives.[7] All interactions were conducted in the languages of the participant families, including Arabic, Hadiyya, Amharic, Manjak, Zezuru, Manyika and Ndau.[8] Some of the families communicated in English, French and Spanish for the benefit of the research team. Lastly, the names used in the reports are pseudonyms to protect the privacy of the families.

One important limitation to the study was the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. While most fieldwork was completed before the pandemic, some interviews which had long been planned to take place in person had to be conducted remotely. In the United Kingdom and Zimbabwe, mobility restrictions meant that some interviews had to take place over the phone. A third round of fieldwork in Spain planned to meet with families in the cities of Ceuta and Melilla and the Canary Islands had to be cancelled. While the team made efforts to contact migrants over the phone or to conduct interviews via virtual meeting applications, it became clear that contact constituted an additional burden to family members severely impacted by COVID-19. Families shared with the research team via text messages or social media the impacts of jobsite closures on their ability to earn a living. A fire at one of the research sites – an informal settlement in Southern Spain – caused many friends and relatives of the families interviewed to lose their homes.

[6] The research team included: Frank Laczko (project leader and editor), Gabriella Sanchez (field research coordinator, editor, and research with families in Spain), Kate Dearden (project coordinator, editor, and research in Zimbabwe), Marta Sánchez Dionis (project coordination, editor, and research with families in Spain and Zimbabwe), Carlos Arce (legal/policy analysis in Spain), Samuel Okyere (research with families in the United Kingdom), Sia Kondeh (legal/policy analysis in the United Kingdom), Myriam Cherti (editor, United Kingdom country report), Tekalign Ayalew Mengiste (research with families and policy/legal overview in Ethiopia), Ringisai Chikohomero (fieldwork with families in Zimbabwe), and the families and advocates that, while not mentioned here for privacy, collected, shared, and analysed data and contributed to the focus and development of this project.

[7] The project generated large amounts of data. Research meetings with families were audio-recorded with their consent. Notes from these meetings and other fieldwork activities (visits to employment sites, rescue locations, events) were written into field memorandums for analysis. Photographs taken during fieldwork sessions and many belonging to the families themselves were also discussed during photo-elicitation research meetings, which generated additional data. Data were coded into thematic categories selected collectively and under the guidance of families.

[8] Translation of the families' testimonies into English were all done by the researchers conducting the interviews to ensure the intended meaning was retained.

Shortages or unavailability of employment opportunities, restrictions on public transportation, and lack of funds to purchase phone credit or Internet access all posed limitations to people's ability to participate in the study. These factors made clear that any research efforts during the pandemic could not only infringe on the safety and health of the participants, but in fact constitute an undue burden to families.[9]

[9] The case of the Canary Islands constitutes a notorious absence in the project's reports concerning Spain and this final report. In the summer of 2020, the Western Africa/Atlantic route regained visibility as thousands of migrants embarked on irregular journeys with the hope of reaching Europe. COVID-19-related restrictions led the research team to cancel fieldwork at this site. While the Spain country report does not contain data derived from interviews or fieldwork in the region, IOM's GMDAC supplemental report, published in March 2021, examines available data on the overseas route to the Canary Islands. The report is available at https://publications.iom.int/books/maritime-migration-europe-focus-overseas-route-canary-islands.

CHAPTER 2

Findings

1. Contextualizing the decision to migrate

The very process of the disappearance was an important topic to all families who participated in the research. It often allowed them to (re)construct what happened to their loved ones, and to contextualize the reasons behind the departure and migration journey in the first place. Many families emphasized that their missing relatives had made every effort to migrate regularly and that their intention was never that of embarking on irregular journeys that would pose risks to their safety. Many described how their loved ones had first approached embassies for visas, what constituted a costly and time-consuming process given the nature of their requirements, only to be repeatedly denied authorization to travel legally. Families often indicated that they or their missing loved ones had opted to travel irregularly only after being denied visas. In Zimbabwe, participants recounted the difficulties in obtaining not only visas, but also passports needed to leave the country. The passport application process in Zimbabwe is characterized by waiting times and delays at registry offices that can last months (Chingono, 2019), which was not effective for people who needed to urgently emigrate to find work to support their families. For several of the families interviewed in Spain, the experience of applying for a visa was often described as shameful and even humiliating, with consular officers often dismissing or questioning the authenticity of the documents of those aspiring to migrate during their visa appointments. Mohammed related his experience in the 1990s:

> I applied for a visa back then, but the [Italian] embassy declined my application. I got nothing from applying legally. The smuggler charged USD 1,500 at the time. So, from Morocco I flew to Libya, then [crossed irregularly] to Italy, and after a while, I travelled here to Spain. But I did apply for a visa. I did apply.

As in Mohammed's case, the inability to secure a visa was the factor that most often led people to opt to travel irregularly with the assistance of a smuggler. Mohammed had no intention to travel irregularly, as he was aware of the risks it involved – his older brother had gone missing, and to this day his parents have not recovered emotionally from the loss. The thought of facing a similar fate was a concern; however, he ultimately decided to travel with a smuggler known to his mother. "My mother used to say that back then, Libyan smugglers treated Moroccans really well," he said.

Denied. Families often indicated that they or their missing loved ones had opted to travel irregularly only after being denied visas. The inability to secure a visa was the factor that most often led people to opt to travel irregularly with the assistance of a smuggler. Rejection is linked to feelings of shame, sadness or grief – all of which missing migrants and their families experience as they are denied a chance at a better life (artist's concept note). © IOM 2021/Salam SHOKOR

While applying for a visa was an option for some migrants like Mohammed, to many others it was out of the question. Research in all four countries showed that satisfying visa requirements is often impossible for most aspiring migrants – in particular, for young men, across countries of origin. Given the known levels of refusals or denials, many aspiring migrants also considered the visa process a scam or a waste of time and effort and avoided it altogether. Instead, many teenagers and young men within the families interviewed reported having turned to smugglers for their journeys after having saved money for a long period of time.[1] Others had borrowed money from friends or family members. In some instances, relatives had mortgaged land or other goods and lent them money to support their journeys. While not extensively reported in this research sample, some may perform smuggling-related tasks in exchange for the opportunity to travel.[2]

Families also often emphasized that the causes behind the migration of their loved ones were multiple and complex, and that while they were in part driven by financial challenges, they were not merely to leave poverty behind or to fulfil a fantasy to migrate to another country. Ousmane from Senegal, who lost a nephew in 2000, explained:

[1] See also: Martin, 2020.

[2] A 2016 IOM study on unaccompanied migrants travelling to Egypt and research on migrants departing from Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco confirm that young migrants may recruit others, act as lookouts, or even pilot boats despite lacking any seafaring experience (IOM, 2016; Sanchez, 2020).

> I wish people understood that the reasons people have to migrate vary – that it is not just a matter of people being poor. We have different reasons [to leave].

For example, among families in the United Kingdom, the disappearance and the search for the missing was often triggered by conflict. Among Somalian and Eritrean families, war often led to the destruction of homes, towns and villages, making it hard for those missing and their families to remain in a single location or to stay in touch. Even after having been in the United Kingdom for a long period of time, families remained separated, as Abbas' testimony indicated:

> When I came here, I tried to contact them through all the avenues that were available, [but] they were not in one place – they were fleeing constantly ... They were just trying to settle down wherever they found safe[ty] ... They were constantly fleeing because of the war.

Ahmed, a Moroccan man who has been searching for his brother for over 20 years, also explained that many aspiring migrants decide to leave out of shame, derived from the lack of alternatives available to them. This echoes some studies that have examined how the lack of employment or resources has prevented men, in particular, from starting a family, having children, or reaching other socially expected milestones (Zagaria, 2019; Ghorbeli, 2019). Gendered stigma factors in their decision to migrate and/or to leave without an explanation:

> Many may leave for different reasons. They may not know what their future is going to be like. They may have problems with other [people]. I feel that others are very unlucky, and that they don't want anyone to know [about their hardships]. I also feel that this is why many [of those who leave] never return to their families.

In fact, a common theme in all four countries involved is how often missing migrants had not initially disclosed their intention to migrate. This was particularly the case among young men, who – also in an attempt not to worry their parents, especially their mothers – would simply leave their homes without providing details concerning their destination and would only communicate after their departure, and at times until their arrival, to inform their families of their whereabouts. Some kept their plans to migrate a secret in an effort not to be questioned or challenged, as well as to avoid criticism should the attempt be unsuccessful. Several mothers interviewed admitted they had not questioned their sons nor initially enquired about their whereabouts in an effort to protect their privacy as young men.[3]

These decisions – often made out of love and concern, but also quite reflective of gender dynamics – translate into families lacking information concerning dates or times of departure or potential destinations, the routes followed, and the identity of the person facilitating the journey of their loved one and/or their companions. Coincidentally, this information tends to be what is often requested by law enforcement or other authorities to initiate a search. Without this information, the likelihood of any kind of official inquiry being launched is far less likely.

2. The search process and its sources

Family members of missing migrants are neither silent nor passive victims. Families soon realize the lack of official mechanisms and resources to deal with the vast range of social, legal and economic hardships related to their loss. Faced with this lack of support, and despite their grief, families organize to get answers. While some carry out their searches independently, most develop support networks and structures to search for the missing.

In all countries, families reported relying on a combination of sources for information on the whereabouts and fate of their missing relatives. Typically, they first turned to friends and family members, the families of other missing migrants, or the facilitators of their loved ones' irregular journeys or the people connected with these (that is, smugglers, brokers or *passeurs*). Families also relied on community-based organizations, both those in their vicinity and larger NGOs. Mass and/or social media were used to search for answers across a wider area/region, although their use varied greatly across all countries.

[3] Aspects related to gender and how it shapes the search process are discussed in more detail throughout the report and in Section 4.1.

A few families interviewed had approached authorities to report their missing loved ones, although with mixed results. In all countries, the testimonies of families point to widespread mistrust towards government bodies or entities that gave the impression of being official or connected to the government. This was in part given the lack of results and the bureaucracy that any search process involved. But most importantly, participants repeatedly emphasized that they had often been the target of mistreatment and/or abuse by authorities. Many families endured comments related to their ethnicity, race, gender, social class or migration status. They were often chastised for having relied on smugglers to migrate and told that the disappearances of their loved ones were ultimately their fault.

Begging Above, Begging Below. "We don't know which institution is responsible to offer information related to missing migrants. I don't know where to go or whom to ask in the Government. What I can do is keep praying, hoping that one day my God may herald me with good news." © IOM 2021/Salam SHOKOR

2.1. Searching within networks of friends, family members and the diaspora

In all countries, friends, family members and local acquaintances were typically the first people whom the families reached out to for information and help. Some families of North African origin explained that since their sons or other male relatives had travelled together, families often joined forces in the search. Once the departure of a group of migrants was known, or an incident like a shipwreck or a disappearance was announced publicly, families looked for and contacted the family members of those who had travelled with their relatives. Several of the Moroccan families that participated in the project reported conducting searches, filing reports or travelling to police stations alongside other families. They followed the lead of others in their community who had also experienced the disappearances of loved ones, and tried to learn from their experiences, even in cases when families had been unsuccessful in their search. Laila, speaking remotely from Morocco, stated:

> My brother and my neighbour's son left on the same *patera* [boat], so when it came to look for them, we joined forces. That is how we have been looking for them. Whenever we have information, we talk. We share what we have learned [and] what we are able to find out.

The transnational nature of migration and the multiple locations across which extended families live are also used in the search process. Families often made contact with people in the diaspora, who were perceived as better positioned or as having stronger, wider networks that could yield more answers. Abdikadir, a Somalian man in Nottingham who has been searching for his brother, explained how he relied on friends and community members to gather news and spread information across countries. He stated how through the diaspora, one can learn about other cases in other countries, share information or ask questions:

> Basically, you rely on friends. There are always friends that know friends and that know more friends, like a group of people from the same country. The Sudanese community here in Nottingham and [in] the UK for example. You talk to a "brother" who also asks others. Through platforms and meetings in such communities, you get to hear about missing persons [in other countries]. You get to know those that were shot in Libya, those that died in Libya or while trying to make the journey and all that.

Families in countries of origin also reported reaching out to community members who lived in destination countries, particularly when they returned home for a visit. In Zimbabwe, participants told us how they approached anyone they trusted who returned from or was travelling to South Africa (the main country of destination for Zimbabwean emigrants). In some cases, families did not have the means to search for the missing beyond asking returnees if they have any information. "I just enquire from the people who will be arriving from [South Africa] if they have seen my child," Mr Chireya, a Zimbabwean man who has been searching for his missing child, told us. Similarly, Ms Sithole, who has been searching for her missing husband, explained:

> There is a perception that when people leave their community and go to [a] foreign land, they look for their "homeboys", so we always ask those who are returning for Christmas if they have seen our relative.

It was clear that for many migrants, disseminating case information through their social contacts and networks provided some level of relief and helped build trust. In general, enquiring about missing migrants within one's own community seems to be preferred to searching through larger organizations that, while official or recognized, are perceived as too bureaucratic, untrustworthy or difficult to access. Kwame, a Ghanaian man in London searching for his brother, explained that he had found community groups and friends more helpful than institutional actors:

> I've approached many organizations and charities, but many of them don't have time for you. They're helping so many people, and your story is just one of many, so I felt like they don't really care. But the church and my friends have been wonderful. Every day, on WhatsApp, Facebook and so on, they help me get the message out. They pray for me and call me to find out how I am doing. Without them, I would be on the streets like a madman today, I tell you.

