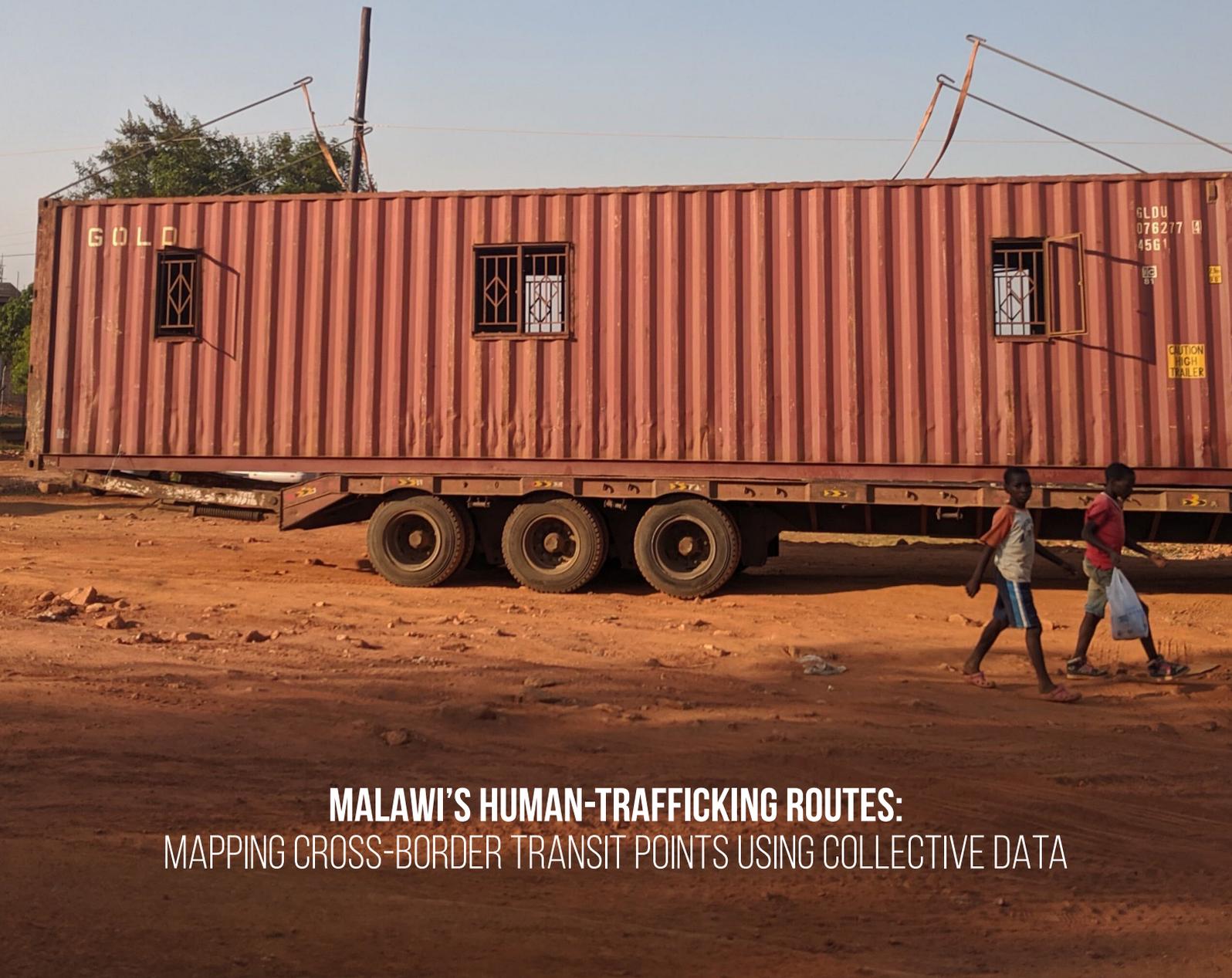


# FREEDOM COLLABORATIVE

TO END HUMAN TRAFFICKING. TOGETHER.



