



JUNIOR ACADEMY MODEL UN X

**AU**

TOPIC GUIDE

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## INTRODUCTION

### **TOPIC: Migrant Smuggling**

Migrant smuggling has been an ongoing issue that has not only affected countries in Africa but has also affected countries internationally. Smugglers find this to be a profitable business that does not show much signs of instability or decline in its near future. This problem reflects the complex challenges of Africa such as economic disparities, political instabilities in some regions and more. Africa has, for these reasons, become a significant hub for both intra and intercontinental migration. Migrant smuggling is an issue that puts lives of people who are seeking better opportunities at unimaginable grave risks. As such, the African Union has recognized the urgent need to address this issue comprehensively to promote safe, legal, and orderly migration while combating the criminal networks profiting from human suffering.

## Topic History.

Migrant Smuggling is not a recent dilemma throughout Africa, or internationally for that matter. However it has worsened due to economic disparities, climate change, porous borders and other deep rooted issues within the country. Over the past two decades, the continent has witnessed a steady increase in irregular migration, often facilitated by organized criminal networks. According to the data compiled by the African Union, the majority of migrants attempting to reach North Africa and Europe originated from Sub-Saharan Africa, with Somalia, Eritrea, and Nigeria being the primary source countries. Migrant smuggling has led to abuse, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking internationally, putting vulnerable immigrants at the hands of dangerous crime networks.

Migrant smuggling is also not a recent crime, and consequently has deep roots set in countries that were developing or are still considered developing countries, keeping a tight hold on vulnerable or 'weaker' parts of each country's system.

The smugglers are no doubt experts and simple solutions such as longer prison sentences, or more serious consequences are not very likely to have notable changes. Statistics continue to show an overall increase in migrant smuggling, most notable in unstable countries, typically presenting 'weaker' borders that are easier to cross in comparison to nearby countries. As the UN states, "External threats like the crisis in Sudan are creating a 'snowball effect' on the region, Mar Dieye, the UN Secretary-General's Special Coordinator in the Sahel, told UN News." ( [news.un.org](https://news.un.org) 1) Snowball effect is a psychological effect in which the majority influences the minority, encouraging more people, relative to this situation, to escape their home countries through the means of Migrant Smuggling.

In the past, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) was established in 2003, to combat transnational organized crime, trafficking of human beings, terrorism and migrant smuggling. Despite this, migrant smuggling has been on a steady increase.

# Current Situation

Migrant smuggling has not been kept under control, seeing a steady increase as the year goes on. According to data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in 2020 alone, over 92,000 migrants attempted to cross the Mediterranean Sea, primarily departing from North African countries. Alarming, around 1,400 people lost their lives during these perilous journeys, highlighting the human cost of this crisis. More specifically, women and children are particularly at risk of falling prey to human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Additionally, once migrants arrive in host countries, they may face further challenges, including discrimination, detention, and deportation. Citizens continuously suffer from similar problems, including but not limited to, conflict, environmental changes, and persecution that will affect everyone internationally if long term solutions are not acted upon immediately. Well established drug cartels have also reportedly been heavily involved in Migrant smuggling.



As Blackburn states “In 2018, cartels made roughly \$500 million a year smuggling migrants into the United States. Today, this source of income has ballooned into a \$13 BILLION industry.” (senate.gov 1) Though this source does have its limitations, such as it representing a certain political party, their data cannot be denied. The UN has also spoken on this matter, highlighting the roles of big and powerful groups that contribute to this issue, also showing how many countries, most of Africa included, cannot stand against such powerful groups.

The African Union must examine the root causes of migrant smuggling while simultaneously addressing short term solutions to end human suffering and exploitation that plague Africa.

# Country Policies

## **Western Africa**

Migrant smuggling in Western Africa presents unique challenges within specific countries. For instance, in Niger, its strategic location along well-traveled migration routes exposes it to significant smuggling activities. The country's vast desert and weak law enforcement infrastructure enable smuggling networks to operate with relative ease, exploiting vulnerable migrants en route to North Africa and Europe. Similarly, Nigeria faces multifaceted issues, including human trafficking and irregular migration, driven by a combination of poverty, unemployment, and insecurity. The presence of Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria exacerbates the problem, as the group forcibly recruits migrants and exploits them for its operations. Furthermore, the lack of economic opportunities in countries like Mali and Burkina Faso has led to a surge in irregular migration, with smuggling networks taking advantage of these desperate circumstances. The Sahel region's instability and the ongoing threat of armed groups compound these challenges, making it increasingly difficult to control and regulate migration flows.