Families recognized the risks or limitations they may encounter during their search, discussed in greater length in Section 3. Many warned against considering ethnic solidarity and camaraderie as inherent to the search process, one reason being the widespread nature of fraudulent activity, carried out often by other migrants who take advantage of the despair of families (see Section 3.3). Some families, particularly in Zimbabwe, expressed fears that by alerting others about the disappearances of their loved ones, members of the diaspora could notify the authorities about their relatives' lack of regular migration status. Women carrying out searches specifically reported having been offered help in exchange for sexual favours, or their efforts being dismissed or criticized by their own family members (often their in-laws). Some of these gender dynamics are discussed in Section 4.1.

2.2. Smugglers, brokers and other facilitators of migrants' journeys

In Spain, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, families emphasized the role of those who facilitated the irregular journeys of their loved ones as part of the search process. Families shared how brokers or smugglers were often the first persons they went to for information – some families in fact indicated that they contacted smugglers even before notifying other family members about the disappearance. This was at least in part because smugglers quite often are friends or family members of those they transport, and to a degree, assume responsibility for the migrants' safety and are therefore aware of their whereabouts with significant detail (Mengiste, 2018; Adugna et al., 2019). The social interconnectedness of smugglers – to other smugglers or brokers, border and/or police officers, personnel at detention facilities, transporters, guides and other actors – also translated into them having quick access to information concerning arrests, detention, accidents or even deaths. Notwithstanding the well-documented cases of abuse and violence perpetrated by smugglers more generally, it is common for them to hold important social status as facilitators of mobility, and they are trusted members of their communities. In fact, many families stated that they were more likely to trust smugglers over authorities when it came to obtaining information about their missing loved ones. This was explained by the mother of a missing migrant from Ethiopia:

> We don't know which institution is responsible to offer information related to missing migrants. I don't know where to go or whom to ask in the Government. Secondly, it is impossible to go to the country where [my son] went missing because I can't afford it. What I can do is to get news from the *delala* [smuggler] who facilitated his journey. Though I am very disappointed in the *delaloch* [smugglers], I have never thought to accuse them [of my son's disappearance] also because most of them are my relatives.

2.3. The role of community members, civil society and other community-based organizations

Alongside friends, family members, and brokers or smugglers, people searching for missing migrant family members rely on activists and advocates working with community-based, grass-roots migrant and refugee associations. They also reach out to religious groups, which can provide spiritual support, like those formed at churches and mosques. Many of these advocates are migrants themselves and, in some instances, have experienced the disappearance of a loved one as well. In other cases, families of missing migrants receive help from local community members, who by virtue of having more stable jobs, language skills, and/or citizenship or regular immigration status can help navigate local support systems and social services.

In Southern Spain, not only civil society, but also individual citizens or small groups of friends with no particular affiliation were at the front lines, providing assistance to the families of missing migrants. They take calls, collect data, share information, and use their connections to secure information, services or assistance. Families often obtain the contact information of individual advocates from other families who experienced a similar loss in the past. Once they have gathered basic information to start a search, advocates rely on their connections to obtain official information concerning the names and condition of migrants recently arrived on boats, staying at hospitals or processing centers. The researchers witnessed as advocates travelled to locations where migrants had recently arrived by boat or where accidents had taken place, also seeking to obtain first-hand information that could be shared with families.

Smuggled. Smugglers or migration brokers emerged in the research as actors in the search, in some contexts. The social interconnectedness of smugglers – to other smugglers or brokers, border and/or police officers, personnel at detention facilities, transporters, guides and other actors – also translated into them having quick access to information concerning arrests, detention, accidents or even deaths. © IOM 2021/Salam SHOKOR

In the United Kingdom, participants indicated that mosques and churches, as well as small community- or neighbourhood-based migrant and/or refugee organizations, often provided basic information on how to carry out searches. Some gave access to computers and the Internet and offered ways to connect with other migrants who might provide further support, like connections to potential jobs or places to live. For recently arrived migrants who have also lost a loved one, these forms of support provide initial stability and assistance to carry out their searches.

In Ethiopia, kinship associations and community elders make regular visits to families of missing migrants to accompany them through prayer, blessings and advice. Friends and family members were said to provide company, and to perform agricultural labour for older or female relatives of missing migrants. Sometimes they also offer assistance in caring for children and older relatives. The mother of a missing migrant described her experience as follows:

> Our fellow church members are the ones who persistently comfort me. They arrange a prayer programme frequently. They always advise me to keep praying. The pastor of our church has also told me that nothing bad will happen to my son. He also said that my son will come back sooner or later. When they prayed for me and I heard such words, I [felt] completely relieved. They always advise me to think [positively] and hope for the better.

In Ethiopia's region of Hadiya, where the research was conducted, community coalition care groups operate at the village level and provide psychosocial and financial support for families who have lost their loved ones during migration journeys. Families reported relying on the *iddir* system and its social networks to obtain information about their missing relatives. The *iddir* is a community-based support group common in rural areas of Ethiopia. Its members contribute financial resources that are used in times of crisis (Aredo, 2010). The *iddir* also plays a vital role in the search for missing migrants since many of its members either have good rapport with smugglers or are smugglers themselves. Through their social networks, the *iddir* can alert its members about a disappearance, obtain information for a family, and even organize efforts to repatriate remains in the event of a death.

2.4. Social and mass media

Social and mass media can be important sources of information and mechanisms to disseminate missing-person cases. Families use platforms like Facebook not only to disseminate information concerning their missing loved ones, but also to look for information on unidentified or missing migrants. However, social media use is not uniform or unlimited in all countries. Poor Internet signals and the lack of financial resources to access a computer and the Internet shape the ways in which families interact online.

In Spain and the United Kingdom, some families reported relying on online social networks, especially Facebook, to gather information about their missing loved ones, as well as to report their disappearances through online networks and communities. The fact that data can be posted on Facebook from any region of the world allowed them to locate pages from different countries and communities. Families believed there is a possibility that their missing loved ones could have transited through particular locations in specific countries, or that someone who travelled with them could recognize a picture or a post. Tasha, a Somalian woman in Bristol, was successful in her search through social media channels:

> I tried [Somali *BBC*[4] and the Red Cross] without success. What worked was social media. I contacted my friends, and my friends contacted their relatives with the information I shared with them, [and] we managed to find my mother in Yemen. It was easier to spread the news that way. And we are already getting information [via] Facebook platforms that may also help us find my father.

In the case of Zimbabwe and Ethiopia, families did not report relying exclusively on social or mass media. Some Ethiopian families reported having heard of missing-migrant cases being solved by sharing information on social networks, or that information found online led to the potential identification of someone who had been missing. However, cellphone coverage and Internet access in some regions in Ethiopia are still limited, and families preferred – or rather, had few other options besides communicating by phone. This was the experience of Seyum, whose brother Eyasu is believed to have been killed by the Islamic State in Libya in 2015. Seyum has been searching for details concerning Eyasu on behalf of his family ever since, and he received a phone call from someone who believed they had identified Eyasu online:

> My brother Eyasu left for Libya to reach Europe with his friends. On a Saturday night, I was watching a soccer game with my friends. Someone called me on Eyasu's phone, which [he had left] with me. They asked if I was Eyasu, and I told them I was a neighbour who had borrowed his phone. I did not want to reveal who I was before I knew who was calling. They asked if I had seen [Eyasu's] picture on Facebook. I left the house and went to a store nearby. I asked them to check Facebook on their smartphone. That is when I saw Eyasu, and I knew immediately it was him. The person who called, thinking I was someone else, had already told me that Eyasu had been captured and killed by ISIS. This was four years ago. We reported the case to the police. I [testified]. But nothing has happened following my testimony.

[4] *BBC* Somalia, with funding and coordination from the International Committee of the Red Cross, ran a show in which people could share letters and messages with relatives with whom they were trying to re-establish contact. More information is available at www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/audiovisuals/video/2013/03-15-somalia-rfl.htm.

Limited access to the Internet, however, was not unique to countries like Ethiopia or Zimbabwe. Some families interviewed in the United Kingdom also reported having limited access to computers and the Internet, these being often unaffordable due to their precarious financial situation.[5] Some of the families in the south of Spain had access to Internet through their phones only on a pay-as-you-go basis, which made it expensive. In both countries, the lack of formal employment or government assistance in addition to low wages often meant families had to prioritize expenses – Internet access or phone credit not being at the top of their list. Computer access was quite limited and restricted to the times when families were able to go to a mosque or a community or migrant organization. Most families lacked personal computers or laptops to carry out online searches or research.

In Spain, multiple Moroccan families reported hearing of or relying on a Moroccan public television show, *Moukhtafoun*. The show is well known for featuring missing-migrant cases, which are accompanied by personal appeals from families seeking information, along with their contact details. Families claim that the show's rate of success is quite high, and for that reason, they do not hesitate to send information with the hope that their individual case will be selected for broadcasting.

While on occasion families may have received information through well-intended contacts after disclosing the disappearance of their loved ones on social media or television shows, they are often reached by people who claim to have information on their friends or relatives and are willing to share this information in exchange for money. The research showed that the use of social and mass media for search purposes, while beneficial at some level, also creates opportunities for scammers to prey on the desperation of families, as shown in Section 3.5.

2.5. Humanitarian/rescue organizations

A handful of the families who took part in the research mentioned approaching humanitarian/international organizations to help them with their missing-person cases. International and non-profit organizations, and particularly the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), are some of the only actors who conduct specialized and formal searches for people lost in the context of migration in the countries involved in this project. These organizations can, in theory, work as a buffer between law enforcement and immigration enforcement, and thus people with missing migrant relatives may feel more comfortable approaching them. The international reach and networks of such organizations are vital, as they allow for carrying out searches across countries. The ICRC's Restoring Family Links programme, the most significant effort to trace missing migrants globally, relies on its network of Red Cross/Red Crescent national societies.[6] A few of the participants specifically mentioned finding a number of missing persons through this service. Key informant interviews with organizations providing such support reveal that they lack resources to keep up with the volumes of missing-migrant tracing requests they receive, which prevents them from engaging in outreach activities. It also means that sometimes families must wait several months before their cases are registered.

Family members who were migrants themselves and who had lost a loved one while in transit also mentioned interacting with humanitarian organizations along their migration journeys; however, unless the encounter involved immediate rescue, they did not receive additional help with tracing. Testimonies shared during the research indicated that coordination and information-sharing mechanisms are not set up to help people who are on the move report or obtain information about missing co-travellers or loved ones in an expedited way. Munir's case exemplifies some of these experiences. A Sudanese man in London, he has been searching for his wife and his sister. The three of them started the journey as a family, but they became separated while trying to make the Mediterranean Sea crossing into Europe from Libya. It was here when his wife and his sister were forced onto a different boat:

> I prayed that we all arrived safely in Italy and reunite. Our boat was rescued by an Italian ship after about four days. It took us to Sicily, and [once there] I asked about the other boat and the women. A lady there – I think she said she worked with Red Cross or UN or something like that – told us that several boats had been rescued that week and taken to other places like Lampedusa and Sardinia, so she asked us for their names to help us.

[5] Currently, asylum seekers in the United Kingdom are not allowed to work while their applications are being considered. The Government provides them with a stipend of GBP 39.60 per week, intended to help them cover their basic living needs. This amount, however, has systematically been shown as insufficient to cover basic expenses (Okyere and Kondeh, 2021).

[6] The online platform Trace the Face is another tool for tracing operated by ICRC, where people searching for loved ones can post their photos in hopes that their missing relatives will see them and get in touch. It was started with national societies in Europe but is widening its scope. Besides tracing, the ICRC's work on missing migrants also involves supporting the needs of families of the missing, programmes to help prevent people from going missing, and forensics to identify the deceased.

Lost in a Message in a Bottle. Many migrants don't survive the obstacles of their journeys, the sea being the biggest threat. At some point during their migration journeys, they lose touch with their loved ones, transforming them into the lost message itself (artist's concept note). © IOM 2021/Salam SHOKOR

After two weeks in Sicily, Munir had no information concerning his wife's and his sister's whereabouts. He decided to leave for the United Kingdom, where he continued the search through the initial institutional contact he had made in Italy, although with no luck:

> After we got to London, we have been calling [registration offices], but nobody knows where they are. Even if we heard that they died, we could accept the news a little bit because that would have been God's wish. But not knowing anything is a killer.

Some of the participants who reached out to humanitarian actors reported that they were told these organizations did not have a tracing mandate. An Ethiopian woman shared her experience searching for her friend on behalf of her friend's family:

> Two years ago, I lost my friend Saba in Yemen. Her family lives in rural parts of Jimma. ... Her relatives are illiterate and very poor. They do not know what to do. They keep calling me to this day. I went to international organizations. They told me that this was not their mandate. ... Saba is still missing. Her mother and father cry every day. No one is reaching out to them.

In sum, while families did refer to humanitarian actors as part of their search, they did so in passing; many did not know about them or had little confidence that they could help. And the few families who were aware of specific organizations

were reluctant to engage with them, worried that by virtue of being more institutional, they could have ties to the government, and share information that could jeopardize a person's asylum claim or immigration status. For example, when asked why he had not gone to an international organization for help, OC, a Nigerian man in the United Kingdom searching for his wife, bluntly stated: "You have to be careful because they [Home Office, humanitarian bodies and other charities] are all working together now."

Additionally, some of the research participants in the United Kingdom were under the impression that without legal migration status in the country, they could not report cases of missing persons, or that reporting would impact their ability to receive asylum. While none of these instances is known to be the case, there is also no way to ensure that Home Office staff do not base the decision concerning a person's right to remain on disclosed information concerning a missing loved one.

2.6. State and State-affiliated agencies

Based on the few families who reported having reached out to government authorities at some point in their search for answers, there was a clear divide concerning access to authorities in urban and rural communities. It was more common among families living in urban settings in both countries of origin and destination to report having contacted police departments, immigration authorities or other government entities, like corresponding foreign affairs ministries. Families in rural settings in countries of origin, on the other hand (namely Ethiopia and Zimbabwe), generally did not approach State bodies or authorities and were more likely to turn to social networks and community groups for support.