**MALAWI'S HUMAN-TRAFFICKING ROUTES:**  
MAPPING CROSS-BORDER TRANSIT POINTS USING COLLECTIVE DATA



# **MALAWI'S HUMAN-TRAFFICKING ROUTES:** MAPPING CROSS-BORDER TRANSIT POINTS USING COLLECTIVE DATA

Lead authors: Malawi Network Against Trafficking (MNAT)  
Freedom Collaborative

Data contributors: Global Hope Mobilisation (GLOHOMO)  
Life Concern Organisation (LICO)  
Mzimba Heritage Association (Mziha)  
People Serving Girls at Risk  
The Salvation Army, Anti-Child Trafficking Project  
Tiphedzane Community Support Organization (TICOSO)

## FOREWORD

The existence of our group, the Malawi Network Against Trafficking, is testament to the high level of collaboration and support that already exists within the anti-trafficking sphere in Malawi. We are very lucky to have a community that spans nearly every sector of society and works together for a common goal. However, a lack of robust data on both victim case studies and victims' movements from, through and beyond Malawi is a constant obstacle to further progress for many of our organizations. This exercise is therefore the first step in a data collection journey that is urgently needed, and that we hope will take our fight against trafficking in persons to the next level of success.

Identifying the routes of trafficking that exist in Malawi is paramount to our ongoing work, as this information will inform best practice for achieving the '3 Ps – Prosecution, Prevention and Protection – within Malawi's anti-trafficking community. Knowledge of such routes will enable MNAT and its network members to develop best response strategies, working together with our partners in the fight against this national and global issue.

MNAT representatives sit on the National Coordination Committee on Combatting Trafficking in Persons, under the Ministry of Homeland Security, where it chairs the Program, Planning and Monitoring Committee. The network has been key in advocacy of TIP Law and the Trafficking in Persons Fund, to mention just two areas of our work. The information we could gather from an ongoing collective data initiative would allow us to carry out this work far more effectively and efficiently, with goals that are more thoroughly researched and precisely targeted.

We would like to thank the contributors to this exercise, a project which will assist in curbing the crime of human trafficking in Malawi. We are also indebted to the government of Malawi, through the Ministry of Homeland Security, for the support they give us in our work. We are very grateful to Liberty Shared for supporting the implementation of this project and to Global Hope Mobilization (GLOHOMO) for hosting the network.

Caleb Thole  
Coordinator  
Malawi Network Against Trafficking (MNAT)

## **ABOUT THE MALAWI NETWORK AGAINST TRAFFICKING (MNAT)**

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The Malawi Network Against Trafficking (MNAT) is a network of 230 civil society, private sector, state and religious organizations working together to end Human Trafficking in Malawi. MNAT representative sit on the National Coordination Committee on Combatting Trafficking in Persons (under the Ministry of Homeland Security). MNAT is the Chairperson of Programs, Planning and Monitoring in the national Coordination Committee Against Trafficking in Malawi.

The overall objective of the campaign is to contribute to the vision of the national action plan on combating trafficking, which is a Malawi free from the crime of trafficking in persons. It will also contribute to the mission of the action plan, which is to combat the crime of trafficking in persons through victim-centered and human rights- based prevention, prosecution, protection, care and support approaches, until trafficking is eradicated in Malawi (2017-2022). The strategies and programs adopted by MNAT are informed by those who will be affected directly and indirectly.

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS



### **Global Hope Mobilisation (GLOHOMO)**

GLOHOMO is a Malawian national non-profit organization working to promote equitable quality health and developmental services by creating linkages between communities and service providers using community mobilization and advocating for improving service provision.



### **Life Concern Organisation (LICO)**

Life Concern Organisation (LICO) provides holistic services to marginalized and vulnerable populations in Malawi's Rumphi district, supporting better health, development, and informed decision making.



### **Mzimba Heritage Association (Mziha)**

Mzimba Heritage Association is a registered organisation and Ngoni cultural heritage association aiming to preserve the culture of the people of Mzimba.



### **People Serving Girls at Risk (PSGR)**

People Serving Girls At Risk (PSGR), a human rights organisation, started due to increased cases of girls and women in Malawi falling victims to sexual exploitation. The organisation provides awareness raising and rehabilitation services for survivors of sex trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation and child marriages.



### **The Salvation Army, Anti-Child Trafficking Project**

Through the Salvation Army Mchinji rehabilitation social centre, children that are exploited through various forms of child abuse and exploitation such as child labour, sexual exploitation and domestic servitude are rescued and rehabilitated.