## **North Africa**

Migrant smuggling in North Africa presents distinct challenges that warrant attention due to the region's geographical proximity to Europe and its position as a transit point for migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. Libya stands out as a major hotspot for migrant smuggling, characterized by its porous borders, political instability, and lack of effective governance. Migrants often find themselves trapped in dangerous and exploitative situations, falling victim to human traffickers and deplorable conditions. Similarly, Egypt faces issues related to the smuggling of migrants, particularly through its Sinai Peninsula, where criminal networks exploit vulnerable individuals, subjecting them to abduction, extortion, and violence. Morocco, acting as a conduit for migrants heading towards Europe, contends with challenges including increased maritime smuggling activities, resulting in tragic shipwrecks in the Mediterranean, coupled with the need to balance its own socio-economic issues alongside migration pressures. These specific countries highlight the complexities of addressing migrant smuggling in North Africa, necessitating regional cooperation, improved border control measures, and a focus on human rights to effectively combat these critical challenges.

# Country Policies

## **South & East Africa**

- In South and East Africa, migrant smuggling presents distinct challenges rooted in the complex interplay of socio-economic factors and regional dynamics. In South Africa, the inflow of migrants, particularly from neighboring countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Lesotho, often results in overcrowded informal settlements and strained public services. These migrants face exploitation and discrimination, and the porous borders exacerbate irregular migration. Additionally, in Zimbabwe, political instability has led to significant numbers of citizens seeking refuge in neighboring countries, contributing to the overall regional migration challenge. Meanwhile, in East Africa, countries like Ethiopia and Somalia grapple with their own unique issues. Ethiopia, a source, transit, and destination country, contends with internal displacement due to conflict and drought, spurring migration within its borders and across borders into Sudan and Yemen. In Somalia, a combination of insecurity, lack of economic opportunities, and environmental stressors has propelled citizens towards perilous journeys in search of stability and prosperity. While each of these South and East African countries faces its specific migratory challenges, collaboration at the regional level is essential to address smuggling networks, improve border management, and provide better protection and support for vulnerable migrants.

## Potential Solutions

To address the multifaceted problem of migrant smuggling, delegates must approach this problem thoroughly through multiple lenses. To first address migrant smuggling, strengthening the border control and law enforcement are of utmost importance as the cause of migrant smuggling often lies within the above issues; providing work permits, visas and more can prevent the demand for smuggling services. Furthermore, collaborative intelligence-sharing mechanisms will allow the African Union to track and understand the flow of migrant smuggling, as well as predict popular trends and understand better the causes and effects of this problem.

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As for short term solutions, providing temporary aid and hospitality for countries, as well as supporting minorities such as women and children in countries like Nigeria to prevent them from being entered into Human Trafficking. More spreading public awareness to a greater or even international degree will make it harder for the effects of human trafficking or migrant smuggling to go unnoticed, and countries can then provide help or dissuade potential migrants from engaging with smugglers.

Overall, Delegates must understand the seriousness of this issue and the complexity intertwined with it. Though countries within the African Union may have conflicting issues delegates must remember to work cooperatively, as it is not a problem against countries but a problem against smugglers.



## Questions to Consider

- What are the push and pull factors of migrant smuggling? How are smugglers exploiting these weaknesses and how can this be stopped?
- Where are the smugglers gaining political influence and power?
- How can the African Union promote safe and legal migration routes to reduce the reliance on smuggling networks?
- How can countries provide intellectual information to better understand the dynamics of migrants smuggling? How can this be used to prevent smugglers from profiting in such an inhumane way? How can member countries be encouraged to participate?
- To what extent do economic disparities between African countries contribute to the prevalence of migrant smuggling, and how can the African Union address these disparities to reduce smuggling? Are there more significant problems that should be addressed? If so, in what order should they be addressed?

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