What was clear in the testimonies of rural families, working-class urban families, and among those that despite having arrived in destination countries still lacked stable and legal immigration status was the degree of conflict and tension they encountered when contacting official and/or government entities. Some of those who had pending asylum claims or who were in the process of adjusting their immigration status were reluctant to reach out to their case officers or to personnel from international organizations to report the disappearances of friends or family members during the journey, fearing being flagged for deportation or for abusing the system. Other families felt that contacting the authorities could jeopardize the safety of their loved ones, particularly if they had fled their country for fear of persecution or if they had insecure migration status in countries of transit or destination. As mentioned in Section 2.3, in cases in Spain and the United Kingdom, these dynamics were sometimes managed when the families of the missing person could ask a middle person, who had citizenship or regular migration status in the country, to approach the authorities on their behalf. However, these efforts were highly dependent on personal relationships and did not have overwhelming success in terms of finding information about the missing person in question.

As discussed throughout this report, there are serious issues related to trust between people looking for their missing migrant relatives and the authorities. Granted, staff responding to reports from families may be front-line personnel, overwhelmed and deprived of frameworks and/or protocols that facilitate their ability to respond, furthering the reluctance of families to reach out or interact with them in the process. As discussed throughout Section 3, these tensions constitute a critical barrier towards obtaining any kind of information or support concerning a missing loved one. These interactions with State actors define perceptions towards authorities, and ultimately the course of the families' search.

2.7. Other sources or search mechanisms

While not extensively reported by the families who participated in this project, other studies have shown that many families turn to spiritual leaders, fortune tellers, and people who claim that they can help find missing persons for a fee, in their attempts to obtain information (Crocker et al., 2021; Mediterranean Missing, 2016; Robins et al., 2014). While these sources can be dismissed by authorities or even by other family members who consider them scams (discussed in Section 3.5), people with missing loved ones can interpret them as important sources of information, or as mechanisms allowing them to cope with loss. Even in the event they do not provide specific information or positive outcomes, these alternative search mechanisms can give families a sense of direction or alternative explanations or answers that can offer a sense of solace and escape from the torment of ambiguous loss.

Searching Eyes. Fortune tellers and spiritual leaders are sometimes consulted for information by families of missing migrants. While "the searching eye of the beyond" may not provide specific answers, it can be a source of solace and hope for these families. © IOM 2021/Salam SHOKOR

Text box 1. The impact of COVID-19 on the search for missing migrants*

At the beginning of the pandemic, the mobility restrictions and border controls implemented by governments worldwide to stop the spread of the virus seemed to reduce irregular migratory flows. Recording the cases of migrants becoming stranded or seeking assistance to return to their countries of origin began (Benton et al., 2021). However, as months went by, it also became clear that the desire and need to migrate continued, for the causes that often lead people to embark on journeys (lack of opportunities, violence, conflict, financial precarity, gender-based violence and discrimination, to cite a few) not only remained unaddressed, but in some instances had worsened under the pandemic. This had led many migrants lacking access to safe and legal migration pathways to embark on clandestine journeys, many of them unsuccessful or lethal. More than 5,700 people lost their lives during migration between 1 March 2020 and 1 August 2021 globally, according to data from IOM's Missing Migrants Project.

COVID-19-related measures and closures have in some instances increased the precarity of these journeys, pushing people into more perilous and deadly situations where humanitarian support and rescue may be unavailable, and where abuses prevail. For example, according to IOM Zimbabwe, smugglers were reportedly abandoning migrants in the course of their trajectory because they were unable to circumvent South Africa's border controls, which were tightened because of COVID-19 (Nyathi, 2020). The restrictions imposed by many countries and the designation of resources once allocated for search and rescue to respond to the COVID-19 emergency have also limited the ability of authorities to respond to calls for help, to collect and report information on migrant deaths and disappearances.

These circumstances have not stopped families' demands for information on their missing loved ones. Fieldwork in the context of this project suggested that people continued with their searches to the best of their abilities, contacting authorities and reaching out to advocates. However, restrictions on mobility make it harder for people to access or receive information concerning the whereabouts of their friends and relatives. Compounded with the risk of contracting COVID-19, along with the economic downturn caused by the pandemic, these have had a detrimental impact on families' socioeconomic, mental and physical well-being.

Families searching for information on their loved ones faced many obstacles that have been exacerbated by COVID-19. The research in the United Kingdom shows that the participants' lack of migration status, coupled with difficult socioeconomic conditions related to their inability to become employed, is a barrier to finding missing loved ones. Many family members who participated in the research in the United Kingdom support themselves through informal, low-wage jobs, which have been adversely impacted by lockdown measures. Many others struggled with securing housing or earning an income and were forced to pause their searches at times.

In Spain, strict lockdown measures have severely affected the ability of migrants working in commercial agricultural greenhouses and fields to search for missing loved ones. Fieldwork conducted by the research team in Almería, Southern Spain, showed that COVID-19 restrictions have led to a reduction and suspension of harvesting activities and the loss of employment and income. A year into the pandemic, many migrants continue to rely on the assistance provided by local NGOs to access basic supplies like food and medication. Official restrictions have also impacted the ability of families to come together and organize, having to remain confined to their homes. In some instances, as in the case of irregular settlements like the one in Atochares, residents are unable to travel to other nearby cities or towns given the lack of public transportation. Additionally, a fire broke out at the Atochares settlement on 13 February 2021, destroying the homes of hundreds of its residents, an inevitable outcome of the difficult and unsafe conditions in informal settlements. At least 400 people have been left without shelter, losing their homes and their belongings.

Past research in the Mediterranean context has shown that it is rare for families to be present during the burials of relatives who died in the course of their migration journeys (Diarra, 2020). The already painful and costly process of repatriating the remains of the deceased has been further complicated amid the COVID-19 pandemic by sanitary restrictions concerning the propagation of the virus and the treatment of human remains.

For example, the bodies of 26 Bangladeshi and 4 sub-Saharan African migrants massacred in the Libyan city of Mezdah in late May 2020 were buried in Libya, despite the desperate requests from relatives who were hoping the remains would be returned to their homeland (*Daily Star*, 2020). As this and other research shows, the inability of families to travel to identify remains or attend funerals, as a result of the lack of mechanisms allowing them to reach destinations abroad for this kind of events, causes extreme distress and exacerbates their grief (IOM, 2017; Mediterranean Missing, 2016).

The relatives of migrants who went missing in a shipwreck that occurred on 3 April 2020, as they were travelling from Morocco towards Spain's Canary Islands, explained that their inability to follow burial and mourning traditions have compounded the pain over the loss of their loved ones. Interviewed by Le Monde in April 2020, Ibrahima Sylla – the brother of Alseny Kouta, a young Guinean who went missing during the shipwreck – explained: "My mother mourned him as if his body was next to us, she is convinced of his death, [yet] I can't say if he's dead or not, if he was buried somewhere or not. And we have no one to turn to." Despite the lack of certainty concerning Alseny's fate, his family wanted to organize a ceremony "so that his soul can rest in peace if he is dead or that God can take care of him if he is still alive", his brother said. However, the prohibition on gatherings of more than 20 people due to the COVID-19 restrictions did not allow for such a ceremony to take place. In the end, it was held in private. "It's odd to say goodbye to someone that way." (Diarra, 2020)

What these last months have made painfully clear is the emotional impact of families' inability to collectively mourn and experience loss. Faced with an uncertain future, the disruption of everyday life, and the loss of loved ones in the time of physical distancing, people around the world are experiencing reactions frequently associated with ambiguous loss and grief. This is an experience all too common to migrant families who have lost loved ones. For them, none of the feelings of profound grief and loss are new, but they have been amplified by the increased isolation and precarity brought about by the pandemic.

* This text box is based on a blog piece written by the authors (IOM, 2020). It is available at https://medium.com/@UNmigration/covid-19-compounds-families-painful-search-for-missing-and-disappeared-migrants-257abb3ad6a5.

3. Challenges related to the search for a missing migrant

In all countries, families face similar challenges in their efforts to locate missing migrants. Structural deficiencies – the lack of tools, protocols and institutions allowing those looking for a loved one to effectively conduct a search – were clearly identified in all countries as the main barriers to the search process. While families, community-based organizations, large humanitarian agencies, and civil society at large all carry out important efforts to support families in their processes, there is not a specific mechanism in place that allows them to do so in a coordinated, efficient, and especially, dignifying and respectful way.

While there are multiple other factors that systematically prevent people from conducting a search – ranging from the lack of legal immigration status, financial precarity derived from the lack of income, social standing, etc. – it was clear that the lack of protocols dealing with the specific dynamics of deaths and disappearances along irregular migration routes

prevented people from securing official information and support concerning their searches. As the research on policy and legal frameworks in Ethiopia, the United Kingdom and Spain shows, all countries researched have protocols on how to handle general missing-person cases. However, none of them are adapted to respond to the specific dynamics concerning the death or disappearance of irregular migrants, nor do they take into account the specific circumstances faced by the family members and friends. Perhaps one of the most troubling revelations of this absence is palpable in the testimonies of many families who, rather than identifying the lack of protocols and guidelines specific to irregular migration as barriers, blame themselves or attribute to their behavior or inaction the lack of results or outcomes of their search.

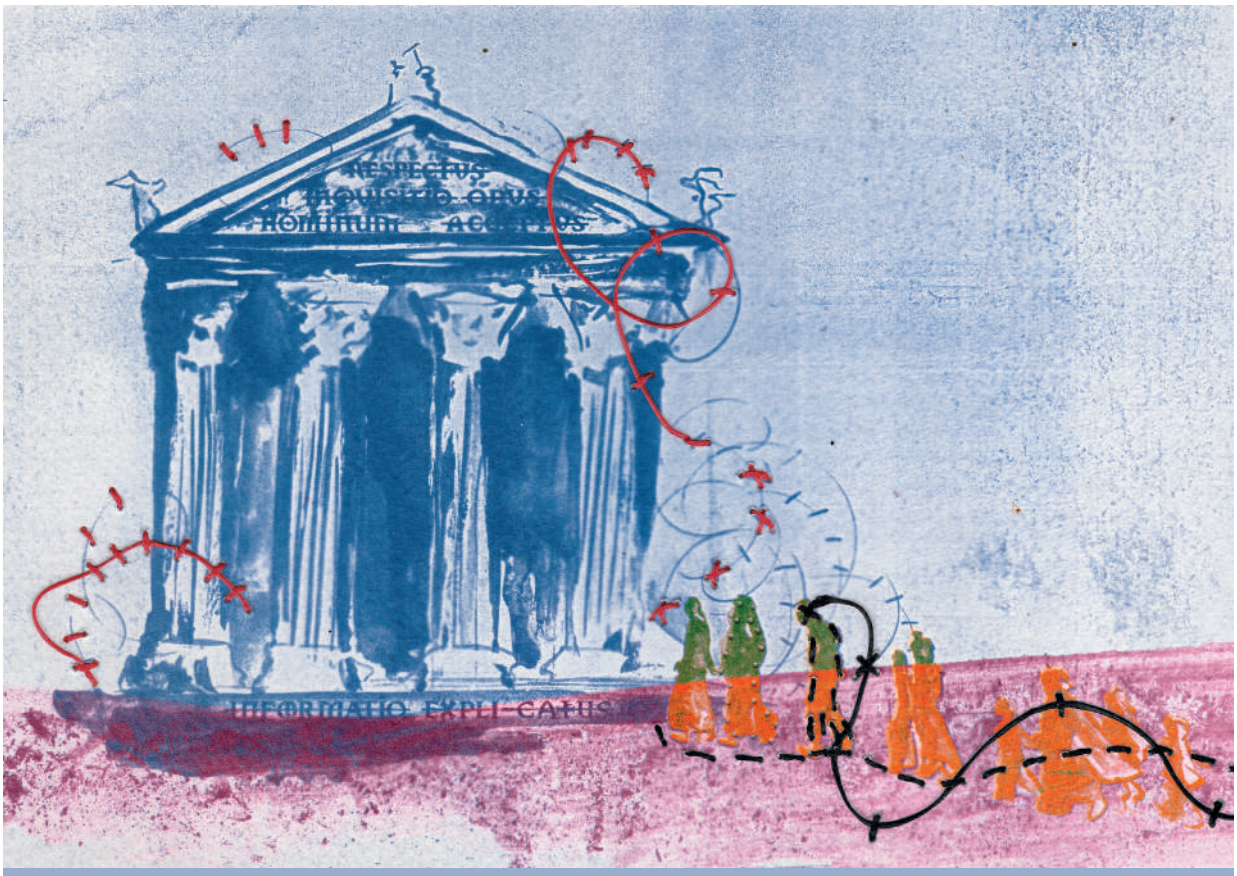
This section examines the specific challenges that families face in the course of their searches, particularly the structural barriers they encounter in their search processes – namely, the kinds derived from the lack of official mechanisms and protocols specific to missing migrants. The experiences of families concerning the disinterest and apathy of government entities, and the ways in which racism and discrimination become manifest in these contexts, are also analysed. This section then takes a closer look at the crimes specific to missing-migrant cases that further the material precarity and vulnerability of families as they search for their missing loved ones. Finally, the criminalization that families and, increasingly, civil society have reported in the context of the search processes, along with how family-created mechanisms relevant to the search are often dismissed as unscientific or subjective, is examined.