### **Tiphedzane Community Support Organization (TICOSO)**

TICOSO is currently headquartered in Nsanje district, and committed towards the prevention and mitigating of issues affecting marginalized and vulnerable groups of people like orphans, people living with HIV/AIDS, the elderly, disadvantaged women, the youth and the chronically ill through advocacy, research and training.

## INTRODUCTION

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The Malawi Network Against Trafficking (MNAT) has been active since 2007 and now brings together 230 member organizations, including civil society groups, government departments, human rights bodies, colleges, religious organizations, trade unions, and partnerships, such as the Malawi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, which collectively work towards preventing human trafficking in Malawi and securing support for survivors and their families. MNAT members have sought to collaborate closely, to create identification and referral systems, to coordinate services, and to advocate for policy change – all in the interest of serving clients more effectively.

With 18.6 million inhabitants, Malawi is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa, but also one of the poorest in the world, with the vast majority of its population employed in agricultural work and 40% living in extreme poverty. While traffickers exploit most Malawian victims within the country's own borders, Malawian sex and labour trafficking victims have been identified in other countries in East and South Africa, as well as in the Gulf region, according to the 2020 Trafficking In Persons report. In 2019, the U.S. Department of State placed Malawi on the TIP Report Tier 2 Watch List, but in 2020 upgraded the country back to Tier 2 in recognition of increased government efforts during the reporting period.

Although these efforts include greater action on protection and prevention, many Malawian migrants continue to experience exploitation abroad. One key challenge in the anti-trafficking sphere, as noted in the TIP report and highlighted

repeatedly by MNAT, is the lack of robust data, not only on victim referrals and prosecutions, but also on movement from, through and out of Malawi, and the source, transit and destination locations of victims.

MNAT believes that effective prevention and response plans need to take population mobility and cross-border dynamics into greater account. However, while the group is increasingly aware of the need for centralized data, it is still working through the myriad challenges such an effort involves – from achieving genuine buy-in from all members to establishing mechanisms for collection, analysis and application. The network has had limited access to practical support for the implementation of data collection sets, and for optimizing the accessibility of available information for its member base.

For this reason, the network partnered with Freedom Collaborative, aiming to address the scarcity of available data on routes used by Malawi victims and migrants, and to contribute to a better understanding of cross-border smuggling and trafficking trends. It started working with a pilot group of network members, using Freedom Collaborative's platform to collect data from them in early 2020. Six organizations participated in this data collection effort and we were encouraged by their willingness and motivation to contribute. These organizations have been caring for and working with vulnerable communities for a long time and are therefore an important source of information – yet their knowledge and data have largely not been published or shared.

Freedom Collaborative and the Malawi Network Against Trafficking are therefore pleased to release this report, which summarizes the data analysis and conclusions drawn from the pilot group exercise. In particular, the report provides an overview of the border crossing points used to exit Malawi, and insights into the facilitation of movement from Malawi to South Africa, Zambia and Mozambique. We also discuss reports of corruption and officials' complicity, which undermine anti-trafficking efforts and allow smugglers and traffickers to easily move people through checkpoints.

In preparing the report, we worked closely with MNAT to analyze the data and double-check the locations mentioned. Freedom Collaborative has worked on similar mapping initiatives in Kenya over the past year, however, the Malawi project proved more challenging due to the remoteness of many of these locations, which made them more difficult to map accurately.

Beyond mapped border crossings and migration routes, it is critical to highlight that migrants in border districts also cross from country to country on foot at unofficial points. People move easily between countries in their everyday lives for social, economic, cultural and other needs. Cross-border movement is therefore extremely difficult to monitor and community policing initiatives have been set up to support trafficking identification and prevention efforts.

The data collected also helps to guide the geographical focus of these monitoring efforts.

MNAT continues to work diligently to assist individuals, families, and communities impacted by human trafficking and exploitation, and seeks to collect additional data on new trends from its members across the country. It has seen increased migration since the COVID-19 pandemic began, enabled by fewer border controls – officers work in shifts and are afraid of contracting the virus. With this in mind, and as COVID-19 further increases economic pressures on families in Malawi, MNAT expects a future surge in trafficking and exploitation. Targeted prevention efforts in identified regions of origin and popular transit locations are therefore even more important than ever.

MNAT hopes that this initial data collection exercise can help foster a strong data-driven culture in its network members, building a broad interest in data usage to improve programming as a long-term and ongoing undertaking.