3.1. From disinterest to intimidation, abuse and disrespect: Interactions with State authorities

In all countries, families provided clear examples of State authorities' reluctance, if not clear lack of interest and hostility instead of supporting them in their searches. Families provided abundant information on instances involving rejection, harassment and verbal intimidation experienced at the hands of State actors in response to questions concerning how to start a search. Often, families were told by authorities that they did not have the resources, protocols or infrastructure to search for missing migrants in other countries, and some authorities suggested that families make use of their informal networks to find information or recommended that they travel themselves to search in the countries where their relatives went missing. In other cases, it was clear that the procedures for processing a missing-person case were not adequate for cases of people missing on irregular migration journeys in other countries. These experiences delay, if not derail, search processes. They also showcase the ways in which States at least initially respond or decide to address missing-migrant dynamics – namely, by clearly communicating to friends and family members of missing migrants that their losses are not a priority. A family member in Chimanimani, Zimbabwe, whose brother has been missing for close to five years, narrated their experience with the police:

> Two days after leaving Mutare [for South Africa], we had contact with my brother when he was about to cross the Limpopo [River] into South Africa, and we never heard from him again ... We went to the police, not really sure what to do or say. I guess we just wanted to talk to someone in authority. The police entertained us just to hear the story and laugh among themselves, making jokes about how my brother had run away from his life ... We felt hurt and bitter, but there was no one else to tell. From that day, we realize the shame that we carry and that the police had not even been professional to keep the story to themselves after they turned us away. We heard people talk about us, and we couldn't get ourselves to reach out to anyone again.

In their interactions with families, authorities (including police), representatives of different government ministries, and personnel at diplomatic missions (embassies) often employed fear and intimidation, which not only deterred families to continue the search in some instances but also further fuelled fear and mistrust towards authorities. In other words, these first encounters with State actors create a structural barrier that prevents families from approaching the State for protection or support. Families with prior experiences with authoritarianism or other forms of State violence – especially those who have left behind conflict, forms of State violence, forced recruitment, civil war, etc. – found these interactions evocative of their past experiences.



In Line Outside the Curia. Governmental institutions are symbolized with the roman Curia or senate house. Metaphorical barbed wires around it represent the barriers that migrants and their families face when trying to get the help they need. Everything that the Curia denies them is written on its walls, in Latin, crossed out. The families stand in front of the institutional system that continues to fail them and belittles them until they feel diminished in size and dignity (artist's concept note). © IOM 2021/Salam SHOKOR

In general, the families that participated in the study – most of whom had experienced criminalization; lack of regularized or certain migration status; or discrimination on the basis of race, class and gender; or whose communities were subjected to over-policing – provided clear examples of dismissive interactions that reinforced their mistrust towards government authorities and further cemented their reluctance to ask for their support or assistance. That was the experience of Mohammed, whose father was treated dismissively by embassy staff:

> We looked for my brother on Facebook. Someone contacted us from Portugal and said, "I know a guy who looks just like the one in the photo." My father and my cousin went to Lisbon to search for answers. [They] contacted the local authorities, and then they went to [our country's] embassy. As soon as they arrived, the person who attended them treated [my brother and my father] with disdain. He simply handed them some papers and said, "Okay, so you are looking for your son. Fill out this paper." But that paper, no one knows where it goes. And my father didn't know what [else] to do and decided to return to Spain.

Other family members also felt disrespected and unwelcome at embassies, with some having been met with either condescending or even aggressive staff who had limited or no interest to assist them. Ousmane, a man who has been searching for one of his nephews who went missing while en route to the Canary Islands, responded with frustration when asked about his experience in his country's embassy in Spain: "At the embassy? Search through the embassy?

What will the embassy do, search for a person? Ha! [The staff] won't do anything." Arnaud, a migrant advocate from Cameroon, also explained the emotional targeting to which families are subjected:

> Families who have no news of their loved ones do not necessarily approach embassies or authorities. Why? Often, it is because they don't know which authorities to approach. But also because they feel that they will be blamed, like they will be told they have done something wrong. And because [they feel] that the authorities cannot help them.

Testimonies from all four countries characterize State authorities and/or other State bodies as dismissive, disrespectful and even hostile. In the United Kingdom, Ethiopia, Spain and Zimbabwe, the research teams collected testimonies concerning troubling incidents with government officials, ranging from refusals to provide information, blaming families for the disappearances of their loved ones, to in one instance physically preventing a family from entering an official building to make a missing-person report. The brother of a missing migrant in Ethiopia explained:

> We are not criminals. We went to the police and to the Ministry [of Foreign Affairs] for help. They treated us as criminals. The guards did not even allow us to enter the building. They told us to go away. [There is no path to file a report] or complaint. They must recognize missing migrants are also citizens. The State has to help us with our searches. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a consulate in Egypt. Through that consulate, they can search for the missing in Libya. We cannot communicate with the Libyan or Sudanese embassy here. This should be done by the Government.

Examples of shaming and intimidation by State officials were brought up in all countries, suggesting that these were not merely a trend in migrants' countries of origin but in destination countries as well, and that they were often derived from perceptions concerning the gender, ethnicity and social status of the families.

3.2. Lack of legal and policy frameworks applicable to cases of missing migrants

The mapping of legal and policy frameworks conducted in Ethiopia, Spain and the United Kingdom shows that there is a general lack of awareness of the unique challenges faced by families of people who go missing on irregular migration journeys, including the effects of separation, disappearance or death. There is no evidence that any of the countries have undertaken any action to fulfil their commitments under Objective 8 of the Global Compact for Migration. Neither are they working to engage in "coordinated international efforts on missing migrants", to cooperate in "the standardized collection and exchange of relevant information", nor "to identify those who have died or gone missing, and to facilitate communication with affected families" (UNGA, 2018).

As a result, the legal and policy frameworks applicable to cases of missing persons in the countries of research are not adapted to cases of missing migrants and do not address the specific needs of their families. This means that they may not be accessible to families, and they may impose requirements on them that are difficult, if not impossible, to meet. For example, in Spain, generic police protocols on investigations for missing-person cases require that a report is filed with the police in Spain (the country where the disappearance took place). This is a difficult, if not impossible, feat for families of missing migrants. Families who live in countries of origin or transit may not have the ability to travel to destination countries, let alone qualify for a visa allowing them to travel. Migrant families who are already living in Spain may be reluctant to come forward and report the disappearance of their loved ones to the police, particularly if they have irregular immigration status, for fear of detention or deportation, as generic police protocols do not uphold "safe reporting" for migrants with irregular status. There are no firewalls that allow people with irregular migration status in Spain to file complaints with the authorities without fear of apprehension or deportation (González Beilfuss, 2019). As explained by Amira, a migrant rights activist in Southern Spain:

> It's not common for families to directly file reports themselves: When they're in Spain, they're often undocumented and won't want to file a report. When they're in [their country of origin], they have no way of reporting the disappearance to the Spanish authorities.

Other testimonies also illustrated that generic procedures by law enforcement to report missing migrants fail to consider the specific dynamics of the search (namely, its clandestine nature and the fact that departure details are often unknown to and kept from families). Families have few details about the journeys of their missing family members, yet authorities often request specifics like the place and time of disappearance, stating that they are critical pieces of information. Authorities would refuse to file a report if a family is unable to provide this information, or they would claim that without the place of disappearance being known, agency jurisdiction could not be established.

Families also claimed that this was an excuse by some authorities to avoid working on the case. For example, the coroner's inquest in the case of 27-year-old Matada, who was found dead in 2012 on the pavement in London after falling from a Heathrow-bound flight from Angola, determined that the police had no obligation to investigate as no one had reported Matada as missing in the United Kingdom (Walker, 2013; Siddique, 2015). In Zimbabwe, families who contacted the police received similar answers, as documented in the testimony of Mrs Nyemba:

> My family once went to the local police station when they started suspecting that my brother went missing after spending close to eight months without communication [after leaving for South Africa]. The police said they could not help because it was out of Zimbabwe.

In both Ethiopia and Spain, authorities asked the family to provide what they considered as evidence (for example, a description of the belongings that the missing person was carrying, or proof that the relative had in fact been on board a shipwrecked or missing boat). As migrants' irregular journeys are clandestine, the likelihood of records or logbooks narrating the details of the journey existing is null.

Oftentimes the only evidence available is the testimony of the shipwreck's survivors, or news that relatives or civil society organizations may have obtained that a particular person was on a ship that has been shipwrecked or has disappeared without trace – and yet this type of evidence is often considered hearsay by authorities. Families reported that information they collected in the process of looking for their loved ones through reaching out to the wide range of sources detailed above, sharing information with other families, conducting interviews, and developing other ways to gather and analyse information (Cruz-Santiago, 2020; Ennaji and Bignami, 2019) was often dismissed by authorities, who claimed that data may be fabricated, false or not collected in a professional way. Additionally, the lack of protocols specific to deaths and disappearances during migratory journeys does prevent law enforcement from efficiently collecting, preserving and sharing data regarding missing-migrant cases. Not a single authority in any of the four countries in the study collected data for the purpose of a search. For example, as mentioned above, testimonies from witnesses or survivors – who are often the only ones who can provide essential information regarding the identity of the deceased or missing person or the contact details of their relatives – are not systematically collected for the humanitarian purpose of a search; and even if collected, they may not always become available to the families of the missing, nor are they used as part of investigations.

Granted, and as mentioned from the onset, there is a lack of transnational coordination and data exchange and cooperation. The mapping of the legal and policy frameworks in the countries of research showed that there are no mechanisms or agreements in place that would provide a basis for the systematic exchange of information, cooperation and coordination among authorities in different countries. Although some ad hoc cooperation was identified – for example, the Missing Persons Unit at the United Kingdom's National Crime Agency is part of a collaborative pilot project that will be carried out with the British Red Cross and two United Kingdom academic institutions to support a selected number of families who live in the United Kingdom to trace their loved ones in Greece.[7] In Ethiopia, there are some bilateral agreements with countries of destination to assist in the repatriation of remains for migrant workers who have died while legally employed abroad. However, they do not apply to people who migrated irregularly. An officer working with the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated:

[7] This will be done through collecting and matching biometrics and DNA data in the United Kingdom and Greece. The project is delayed however due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

> If migrants die in countries [with which] we have bilateral labour agreements, our consulate offices, labour recruitment agencies and the Ethiopian Airlines repatriate bodies from abroad. This is possible when migrants are legal and they have life insurance from their employer in the country of destination. But it is a big problem when migrants are illegal[8] and die in migration routes, in transit or destinations.

Beyond these limited efforts, none of the countries had an integrated or systematic approach to enable transnational cooperation in the investigation and identification of missing-migrant cases. There is also a lack of resources designated for the specific purpose of supporting missing-migrant searches. For example, interviews with official stakeholders showed that while Ethiopia has a department within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that is technically responsible for Ethiopian missing migrants, there are neither resources nor protocols that may allow it to establish international partnerships or data exchanges.

Political issues pertaining to migration governance – for example, third-country agreements between the European Union and countries across North and West Africa aimed to deter irregular migration – also create additional constraints. Cooperation between Spain and African countries, for example, has almost exclusively focused on migration control, policing and surveillance. So far, bilateral agreements on the issue of irregular migration have not addressed the question of deaths or disappearances of migrants on irregular migration journeys to Spain nor the needs of their families.

3.3. The lack of immigration status and its intertwining with race and ethnicity

It was clear from the experiences of families that immigration status and race also played central roles in the way they were able to pursue cases, including how/if they engaged with authorities and organizations that were perceived as having ties to State agencies.

Family members who were migrants themselves (in Spain and the United Kingdom) and did not have regular/certain immigration status told us that they lived in fear of becoming visible to authorities. These testimonies and experiences are not anecdotal, as data shows that racialized communities are much more likely to be over-policed. For example, 2019 data from the UK Home Office indicates that Black and minority ethnic people in the United Kingdom are four times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police than whites and non-racialized migrants, a figure that increases to over nine times when looking only at the experiences of Black people.[9]

The lack of data on ethnicity also hides the interactions of racialized migrants vis-à-vis the State. Spain, for example, does not collect data on ethnicity. But evidence suggests that racial and ethnic profiling is common: a 2008 survey by the European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) found that 12 percent of white people reported being stopped in the past 12 months, compared to 42 percent of people of North African or Arab origin (FRA, 2010). In 2013, the University of Valencia published results of a national survey asking respondents how often they had been stopped in the last two years (Añón et al., 2013). Six percent (6%) of white people had been stopped, compared to 22 percent of Latin Americans, 39 percent of Black people, 45 percent of North Africans or Arabs, and a shocking 60 percent of Roma people.[10] Furthermore, the Spanish Constitutional Court stated in a case in 2001 that it was rational to stop a person based on their racial appearance, as this was a reasonable way to determine who might be an undocumented migrant (Open Society Foundations, 2019). The United Nations Human Rights Council has declared this judgment discriminatory.[11] However, the Spanish Government has not addressed these concerns (Díaz de Sarralde, 2018).

[8] The term "illegal" is used in this report only when it is a direct quote from a research participant or the official name of a government unit. IOM prefers the term "irregular" to refer to a mode of moving outside regular/legal migration channels, as this word does not necessarily carry a criminal connotation, is not against migrants' dignity and does not undermine respect for the human rights of migrants (IOM, 2019).

[9] A complete analysis is available at www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-powers-and-procedures-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2019.

[10] See also the United Nation's Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent's statement after its official visit to Spain in 2018, which found that "racial profiling of people of African descent is endemic. Time and again, the Working group heard how people of African descent are always assumed to be undocumented immigrants and thus disproportionally stopped at street checks in comparison to people of other ethnicities". More information is available at www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22705&LangID=E.

[11] See: Rosalind Williams Lecraft v. Spain, United Nations Human Rights Committee, CCPR/C/96/D/1493/2006, available at https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/662897/.