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(1) United States Department of State, 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report - United States of America, 25 June 2020. available at: <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020-TIP-Report-Complete-062420-FINAL.pdf> [accessed 28th September 2020]

## SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

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### **Data sources**

The majority of member organizations of the Malawi Network Against Trafficking work directly with victims of trafficking (VoT) or vulnerable communities through service provision, outreach and awareness-raising activities. They provide critical services in the Northern, Central and Southern Regions of Malawi.

For this data collection exercise, a pilot group of six organizations contributed data on routes that were already known to them, either from cases their organization had worked on or had heard about through their community work.

### **Data collection**

The contributing organizations submitted their data using Freedom Collaborative's Victim Journey Mapping Tool and included the following data points:

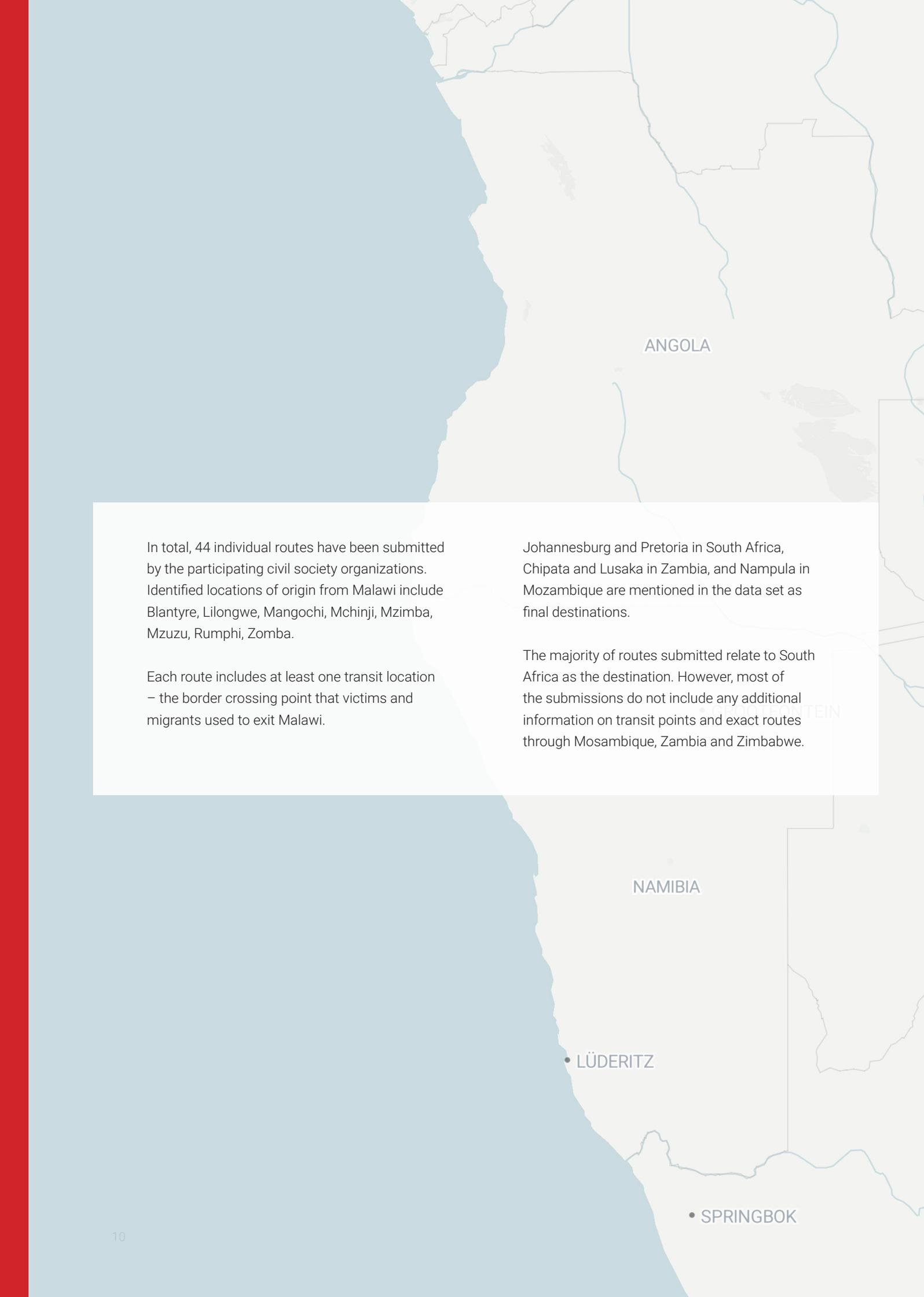
- Victim city and country of origin
- City and country of exploitation
- Transit points in order
- Mode of transport used
- Industry of exploitation at destination
- Any known recruitment details

The data identifies specific regions of origin, transit points, and the destination locations where exploitation occurred. The resulting data, while not comprehensive, provides an overview of the border crossing points used to exit Malawi, as well as insights into the modus operandi of traffickers. The data set includes all the unique routes that were contributed but does not include any numbers of victims or estimates of journey frequency.

**It is important to note that both smuggling and trafficking may occur on these mixed migration journeys. All the contributing organizations pointed out that it is incredibly difficult to distinguish between smuggling and trafficking, as both occur on the same routes.**

Another challenge for knowledge generation was that only a small number of organizations felt they had the capacity to participate in data collection. Despite the limited data set, however, the report illustrates how much data could potentially be generated by investing in ongoing training and accessible mechanisms for case management and record-keeping.

## DATA SUMMARY

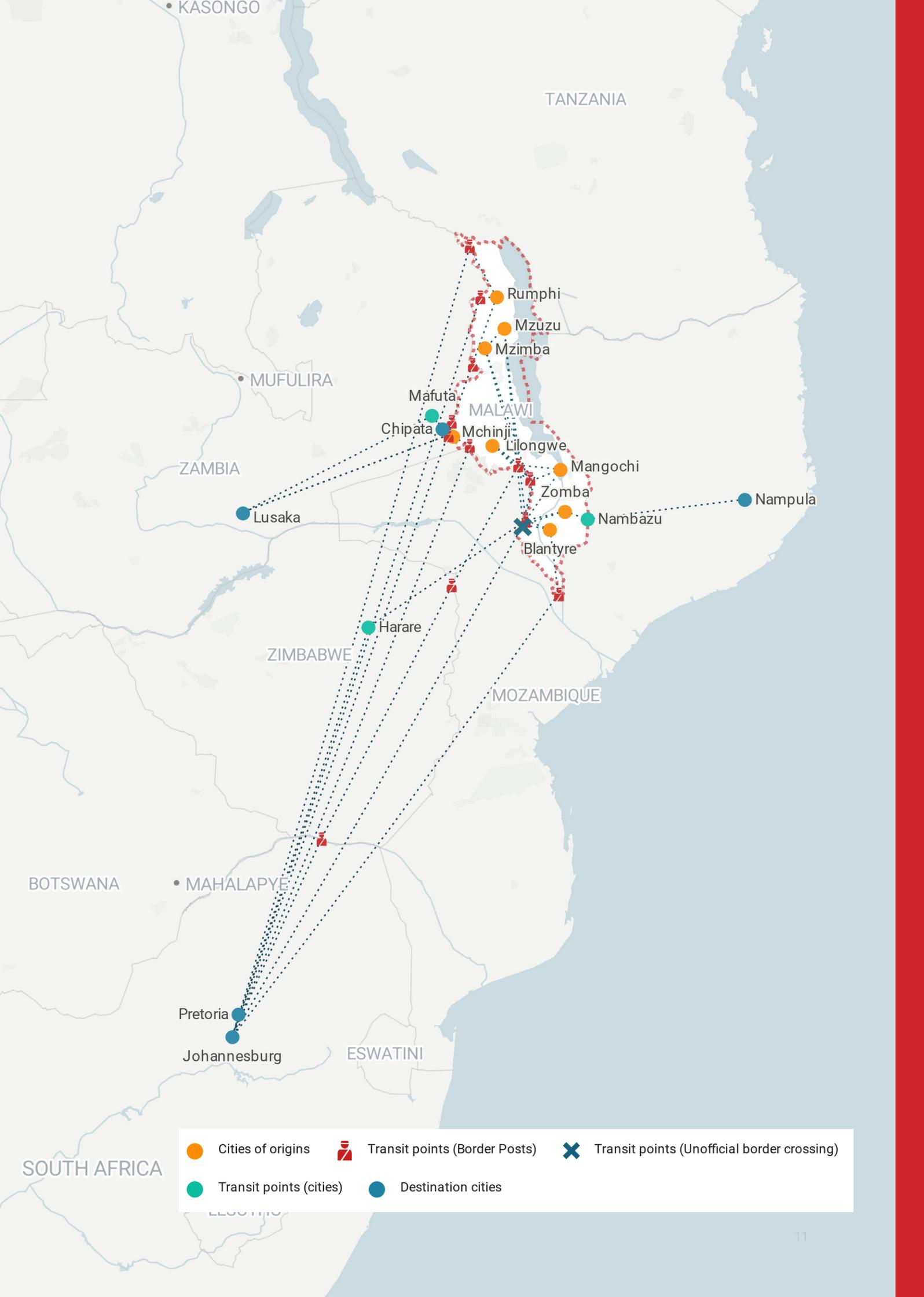


In total, 44 individual routes have been submitted by the participating civil society organizations. Identified locations of origin from Malawi include Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mangochi, Mchinji, Mzimba, Mzuzu, Rumphi, Zomba.

Each route includes at least one transit location – the border crossing point that victims and migrants used to exit Malawi.

Johannesburg and Pretoria in South Africa, Chipata and Lusaka in Zambia, and Nampula in Mozambique are mentioned in the data set as final destinations.

The majority of routes submitted relate to South Africa as the destination. However, most of the submissions do not include any additional information on transit points and exact routes through Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe.



- Cities of origins
- Transit points (Border Posts)
- ✕ Transit points (Unofficial border crossing)
- Transit points (cities)
- Destination cities