Washed Up and Down. On 1 November 1988, 18 people drowned trying to reach Spain. This was the first shipwreck recorded on an irregular migration route to the country. Since that fateful day, more than 9,100 people are believed to have lost their lives migrating to Spain. Each person who has disappeared or died leaves behind family and friends who miss them, wonder where they are, and search for information about their fate and whereabouts. © IOM 2021/Salam SHOKOR

Families and advocates repeatedly indicated their fear of reporting missing loved ones without having regular status in a country or while waiting for their status to be adjusted or stabilized, since making themselves visible to authorities while lacking authorization to be in a destination country, in addition to being a racialized person, could potentially lead to arrest, incarceration and/or even deportation. The family of Ibrahim, who has been searching for their niece Binta since 2016, has not filed a report in Spain for this very reason:

> I was already living in Spain when she disappeared. My brother [Binta's dad] called me to tell me. ... We did not file a complaint here [in Spain], nor in Senegal. My brother is undocumented, so he didn't want to interact with the police.

Similarly, Tasha, a Somalian woman in the United Kingdom looking for her father, repeated several times during the interview:

> Those days my heart would skip a beat whenever I heard the word "Home Office". You feared they were coming for you anytime you saw a police car. I was completely afraid of asking anyone else for help because I was an illegal immigrant and didn't want just anyone at all to know. I didn't even dream of opening up about [my father's disappearance] until I got my papers.

Several families indicated that upon their arrival to destination countries, they often had to make the gruelling decision to prioritize obtaining legal or refugee status over searching for missing loved ones. Families often feared that coming forward and reporting a missing migrant could negatively impact their request for asylum, or that immigration authorities could interpret the request as a way to improve their chances regarding an asylum case or to receive additional benefits, which could ultimately result in the denial of international protection. Joseph waited for nearly two years before he started looking for his sister who had gone missing during her journey from Agadez to Libya, fearing a search would jeopardize his application to remain in the United Kingdom:

> I wondered where she could be, but I couldn't go see anyone to talk about it, not even my lawyer. I felt that we had to focus on [my] application and get my stay in this country first, else we would ruin everything if we tried to do it all at once. It took [me] almost one and a half years to get the visa.

There are also few options for obtaining the required documents and visas to travel abroad temporarily to search for loved ones or to identify and repatriate their remains.[12] Family members in Ethiopia and Zimbabwe reported their frustration at not being able to travel to the last known location of their missing loved ones because they could not secure travel documents. In the most extreme cases, the research team heard stories of people who had left to embark on their own irregular migration journeys in search of missing relatives. In Ethiopia, Haile shared with us his family's search for his older brother, Michael, who at the time of the interview had been missing for three years in Libya:

> Even my other younger brother has left. He is now in Germany. He is the youngest of all. He decided to leave after [my older brother] Michael went missing. He went to Libya to search for Michael and at the same time cross to Europe. He spent one year just looking for [Michael] in Libya. Fortunately, he made it to Germany, but he did not find our brother.

[12] According to the report Every Body Counts, Germany has a special visa allowing temporary visits to its territory for imperative family reasons, including funerals. First- and second-degree relatives of migrant residents who do not belong to the nuclear family may apply for this visa. Notably this visa has been upheld throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (Last Rights, 2021).

Split. "My sons were my hope. One died during an earlier migration [journey]. The second went to search for him and ... [h]e went missing as well. I am dying twice: [because] I lost them and [because] I lost hope." © IOM 2021/Salam SHOKOR

3.4. Criminalizing families and civil society advocates

Families reported that another factor that deters them from reporting missing-migrant cases directly to the authorities is the questioning concerning those who facilitated the missing persons' journeys. They reported that officials often told them they were to blame for the outcomes of irregular journeys, as they supported the decisions of their loved ones to migrate, financed their journeys, or helped them get in touch with smugglers or brokers.[13] It is evident that the pressure to control irregular migration has impacted searches for missing migrants, as they are construed by the authorities not as missing-person cases, but as investigations into migrant smuggling operations. Families who participated in the research repeatedly indicated feeling humiliated and their concerns disregarded as authorities, when and if contacted, often showed more interest in identifying the smugglers behind the journeys, rather than locating the missing. The mother of a missing migrant in Ethiopia explained:

> At every meeting in the *kebele* [neighbourhood], officials blame families for collaborating with [a] *delala* [smuggler]. Whenever we go to the *kebele* for help, they keep asking for the contact details of [the] *delaloch* [smugglers], sometimes in a rough manner. They do not listen to us or advise as how to search for our missing children. We get better information from the *delaloch* than from State officials. The only interest of the Government is to catch and imprison [the] *delaloch*. This does not help us.

[13] While not directly reported in this research, in some cases families have been prosecuted for supporting their loved ones' irregular migration journeys which resulted in death. For example, a 25-year-old Afghan man, who survived a shipwreck in the Eastern Mediterranean in which his 5-year-old son lost his life, has been charged with child endangerment by a Greek court for taking his son on the perilous journey from Turkey to the Greek island of Samos. If convicted, he faces up to 10 years in prison (*Al Jazeera*, 2021).

In addition to the way in which friends and relatives are treated by authorities, there is also growing concern over how other community members are questioned by authorities for their involvement in the search of missing migrants. Several activists and advocates interviewed by the research team reported that authorities had threatened to investigate their alleged ties to smuggling facilitators. This kind of intimidation deters people from filing reports and discourages the activities of civil society and ordinary citizens supporting families. Aida, an advocate of Moroccan origin, explained:

> What is really cruel is that [when the authorities] ask what happened, they ask for the names [of the smugglers], for points of departure first. How can they ask that to families? I filed a report with the National Police [about a missing boy], and a couple of days later I received a call from the UCRIF [the Spanish Central Unit against Illegal Immigration Networks and Forgery], and they asked me if I had any ties to the owner of the *patera* in which the boy travelled.

Advocates provided testimonies like the one above, showing the ways they had been accused by the authorities of being smugglers or of supporting the work of smuggling networks while helping families in their searches. These activities, while humanitarian in nature, have increasingly become designated as smuggling in courts across Europe (Carrera et al., 2019; Cuttitta, 2015). Fearing being criminalized for their work, advocates have made the decision to carry out such activities in a more discreet fashion to avoid intimidation and potential threats of harassment. This implies relying on personal contacts working within government agencies or entities for support, out of fear that authorities might misconstrue or misunderstand their actions. However, this avoidance of risk also translates into a delay in search processes and the potential loss of critical information.

3.5. Crime: Scams and extortion

The clandestine nature of migrant disappearances, along with the gaps in information and the lack of effective search mechanisms, allows for the prevalence of scams, fraud and extortion along all migration pathways. Families in Spain, the United Kingdom and Ethiopia reported having been the target of crimes intended to extract money from them following the disappearance of their loved ones. While on occasion they might have received information through well-intended contacts on social media or phone calls, many families reported having been reached by people who claimed that they had information on their friends or relatives; that they had seen them in detention facilities, on board of boats, or in hospitals; and that they were willing to share this information in exchange for money. Joseph's family paid nearly GBP 2,000 to someone who claimed to have information on his sister's whereabouts:

> We posted messages on Facebook, and soon I got a WhatsApp call from a lady. She said she was friends with my sister. She spoke our language, she knew the part of Kumasi where we are from, and she seemed very genuine, so we didn't doubt her when she said Mercy [Joseph's sister] had been kidnapped in Niger and the people were asking for GBP 5,000 to release her. We had heard that this happens, so [we] believed her. I sent her my savings of GBP 2,000 to try to secure Mercy's release, but that was the last time the woman called. We used to chat on WhatsApp, but her number vanished as soon as she got the money. Just like that. People are just taking advantage of those of us in this situation.

Ethiopian families described that scammers often rely on the prevalence of kidnappings involving Ethiopian migrants on the northern route towards Libya and the Mediterranean Sea to take advantage of families. The lack of information concerning a loved one's whereabouts makes it harder to assert if they have been in fact kidnapped, or if the family is simply being targeted in a scam. Families often paid ransoms (or were familiar with this experience from others) to release their relatives from detention or other forms of confinement, or simply to obtain information on their whereabouts. Paying for ransom fees, on top of the debt acquired to finance a journey, can easily leave a family destitute. Furthermore, the payment of a ransom does not necessarily result in the release of the person, nor generate information about their whereabouts. In fact, most testimonies indicated that despite the payment of kidnapping fees or ransom, most migrants were never heard of again. The following testimony shows the financial impacts of kidnapping events:

> My brother went missing in Libya three years ago. He was kidnapped by rebels, and they held him hostage with many other Ethiopians. They sent us videos. They asked us to pay USD 12,500. We tried our best to raise money but could not put together the required amount. Then the criminals switched off their phone. Our brother has been missing since. It has been three years now. I think they killed him. My mother does not want to think he was killed. She insists that we keep searching. We went from office to office and even contacted the Libyan embassy here in Addis Ababa. We got nothing. Many families in our neighbourhood [Kirkos] have become poor since they borrowed money to pay the *delala* who facilitated the migration to Libya, and then sold their houses to pay the ransom money for kidnappers, and ultimately lost their sons. They have lost everything.

The decision to reach out to callers or follow up on their calls is difficult for many families, which in their desperation may feel inclined to explore all possibilities that can generate information. In Morocco, Laila fell for one of these attempts while looking for her brother:

> We sent a photo to the Moroccan public television show of missing persons – *Moukhtafoun*. People who had seen the programme started calling us. They tried to take advantage of us. They told us that [my brother] was in prison. Someone from Al Hoceima called us and asked us for money in exchange for information. We went to Al Hoceima and handed over [the] money. The person disappeared after that.

The degree of victimization that families face is compounded by the unlikelihood of them reporting scams or extortion calls to authorities, for they do not want to appear as gullible or ignorant, not to mention the fact that authorities have limited ability and/or interest in pursuing cases – especially as it is well known that families have used the services of smugglers. Their lack of regularized status may lead them to be reluctant to approach authorities to report scams for fear of being detained, or even deported. Broader issues of impunity, and overall lack of trust in institutions, drawing from past and/or ongoing experiences also shaped the reluctance of families to report. Lastly, as mentioned previously, families fear that reporting disappearances may lead to questions concerning smugglers and their organization, rather than actual searches.

4. Impacts of disappearances on families left behind

This section examines the multidimensional effects that the absence and unexplained fate of a loved one has on the lives of the people they have left behind. Gender systematically impacts the experiences of men and women, their access to information, their decision-making processes, and ultimately the aftermath of a death or disappearance. While much has been written about the material impacts of deaths and disappearances on migrant families, these have hardly been seen or read through a gender lens.

The lack of information and certainty about the whereabouts of missing loved ones prevents families from grieving and moving on with their lives. At the social level, this grief can lead to isolation, marginalization, and even stigmatization by their communities. Testimonies from families indicated that stigmatization disproportionately affects women relatives of the missing. Women are sometimes blamed for the disappearances of their male relatives, being perceived by their extended families and communities as having failed in their duties as mothers or wives or having brought bad luck. Stigma can also be associated to the inability to recover a missing person's remains and perform rites of bereavement.

In all countries, families face financial and legal challenges derived from the disappearances of loved ones in the context of migration. The economic hardships faced by research participants were connected to different factors. For family members who are migrants themselves in countries of destination such as Spain and the United Kingdom, the lack of regular migration status means that they face unstable and low-paying employment situations and poor housing conditions. Even for those who have attained legal status, prejudice and discrimination often limit their ability to find employment and generate an income. In countries of origin, family members who stayed behind are in debt and impoverished as a result of having to pay smuggling and ransom fees, which limits their ability to engage in a search and care for themselves and other relatives.

Separated at Sea. "There was a lot of fear and crying as many of us couldn't swim. We clung together for safety, but my sister and my wife became separated. We couldn't go after them because our sons were holding on to me and my brother-in-law, and the water was also moving us the other way. My wife had a white scarf, and I clearly saw her getting with the group going to the other boat." © IOM 2021/Salam SHOKOR

The interviews and field observations collected in the four countries of research also attest to the deep psychological and emotional impacts related to the loss of loved ones in the context of migration. The absence of loved ones and not knowing if they will ever return leaves families experiencing ambiguous loss that defies resolution and disrupts or freezes the process of grieving.

4.1. Missing migrants and gender dynamics

Families' testimonies show that gender is a critical element of the missing-migrant dynamics. Gender perceptions often shape the way information concerning the missing is communicated, the experiences of those left behind to search for them, as well as the migratory journey in the first place. During fieldwork, the research team came across abundant examples of how men's decisions to migrate were often expected and respected, and how their migration journeys were often regarded as admirable coming-of-age processes. Mothers shared how, at first, they did not suspect that their sons were missing or had embarked on migration journeys, thinking they were with other male friends or only asserting their independence. These mothers had been reluctant to infringe on their sons' freedom, or to question their masculinity. Mrs Chiringo, interviewed in Zimbabwe, told us:

> The last time I saw my grandson was in 2007. Since then, we have not seen him, but he used to communicate. I cannot say I remember the exact day I last spoke with him. At that time, as a family we were not very worried because this is what young men do – they look for work to take care [of] themselves. Then in 2010, he never called, and we started to suspect something bad had happened.

Most of these statements about missing loved ones involved the journeys (and eventual death or disappearance) of migrant men. In some cases, when questions were asked about the experiences of searching for daughters, sisters, mothers or other female relatives, responses were scant and hasty. Contrary to the journeys of men, which were often explained as courageous efforts to improve their families' lives, the disappearances of women were at times attributed to women behaving defiantly or even deviantly (for example, having migrated on their own, leaving children behind and/or taking up sex work to support themselves abroad).

The study also revealed that in the context of the searches, men – often in an alleged effort to protect or prevent women from being emotionally hurt – dominated the flow of information, keeping details from and sidelining women in the process. While explaining their experiences with women in the context of searching for missing migrants, several men justified their reluctance to involve women, fearing they would react in ways that seemed disproportionate and labelling them as overly sensitive or weak. Men often provided examples of how women were more likely to get depressed, or of how community events like weddings, births and other celebrations often reminded them of their lost sons or husbands. Assertions like "The mother cries all the time" or "Whenever the mother sees a neighbour getting married, she gets sad thinking she will not be able to live those moments of her child's life" contrast with the in-control approach often articulated by or attributed to men in statements like "There are times when I need to hold back information from my mother to protect her" or "It is important that [men] protect the privacy of the family".

These actions are not intended to be malevolent. However, the calls to "protect" women imply that mostly men (although in some cases, this was documented among women) can control the information available to female relatives, reducing their level of involvement in any decisions that may be made regarding the disappearances of loved ones. Some men explained how they preferred not to share information with women, "who always demanded information". Ousmane, whose nephew went missing in 2000 on his migration journey to the Canary Islands, limits the information he shares with his nephew's mother whenever he visits her. According to him:

> When I go to my parents' village, his mother always comes to see me. I always tell her that I don't know [anything], but I actually think her son is not alive. The mother keeps waiting. She still has hope of finding her son. She talks a lot about her son. She always talks about him in the present tense. But I haven't told her that I think her son is dead.

Women may also limit the amount of information they share with other women, in an attempt to reduce their suffering. However, these women refrained from demanding explanations or detailed information from men, in the process reproducing gender norms. Laila, one of eight siblings, has led the search for her missing brother, who disappeared on his journey to Spain. When asked how her family had managed the disappearance of her brother, she switched from Arabic to Spanish. She wanted to prevent her mother, who was sitting next to her, from following the conversation because she did not want to make her feel sad.

Women who participated in the research then recounted how their difficulty in carrying out searches was also compounded by limited or restricted access to social spaces which were often male-dominated, like discussion groups, church gatherings or migrant associations. Unlike men, many women reported lacking the support of male friends, colleagues, pastors and imams who created or opened spaces for their participation. This issue was evident in Munish's reflections on the search for her brother, who went missing on his journey to the United Kingdom:

> We have an association, and sometimes I want to go there to ask people. But being a woman, it is not that easy because it is mostly men who attend the meetings. ... Women are not banned from attending the meetings, but it is complicated. ... It is frowned upon in the community to mix with men that way, so no woman really does it.

Invisible Women. Women's perspectives, needs and priorities are often dismissed in the context of search processes. Gendered and stereotyped perceptions of women as overly emotional, sensitive or fragile often limit their access to information and their level of decision-making concerning the search. They also face limited or restricted access to social spaces where they could conduct a search, as these are often spaces dominated by men. © IOM 2021/Salam SHOKOR

Women's experiences with socioeconomic precarity also affect their involvement in search processes. Many women participants held unstable and low-paid jobs, often had insecure migration status, and faced socioeconomic hardships, which limited their ability to search for missing loved ones. While socioeconomic precarity is an issue for migrant men as well, in the case of women it can be compounded by sexual harassment, intimidation and abuse. Migrant women in the United Kingdom shared how they often had to deal with sexual harassment and demands for sex in exchange for assistance in the search process. Habibi, a Pakistani woman who lost contact with her mother and three siblings while in transit, was sexually assaulted by men who had promised to help her look for her loved ones:

> This was in 2009. My papers had not gone through, and [the place] where I was staying was very bad. There was mould all over, and the heating didn't work. I went to shops in the area to sit around to stay warm, and I met him at a betting shop that I was visiting. He was very charming, and everyone liked him. We used to talk a lot, and he said he could help me with the search. He invited me to his flat so that we can use his computer to send messages. And that's how it happened. Both him and a friend of his [assaulted] me.

Habibi did not initially report the assault to the police because she still believed that her attacker's genuine intention was to assist her with the search. While she eventually reported the abuse, she has not received assistance with the search for her missing relatives.

The way in which gender shapes the experiences of women in unequal ways was also clear in their experiences as the surviving partners of missing or deceased migrants. Women reported encountering challenges not experienced by men, derived in part from the social pressures they faced from the families of their spouses or partners – caregiving obligations, communal duties involving the cultivation of land, legal challenges derived from the inability to establish the deaths or passing of their spouses, among others. Gendered expectations about marriage, fidelity, fertility and reproduction were imposed systematically on women research participants, while men with missing wives did not report experiencing the same social pressures. Some women reported being repeatedly cornered into getting married to avoid leaving their children destitute, while others experienced pressure to remain single until the deaths of their spouses had been confirmed. The family of Marjani's missing husband, for example, chastised her following false rumours that she had started a new relationship in London:

> His sister who used to be my best friend called me all sorts of names. They said I could not even wait a few years before moving in with another man, that I wasn't even looking for [my husband], that I was still married, and I should think about that ... a whole lot of things even though what they heard wasn't true. All of this causes me great pain on top of everything I am suffering.

Several women also indicated that they face legal challenges because of their ambiguous marital status. Unable to prove the death of her husband or to obtain a death certificate, a woman cannot claim ownership of the properties belonging to her departed spouse, and her children cannot apply for State support or legally claim inheritance. The wife of a missing migrant described her legal challenges and lack of independence this way:

> I can't talk about property or inherit the land before I get proof of the death of my husband. According to the tradition, his brothers control the land. I can't go to the courts and get into a fight with his relatives. If they farm the land and give some food to my children, that is fine. I can't go against tradition and quarrel over inheritance. Land disputes are [a] serious problem in this village. People kill each other over land conflicts. I live with his relatives. I depend on them ... Everything is difficult for me.

As discussed in Section 4.3, migrants often acquire significant debt in order to cover the costs of their journeys. Many others depart already indebted, for reasons ranging from household expenses, family illnesses or smuggling fees for other family members. However, even in the event of someone's death or disappearance, debt is not cancelled, and many times the responsibility to cover financial obligations falls on a missing migrant's wife. Given the fact that women are often prevented from assuming control over property or other inherited goods, the debt imposes long-term obligations that limit women's ability to care for themselves, their children and possibly other relatives. A widow who lost her husband during his migration journey to South Africa explained:

> I was left on my own with kids to feed. I was left alone with the debts we acquired to pay for his travel. I would be happy if I got help to pay the debt and save the land we put down as collateral. I want to feed my children. I want to send them [to] school. But how can I do all these alone? His family should stop blaming me for [my] bad luck. [His disappearance] was not my fault. If they helped me care for these small children, I could at least work. His brothers also want to take the land. My problems are many.

4.2. Shame and stigma

The research found that many families were stigmatized as a result of experiencing the loss of loved ones during migration. While issues of stigma and social marginalization were reported in all countries, they often had a gender dimension. In some areas of Ethiopia, traditional gender norms result in communities attributing the death or disappearance of a husband to the "bad luck" of the wife who stayed behind, which can have serious social implications for her and her children. The wife of a man who died on his migration journey described this as follows:

> His relatives frequently blame me because they assume that my husband is dead as a result of my "bad luck". In our community, it is very common to blame wives [whenever something wrong happens to their husbands]. That is heartbreaking.

Similarly, women in Zimbabwe said that the absence of a married man was often interpreted by family members, in-laws and the wider community as linked to relationship problems caused by the wife, which often led to stigmatizing attitudes and behaviours towards wives and children of missing migrants. Ms Sithole, whose husband migrated to South Africa and, at the time of the interview, had not made any contact with the family for more than a year, explained:

> Wherever I go, I have a tag that my husband ran away from me. I feel exposed and vulnerable. The community has lost all respect for me. My children are harassed willy-nilly at the township and at school. Where do I start to look for my husband? Did he arrive well? Is he alive? Is he coming back? I cannot even reach out to community members.

In Zimbabwe, families talked about the social stigma associated with disappearances, as they feared that neighbours or other community members would think their relatives had abandoned them or were avoiding their responsibility to send money home. The fear of social stigma meant that families made every effort to keep disappearances linked to migration private. Mr Bumhira, whose brother went missing after migrating to South Africa, explained his family's situation:

> At first, [my brother's] phone used to ring, and no one would pick it up, but these days we cannot get through, and it's so heartbreaking. Our neighbours here who came back from South Africa or those with children who work in South Africa, they tell us they see him. We have become the laughing stock in the village as everyone says we have been rejected by our own blood.

Some families in West Africa also reported that they had opted to conduct their searches in private, without disclosing details to those outside their circles, citing traditions and local customs. Martin, a migrant advocate from Senegal interviewed in Spain, explained how the disappearances or deaths of young people are interpreted by communities:

> You cannot speak about death. Families do not allow it. In our community itself, we do not talk about the deaths of young people. The subject is discussed in the family, within the family. But never outside of it.

Stigma can also be associated to the inability to recover a missing person's remains and perform rites of bereavement. In Ethiopia, traditions and religious guidelines establish that families need to bury the remains of their relatives in the graveyard of their ancestors. Families help the deceased make the transition from the living world to the world of the dead through a series of religious and cultural rites which cannot take place without the remains. Socially, it is believed that the inability to recover the remains of a missing relative means that their family is cursed. A man who is searching for his missing brother explained:

> Our grief would have not been as deep had we found our brother's corpse and buried him in the graveyard of our grandfathers. [Worst] of all, in our community, it is believed as a huge curse for a family not to be able to get the remains of their dead family member. The whole family and their next generation will be considered cursed.

The mother of a young Ethiopian man who went missing described the humiliation and shame that her family experienced when they were unable to find her son's remains and perform burial rituals:

> I always wish I could get back his remains. ... I know death is natural, but when someone dies somewhere unknown, it is too painful. In our culture, if someone is buried without the proper cultural and religious funeral rituals, it is considered a kind of "double death". We experienced it first when we lost him, and yet again when we were unable to perform the mourning and burial.

4.3. Legal impacts and socioeconomic precarity

The financial and legal challenges derived from the disappearances of loved ones in the context of migration are severe for families in all four countries and revealed gaps in their access to assistance and support, particularly for the most marginalized ones, including people with irregular or uncertain migration status.

In destination countries like the United Kingdom and Spain, for example, interviewed families indicated that their financial challenges were largely the result of their inability to regularize their migration status and thus become legally employed and make a stable income. Particularly among United Kingdom–based families, the series of measures to discourage irregular migration – what has become known as the "hostile environment policy" – has drastically reduced, if not altogether eliminated, the possibility of people without legal or certain migration status to be legally employed, and for asylum seekers to cover their basic personal expenses (Okyere and Kondeh, 2021). The costs associated with a search (such as making calls, spending time on the Internet and travelling to meet with those that might be able to help) are prohibitive, especially with limited income. Individuals and families interviewed for the report indicated that they had to prioritize their own survival or that of their families, having to postpone or delay any search processes, at the expense of their physical and mental health. Ali explained:

> The main challenges I can say is ... first, if you are struggling to survive yourself, you can't find someone. Unless you settle down, you can't look for them. Unless you have somewhere to live, you have a roof on your head, and then some income to live on, that's when you can really focus on finding them. But when you are not independent or in a strong position with your papers or socially or economically yourself, you can't do anything.

For families in countries of origin, such as Zimbabwe and Ethiopia, the disappearances of loved ones can carry devastating financial and legal consequences. Many migrants mortgage or borrow money against family plots or houses or acquire significant debts to cover the expenses related to their journeys. Their disappearances or even their deaths do not make the debts go away. Plenty of interviewed families indicated that the disappearances of loved ones had been compounded by the loss of family properties to lenders, when they are unable to pay back the loans and interests. A widow whose husband disappeared en route to South Africa explained:

> I gave birth four months after he left Ethiopia. You see [pauses and cries] ... You can imagine what happened to me. My heart is broken. He was the only one who took care of and understood me. He farmed the land. I don't know how I am going to raise these kids. I sold everything we had to search for information and to make international calls to his friends, relatives and sometimes to the brokers. We had also borrowed money with a high interest rate from local moneylenders to cover his migration costs. Now the moneylenders are asking me to pay back as per agreement or they will take the land. Yet, I can't pay their money and the interest. The debt is increasing every year. Initially, we thought that my husband would pay back the money we had borrowed [once] he arrived in South Africa.

Older people also face grave challenges as a result of the deaths or disappearances of their children, especially when they have invested or mortgaged their properties or lands to finance the journeys. Older mothers and fathers are often left without the economic support that their children were expected to provide had their journeys been successful. These losses are compounded when deaths or disappearances involve multiple children in a single family. The father of two missing sons told us:

> My sons were my hope ... They used to help me till and farm the land. ... I am getting older and weaker. I can't work. I rely on my relatives for agricultural labour, but they can only help me after finishing with their own farming. My farm is ploughed late and cannot produce much yield. ... Look at my life, which is becoming hell. I cannot even pay the moneylender. I am living with debt. My wife is already bedridden.

An older woman, Ms Mandi, interviewed in Chimanimani, Zimbabwe, said:

> My first-born son was our breadwinner. He just said he is going to leave for South Africa. Till this day I haven't heard from him. At first, I thought he was settling, and I will hear from him, but years have passed without a word. I don't even have anywhere to start. Who[m] do I ask?