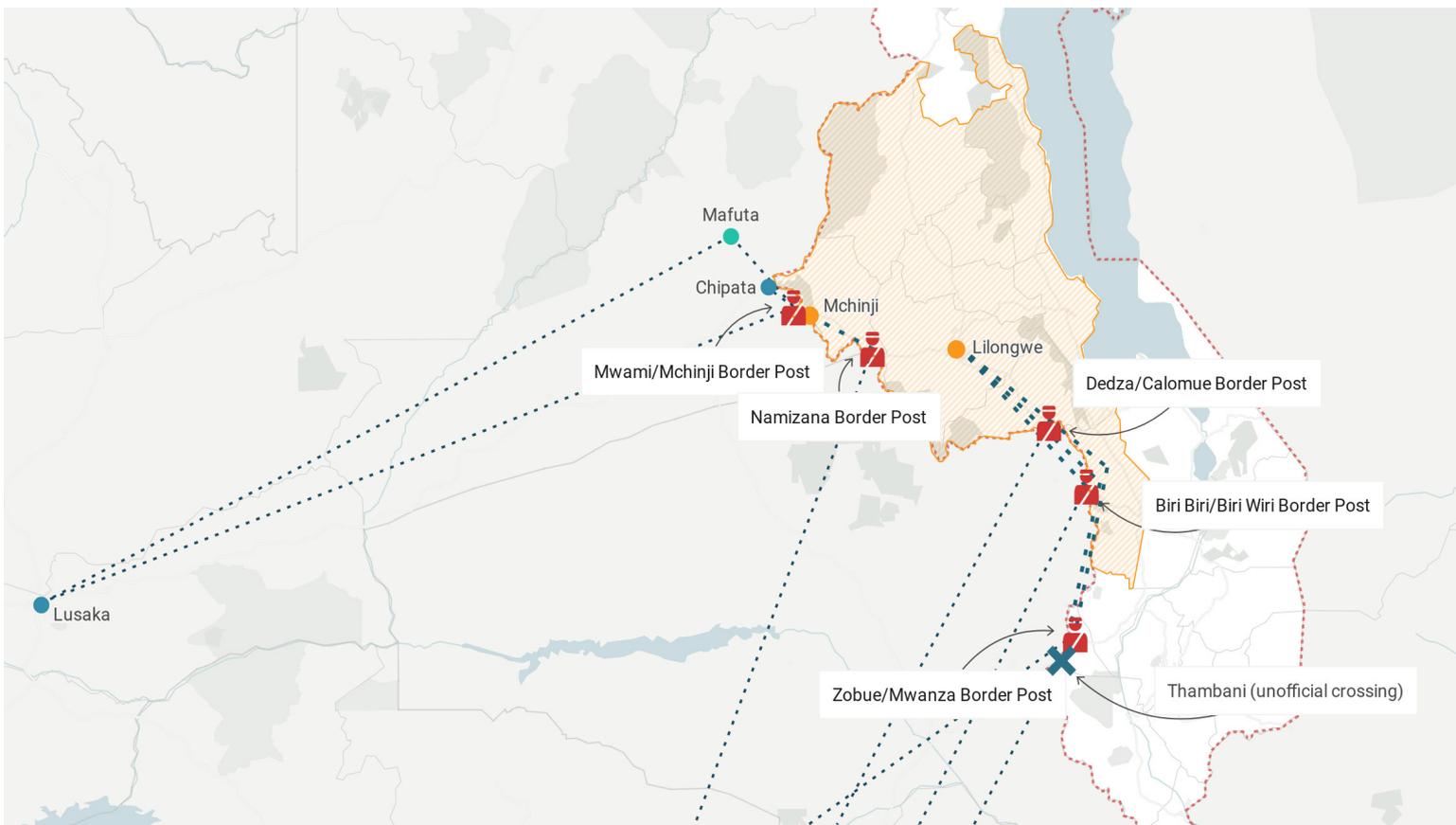
## MIGRATION FROM THE CENTRAL REGION

Locations of origin in the Central Region of Malawi include the capital, Lilongwe, and the border district Mchinji, in the west.

From Lilongwe, migrants may travel to the Calomue/Dedza One-Stop Border Post which is located only 100km south of the capital or to the Biri Biri/Biri Wiri Border. Another route extends further south to the Mwanza/Zobue and Thambani border, then onwards to Johannesburg.

Migrants from the Mchinji district may use the Mchinji/Mwani border post to cross into Zambia. The data includes two journeys that take this initial route, with Lusaka and Chipatia in Zambia as the final destinations. Mafuta has been identified as a transit point for migrants from Chipata on their way to Lusaka.

Migrants from Mchinji also travel via the Namizana border to South Africa.