Furthermore, families face challenges when trying to obtain declarations of absence or death to clarify their legal situation in relation to their missing relatives. Lacking official verification of a person's absence or death, their survivors are unable to file documentation that may provide some financial relief or to claim possession over land or other properties that may allow them to settle debts or to support others who were financially relying on the missing. It can also impact the development of children, particularly if their parents did not obtain birth certificates for them before they left. With no access to birth certificates and identity papers, children are prevented from accessing services, including education and health care, and from fully exercising their rights. Grace's brother-in-law left Zimbabwe in search of a job, first to South Africa and then Botswana, leaving his two children with their grandmother. At the time of the interview, he had been missing for seven years. His disappearance has severely affected his children's lives, who are unable to get identity documents that would enable them to fully participate in school activities, including sitting in national examinations needed to attend higher levels of education.

> After some time, we tried to get birth certificates for his two children ... The registrar wanted to confirm that the father is either dead or has given us permission to take the birth certificate in his absence [which we could not prove].

The disappearance or death of a man, in societies where property is inherited along paternal lines, means that quite often, decisions concerning the distribution of family land or other property are made by the family of the missing migrant in a way that excludes his wife and children, as discussed in Section 4.1. Although this is not legal, several such cases were documented in Ethiopia during the project.

As discussed throughout the report, long-standing issues related to precarity, compounded by lack of legal status and discrimination, created strong limitations to a family's ability to conduct searches. Atochares, the informal settlement in Southern Spain where the research team met with families, caught fire in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of its residents – mainly West African and Moroccan migrants working in nearby agricultural fields – lost their homes during this incident. Given Atochares' status as an irregular settlement, the people who called it home received no assistance from the State. In this case, homelessness – but also the lack of access to basic services – prevented families to continue looking for their loved ones. In some instances, migrants lost important evidence in the fire that could have been used as part of legal efforts to regularize their stay.

4.4. Emotional and psychological challenges

As other studies have shown (Robins and Kovras, 2016; Mediterranean Missing, 2016; Robins, 2019), the loss of a loved one is accompanied by severe psychological and emotional challenges. Families in the four countries included in this project reported experiencing feelings of fear, sadness and anger. Long-standing depression, loneliness and anxiety were also common. Beyond the notion of "ambiguous loss" – the inability to establish whether a missing loved one is dead or alive (Boss, 2017) – the families of missing migrants indicated experiencing physical challenges or ailments derived from their loved ones' disappearances, even women who were bedridden and/or unable to walk following the loss of their children. Just one example of the pain expressed by the interview participants is from Mr Foroma, in Zimbabwe:

> The years I have lost my brother have been the most painful years, not only for me but for all of us as a family. When your brother goes missing like this, without a trace, not a day would pass by without thinking about it and reliving the pain. Relatives, friends and neighbours have tried to give us the emotional support we need, but the pain is just unbearable.

However, these challenges are not derived solely from the loss. As mentioned earlier in this report, being deprived or dispossessed as a consequence of the loss is also a constant source of fear and emotional distress among many families. For example, among Ethiopian families, the loss of land in a predominantly agricultural society causes extreme stress to women who became widows following the deaths or disappearances of their spouses, and among older relatives of migrants. The possibility of losing their independence, livelihood or source of income – along with the family conflicts that emerge over the loss – was a constant point of concern among families, especially among women, who were often harassed or intimidated by their in-laws and lenders to give away their land rights (see Section 4.1).

In the United Kingdom, several men described how the pain and shame associated with the loss of loved ones and their inability to search for them had led to severe depression, which eventually reduced their ability to work, and in some cases had led to homelessness and substance abuse. Some men also disclosed that while they had to continue looking for their loved ones, their financial obligations to their families and the need to support themselves while unable to be legally employed constituted a very heavy load, which was in some instances only manageable through the use of drugs or alcohol, given that mental health services were unavailable. Abbas shared his experience:

> I want to say that anyone in my position, looking for their loved ones and also dealing with all the other problems, must get [mental health] support from day one. Else they may harm themselves or maybe they will even harm others. I was walking in the streets with bad thoughts in my mind all the time. Maybe I should jump in front of a car ... all of these thoughts. But even after I told my doctor that I was going to kill myself, it was another two weeks before I was able to see the psychiatrist.

Women also indicated how the uncertainty of their immigration status, the loss of loved ones, and their inability to secure employment or housing had resulted in sadness and exhaustion. Unable to cover their basic expenses, some women had to accept assistance from other migrants or refugees who took advantage of their precarity, engaging in abusive behaviour towards them, including sexual harassment and abuse, as described in the section on gender.

Many families expressed how their own migrant journeys had often been quite traumatic, left sequels that had not been addressed, and were compounded by the loss of loved ones. With the exception of one man, no family members interviewed in the United Kingdom reported having received psychological assistance to address the trauma of their own journeys or one derived from the loss of loved ones in transit. In other words, the trauma of having endured harrowing experiences and precarious journeys was often compounded by the loss of loved ones. Combined with extremely precarious living conditions, searching for missing loved ones not only was difficult, but actually exacerbated such trauma.

Surreal Limbo. Without the possibility of mourning collectively, the emotional impact of losing a loved one is compounded tenfold. Not knowing if a family member is dead or alive also puts families in limbo, in a state of ambiguous loss. A migrant father is stuck in his personal limbo. He looks in the mirror and sees his rear reflection, representing the surreal reality of the state of mind that families of missing migrants often find themselves in. This work is a nod to and a transformation of Rene Magritte's painting *Not to Be Reproduced* (1937) (artist's concept note). © IOM 2021/Salam SHOKOR

CHAPTER 3

Conclusion

Over seven years have passed since IOM began its Missing Migrants Project in 2014 to document deaths and disappearances during migration worldwide. Thousands of people have gone missing on migration journeys since then – estimates from IOM indicate at least 42,000. Although this research was not intended to measure "progress", the fact that the Project continues to record the deaths and disappearances of people on migration routes every day indicates the urgent need to implement the Global Compact for Migration's Objective 8, which commits States to "cooperate internationally to save lives and prevent migrant deaths and injuries through individual or joint search and rescue operations, standardized collection and exchange of relevant information, assuming collective responsibility to preserve the lives of all migrants, in accordance with international law. [And] ... to identify those who have died or gone missing, and to facilitate communication with affected families" (UNGA, 2018).

This report brings together the key findings of the Missing Migrants Project pilot research study on the experiences of families of missing migrants in four countries: Spain, the United Kingdom, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe. The four reports of the study join other important research that has highlighted similar experiences and challenges concerning the lives of families of missing migrants, while also strengthening the evidence related to the structural and institutional gaps that make it difficult for families to obtain answers concerning the fate of their loved ones.

This research also adds emphasis to the fact that people with missing migrant relatives are neither passive nor apathetic. They mobilize the resources at their disposal as soon as they determine that loved ones have disappeared. They reach out to their vast transnational networks and contact brokers or smugglers, community organizations, and civil society in their efforts to gather evidence or data that can ultimately be used to launch or carry out a search. These efforts, however, are often met with the indifference or outright hostility of government institutions and/or a lack of dedicated capacity and resources in non-governmental and international organizations. Whether State actors are ill equipped to meaningfully address the issue of missing migrants and/or are influenced by deep biases shaped by class or race, families' requests for assistance are generally dismissed. This is further compounded by the lack of legislation, guidelines or protocols that specifically outline who is responsible to search for missing migrants, the process that said search must follow, and the need to involve the families of the missing in search processes.

By situating migrant families as central actors and as important collaborators in the research process, this project revealed a more complex picture of the ways in which migrant families look for their loved ones. The project used a research approach which allowed families to identify their own questions, challenges and priorities. This certainly revealed challenges similar to those identified in other studies: the lack of institutional engagement, the long-term economic impact of the loss, and the psychological implications derived from it. Yet it also revealed many other aspects that until now had not been necessarily identified in the literature and that deserve further exploration. Six significant findings were identified across the countries of research:

(a) The way in which **gender, class, race and migration status define the migratory experience, including the search for missing migrants**

Men and women experience the search differently, although often replicating social hierarchies – women face limited or restricted access to information and social spaces which are often male-dominated, and encounter challenges not experienced by men, derived in part from gendered expectations about care, marriage, fidelity, fertility and reproduction that are imposed systematically onto women. Beyond the racially discriminatory effects of restrictive migration policies, race and racism influence families' experiences of searching for their missing loved ones, often dictating the kind of treatment they face in their searches. Families shared experiences of criminalization; discrimination on the basis of their racial or ethnic origin, citizenship or migration status; and over-policing, which further cemented their reluctance to seek support or assistance. Structural inequality, precarity, and lack of access to services and social protection also shape the ability of families to conduct searches and deal with the impacts of the loss.

(b) **Traditional law enforcement approaches and legal administrative procedures for searching for missing persons are not effective for missing-migrant cases**

Families do not approach authorities for help, or when they do, they are asked to provide information that they do not have, due to the nature of how people go missing on irregular migration journeys. Furthermore, the data collected and analysed by families and that could be used in searches are systematically dismissed by virtue of them not following forensic techniques or because they were collected by people perceived as not trained professionally. This may mean losing important pieces of information in the search for missing migrants.

(c) **The criminalization of civil society's and families' search efforts**

In the push towards containing the spread of migrant smuggling operations – and in some instances, to show partners in the European Union their commitment to contain irregular migration – some countries may incur acts of harassment and intimidation, and privilege the collection of data related to the facilitation of migrant smuggling, over the kind that may allow the locating of missing migrants. Families and civil society advocates reported encountering acts of suspicion, harassment, hostility and intimidation, attitudes of blaming, and accusations of association with smuggling in their interactions with authorities.

(d) **The role of informal networks in the search process**

Faced with the lack of responses by the State, the vast majority of families who participated in the research received meaningful support in their search only from informal networks, including other migrants, activists, grass-roots and community-based associations, and the facilitators of their loved ones' irregular journeys or the people connected with them (that is, smugglers, brokers or *passeurs*). While often vilified in the literature on migration, smugglers or migration brokers emerged in the study as actors in the search in some contexts, trusted by families even after the disappearances or even the deaths of migrants had been confirmed. Understanding that the demand for smuggling services is rooted in the lack of legal and accessible paths to migration rather than privileging narrow organized-crime perceptions concerning the role of smugglers is key.

(e) **Idealized or sentimentalized perceptions concerning migrant communities**

Many depictions of migrant and diasporic communities and their reactions to the search create the illusion that these processes are conflict-free, conducive to solidarity and support. However, people searching for missing relatives can experience tensions derived from gender and class expectations, as well as harassment, intimidation, and even violence and extortion in their own communities. While help provided at the community level was identified as a source of great emotional, financial and moral support in many cases, the testimonies in this study also show its limitations. Incorporating these nuanced dynamics into suggestions on how to better assist the families of missing migrants is key.

(f) **Along with States, international agencies working on development and humanitarian concerns have also not effectively begun to tackle the issue of missing migrants**

The research participants in this project had limited or no interaction with international organizations regarding their missing loved ones. Other stakeholders, such as ICRC and IOM country offices, cited limited resources to properly address these issues. Apart from the ICRC – which works towards preventing disappearances, facilitating the search for and identification of missing migrants, and addressing the needs of families – no other agencies or organizations with such an explicit mandate were identified through this research. However, considering the cross-border dynamics involved in the topic of missing migrants, it is clear that there is a role for international agencies who can help coordinate and guide work using their networks around the world. The research findings point to the need for trust-building between families (and community-based groups, NGOs and activists, who in some contexts support them) and authorities, when it comes to resolving cases of missing migrants. International organizations can also play a key role in this regard.

This research project was an effort to highlight the reverberating impacts that the deaths and disappearances of people on migration journeys have on their families and communities left behind. It documented the experiences of 76 families of missing migrants – but there are thousands more families in the same situation, wondering what happened to their loved ones who left one day and were never heard of again. While the current debates around migration often render invisible the stories and lives of people who went missing or died crossing borders, and those of their families searching for them, this project aimed to document some of these stories so that they are not forgotten. The project intended to create a space for families to articulate their experiences in their own terms, and to call attention to the structural constraints that leave their voices perpetually unheard. Families of missing migrants are not "voiceless". They are not passive victims. Rather, their views have systematically been ignored and marginalized. This project was an effort to listen to them, centre their voices and amplify them.

The project also sought to recommend concretely how States, regional bodies, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and civil society should work towards filling the support gaps for families with relatives missing in the context of migration. Please refer to the accompanying country reports, which provide greater detail of the research findings in Ethiopia, the United Kingdom, Spain and Zimbabwe, as well as to the forthcoming policy briefing, which synthesizes these recommendations.

Where Is My Brother? "The years I have lost my brother have been the most painful years, not only for me but for all of us as a family," said Mr Foroma. "The pain is just unbearable." © IOM 2021/Salam SHOKOR

Bibliography

Adugna, F., P. Deshingkar and T. Ayalew
2019 Brokers, migrants and the State: *Berri Kefach* "door openers" in Ethiopian clandestine migration to South Africa. Working Paper 56. Migrating Out of Poverty, University of Sussex. Available at https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/14872.

Al Jazeera
2021 Refugee father charged with son's death on journey to Greece. 19 March. Available at www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/19/refugee-father-charged-with-sons-death-on-journey-to-greece.

Añón, J.G., B. Bradford, J.A. García Sáez, A. Gascón Cuenca and A. Llorente Ferreres
2013 *Identificación policial por perfil étnico en España: Informe sobre experiencias y actitudes en relación con las actuaciones policiales*. Institut de Drets Humans, Universitat de València. Available at www.uv.es/garciaj/pub/2013_perfil_etnico.pdf.

Aredo, D.
2010 The iddir: An informal insurance arrangement in Ethiopia. *Savings and Development*, 34(1):53–72.

Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de Andalucía (APDHA)
2021 *Derechos Humanos en la Frontera Sur 2021*. Sevilla. Available at www.apdha.org/frontera-sur-21/.