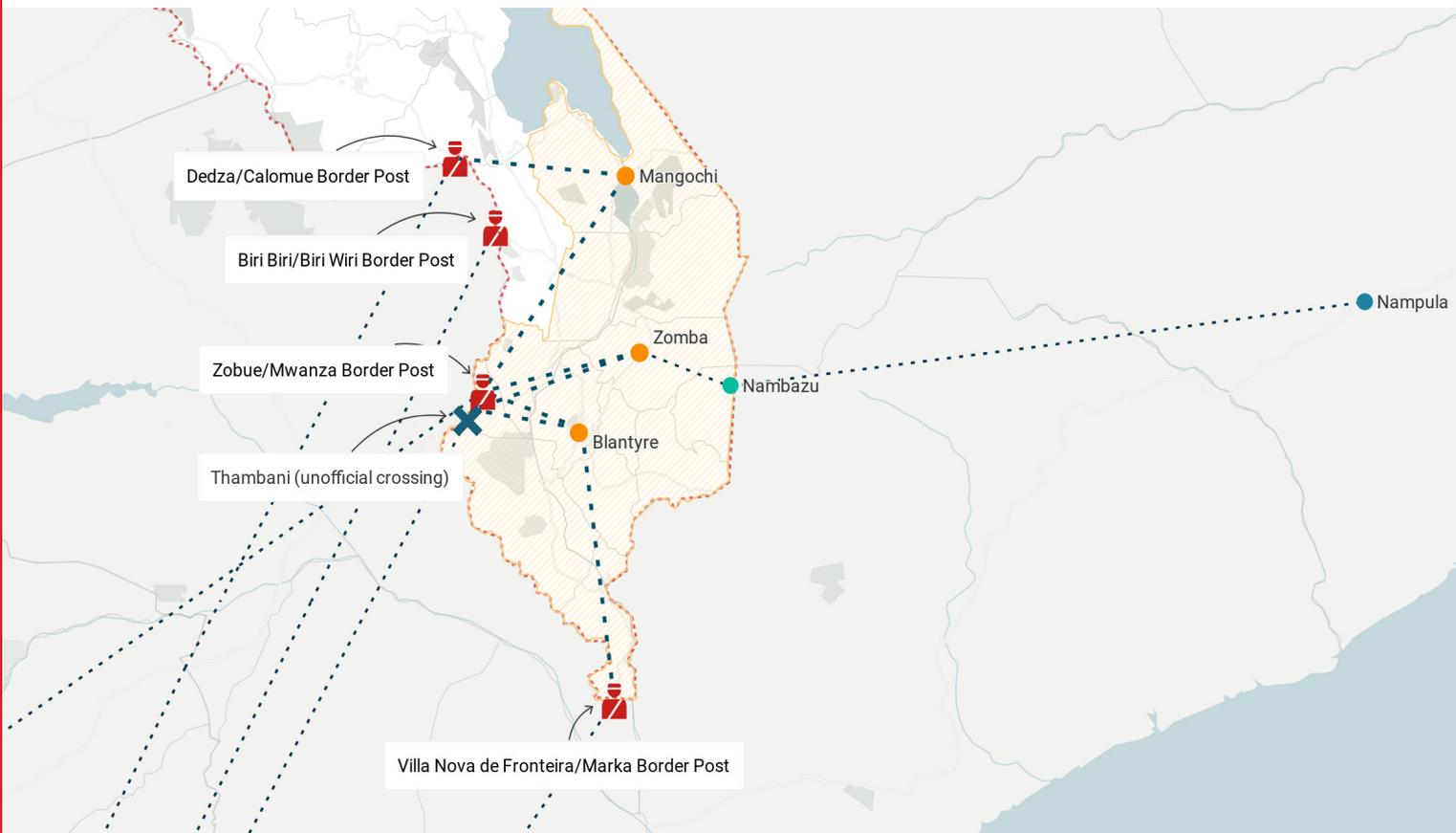


## MIGRATION FROM THE SOUTHERN REGION

Identified locations of origin in the Southern Region include Mangochi, Zomba and Blantyre. From Mangochi, routes extend to the Dedza/Calomue Border, to the Biri Biri/Biri Wiri Border and the Zobue/Mwanza border crossing and, from there, migrants make their way towards South Africa.

Migrants from Zomba travel either towards South Africa via the Zobue/Mwanza Border Crossing and Thambani, or via Nambazu to Nampula, Mosambique.

From Blantyre, the identified transit points for journeys to South Africa include the Zobue/Mwanza Border Post, Thambani, and the Villa Nova de Fronteira/Marka Border Crossing.



**MOVEMENT ACROSS MALAWI'S BORDER:  
IDENTIFIED CROSSING POINTS**

The following chapter focuses on the border crossing locations that migrants use to exit Malawi, identified through the collected data. We also provide context to establish the difficulties in monitoring Malawi's borders, as well as the ways that communities are increasingly involved in addressing this challenge.

### **Identified border crossing locations**

The map on the right provides an overview of all the border crossing posts that were identified through the submitted data. These include:

- Biri Biri/Biri Wiri Border Post