Benton, M., J. Batalova, S. Davidoff-Gore and T. Schmidt
2021 *COVID-19 and the State of Global Mobility in 2020*. IOM, Geneva, and Migration Policy Institute (MPI), Washington, D.C. Available at https://publications.iom.int/books/covid-19-and-state-global-mobility-2020.

Boss, P.
2017 Families of the missing: Psychosocial effects and therapeutic approaches. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 99(2):519–534. Available at https://international-review.icrc.org/sites/default/files/irrc_99_905_4.pdf.

Carrera, S., V. Mitsilegas, J. Allsopp and L. Vosyliute
2019 *Policing Humanitarianism: EU Policies against Human Smuggling and Their Impact on Civil Society*. Hart Publishing, Oxford.

Chikohomero, R., M. Sánchez Dionis and K. Dearden
2021 *Families of Missing Migrants in Zimbabwe: Their Search for Answers, the Impacts of Loss and Recommendations for Improved Support*. IOM, Geneva. Available at https://publications.iom.int/books/families-missing-migrants-zimbabwe-their-search-answers-impacts-loss-and-recommendations.

Chingono, N.
2019 No ticket to ride: Zimbabweans trapped for months without passports. *The Guardian*, 8 July. Available at www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/jul/08/no-ticket-to-ride-trapped-without-passports-zimbabwe.

Crocker, R.M., R.C. Reineke and M.E. Ramos Tovar
2021 Ambiguous loss and embodied grief related to Mexican migrant disappearances. *Medical Anthropology*. Available at www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01459740.2020.1860962.

Cruz-Santiago, A.
2020 Lists, maps, and bones: The untold journeys of citizen-led forensics in Mexico. *Victims and Offenders*, 15(3):350–369.

Cuttitta, P.
2015 Humanitarianism and migration in the Mediterranean borderscape: The Italian–North African border between sea patrols and integration measures. *Borderscaping: Imaginations and Practices of Border Making*, 131–140.

Daily Star

2020 Libya killings: All 26 Bangladeshis buried in Mizdah town. 31 May. Available at www.thedailystar.net/top-news/news/libya-killings-all-26-bangladeshis-buried-mizdah-town-1906891.

Diarra, A.

2020 En Guinée, la solitude des familles de migrants disparus en mer et oubliés des médias. *Le Monde*, 28 April. Available at www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2020/04/28/en-guinee-la-solitude-des-familles-de-migrants-disparus-en-mer-et-oublies-des-medias_6038049_3212.html.

Díaz de Sarralde, A.

2018 El policía que me identificó dijo que tenía órdenes de buscar a personas con mi color de piel. *El Diario*, 15 December. Available at www.eldiario.es/euskadi/policia-identifico-ordenes-buscar-personas_128_1793868.html.

Ennaji, M. and F. Bignami

2019 Logistical tools for refugees and undocumented migrants: Smartphones and social media in the city of Fès. *Work Organisation, Labour & Globalisation*, 13(1):62–78. Available at https://doi.org/10.13169/workorgalaboglob.13.1.0062.

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

2010 *Informe «Data in Focus» Identificaciones policiales y minorías*. Vienna. Available at https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/1132-EU-MIDIS-police_ES.pdf.

Ghorbeli, F.

2019 Illegal immigrants and the deportation from Italy. Socio-anthropological study. Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES), Tunis. Available at http://ftdes.net/rapports/etude.rapatrie.en.pdf.

González Beilfuss, M.

2019 Safe reporting of crime for victims and witnesses with irregular migration status in Spain. Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), University of Oxford. Available at www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/SR19-Spain-country-report.pdf.

Heller, C. and A. Pécoud

2019 Counting migrants' deaths at the border: From civil society counterstatistics to (inter) governmental recuperation. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 64(4):480–500. Available at https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764219882996.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

2013 *«Barça ou barsak» : Étude sur les besoins actuels des familles de migrants Sénégalais disparus*. Dakar. Available at https://familylinks.icrc.org/fr/Pages/Actualit%C3%A9sEtRessources/Ressources/FNAmigrantsSenegal.aspx.

2015 *Evaluación sobre la situación de las familias de personas migrantes desaparecidas: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras y México*. Mexico City. Available at www.icrc.org/es/document/asistencia-humanitaria-personas-migrantes-amputadas-gravemente-lesionadas-o-enfermas.

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

2016 *Egyptian Unaccompanied Migrant Children: A case study on irregular migration.* Cairo. Available at https://publications.iom.int/books/egyptian-unaccompanied-migrant-children-case-study-irregular-migration.

2017 *Fatal Journeys Volume 3, Part 1: Improving Data on Missing Migrants*. Geneva. Available at https://publications.iom.int/books/fatal-journeys-volume-3-part-1-improving-data-missing-migrants.

2019 *Glossary on Migration. International Migration Law No. 34*. Geneva. Available at https://publications.iom.int/books/international-migration-law-ndeg34-glossary-migration.

2020 COVID-19 compounds families' painful search for missing and disappeared migrants. 24 June. IOM Missing Migrants Project. Available at https://medium.com/@UNmigration/covid-19-compounds-families-painful-search-for-missing-and-disappeared-migrants-257abb3ad6a5.

Kobelinsky, C.

2017 Exister au risque de disparaître. Récits sur la mort pendant la traversée vers l'Europe. *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 33(2–3):115–131. Available at www.cairn.info/revue-europeenne-des-migrations-internationales-2017-2-page-115.htm?contenu=resume.

2019 Les traces des morts : gestion des corps retrouvés et traitement des corps absents à la frontière hispano-marocaine. *Critique Internationale*, 83(2):21–39. Available at www.cairn.info/revue-critique-internationale-2019-2-page-21.htm.

Last, T., G. Mirto, O. Ulusoy, I. Urquijo, J. Harte, N. Bami, M. Pérez Pérez, F. Macias Delgado, A. Tapella, A. Michalaki, E. Michalitsi, E. Latsoudi, N. Tselepi, M. Chatziprokopiou and T. Spijkerboer

2017 Deaths at the borders database: Evidence of deceased migrants' bodies found along the southern external borders of the European Union. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 43(5):693–712. Available at www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1369183X.2016.1276825.

Last Rights Project

2021 *Every Body Counts: Death, Covid-19 and Migration – Understanding the Consequences of Pandemic Measures on Migrant Families*. London. Available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1f3QRFCcQmeI5AmhAug38JVTRmfccQyHA/view.

Levenson, M.

2020 At least 140 drown in worst shipwreck of 2020, UN agency says. *The New York Times*, 29 October. Available at www.nytimes.com/2020/10/29/us/senegal-migrants-drowned.html.

Martin, M.

2020 El "revolucionario" al que se tragó el mar de Lanzarote. *El País*, 8 December. Available at https://elpais.com/espana/2020-12-08/el-revolucionario-al-que-se-trago-el-mar-de-lanzarote.html.

Mediterranean Missing

2016 Missing migrants in the Mediterranean: Addressing the humanitarian crisis. Summary report. September. Available at www.missingmigrants.iom.int/publications (forthcoming).

Mengiste, T.A.

2018 Refugee protections from below: Smuggling in the Eritrea–Ethiopia context. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 676(1):57–76.

2021 *Families of Missing Migrants in Ethiopia: Their Search for Answers, the Impacts of Loss and Recommendations for Improved Support*. IOM, Geneva. Available at https://publications.iom.int/books/families-missing-migrants-their-search-answers-impacts-loss-and-recommendations-improved.

Nyathi, K.

2020 Traffickers dump South Africa–bound immigrants in Zimbabwe. *The East African*, 30 May. Available at www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/africa/Traffickers-dump-immigrants-transit-South-Africa-Zimbabwe/4552902-5567770-oj8g4jz/index.html.

Okyere, S. and S. Kondeh

2021 *Families of Missing Migrants in the United Kingdom: Their Search for Answers, the Impacts of Loss and Recommendations for Improved Support*. IOM, Geneva. Available at https://publications.iom.int/books/families-missing-migrants-united-kingdom-their-search-answers-impacts-loss-and-recommendations.

Open Society Foundations

2019 *Under Suspicion: The Impact of Discriminatory Policing in Spain*. Available at www.justiceinitiative.org/publications/under-suspicion-speaking-out-about-ethnic-profiling-in-spain.

Robins, S.
2019 The affective border: Missing migrants and the governance of migrant bodies at the EU's southern frontier. *Journal of Refugee Studies*.

Robins, S. and I. Kovras
2016 Death as the border: Managing missing migrants and unidentified bodies at the EU's Mediterranean frontier. *Political Geography*, 55:40–49.

Robins, S., I. Kovras and A. Vallianatou
2014 Addressing migrant bodies on Europe's southern frontier: An agenda for research and practice. *Working Papers in Conflict Transformation and Social Justice*, CTSJ WP 05-14.

Sanchez, G.
2020 Beyond militias and tribes: The facilitation of migration in Libya. EUI Working Paper RSCAS 2020/09. Migration Policy Centre, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, Firenze. Available at https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/66186.

Sánchez Dionis, M., G. Sanchez and C. Arce Jiménez
2021 *Families of Missing Migrants in Spain: Their Search for Answers, the Impacts of Loss and Recommendations for Improved Support*. IOM, Geneva. Available at https://publications.iom.int/books/families-missing-migrants-spaintheir-search-answers-impacts-loss-and-recommendations-improved.

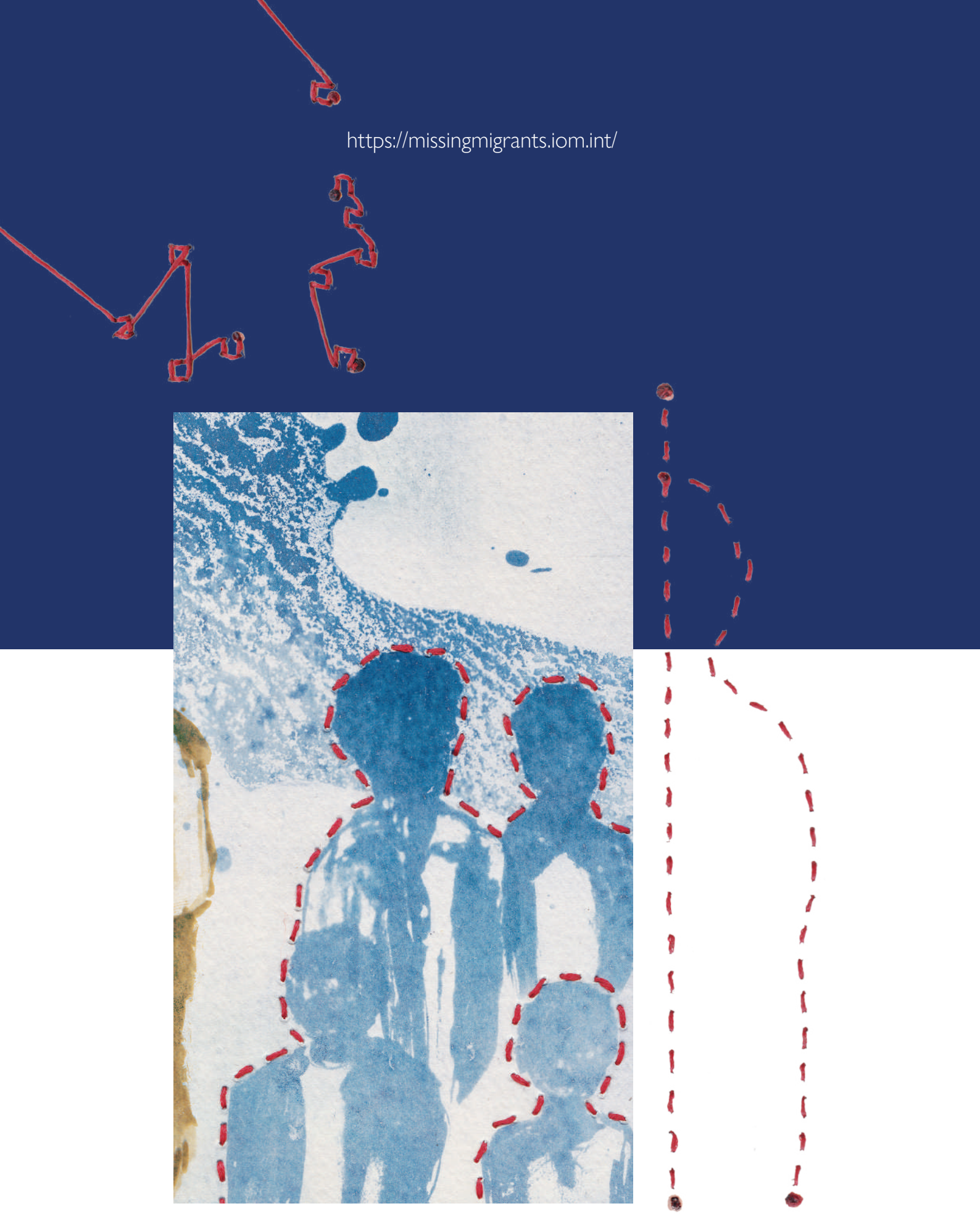
Siddique, H.
2015 Stowaway death of man who died with a single pound in his pocket. *The Guardian*, 19 June. Available at www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/19/stowaway-death-jose-matada-british-airways-heathrow.

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)
2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, adopted on 19 December. Available at www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/195.

Walker, P.
2013 Man found dead on London street "was probably stowaway who fell from plane". *The Guardian*, 25 April. Available at www.theguardian.com/uk/2013/apr/25/man-street-stowaway-fell-plane.

Zagaria, V.
2019 The morally fraught *harga*: Migration blame games in a Tunisian border town. *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 37(2):57–73.

https://missingmigrants.iom.int/



IOM
UN MIGRATION