- Chitipa Border Post
- Dedza/Calomue Border Post
- Lusuntha/Mqocha Border Post
- Mkanda/Gubudu Border Post
- Muyombe/Hewe Border Post
- Mwami/Mchinji Border Post
- Namizana Border post
- Villa Nova de Fronteira/Marka Border Post
- Zobue/Mwanza Border Post

All the mapped locations are official immigration checkpoints. Some are well known crossings that are very busy, others are smaller and more remote.

Trafficking and smuggling activity takes place using both official border posts as well as remote trails and unmonitored border locations in these border districts. As movement by foot is much more difficult to monitor, the data that exists and has been collected focuses primarily on trafficking using vehicles and via official border posts.



Chitipa Border Post

Muyombe/Hewe Border Post

Lusuntha/Mqocha Border Post

Mkanda/Gubudu Border Post

Mwami/Mchinji Border Post

Namizana Border post

Dedza/Calomue Border Post

Biri Biri/Biri Wiri Border Post

Zobue/Mwanza Border Post

Thambani (unofficial crossing)

Villa Nova de Fronteira/Marka Border Post

TUNDUMA

TUKUYU

NJOMBE

CHITIPA

KARONGA

KASAMA, ZAMBIA

CHINSALI

SONGEA

Rumphi

MBAMBA BAY

Mzuzu

NKHATA BAY

MPIKA

Mzimba

LUNDAZI

NKHOTAKOTA

MALAWI

LICHINGA

CHIRATA

Mchinji

Lilongwe

SALIMA

SALIMA

NYIMBA

Mangochi

ANGWA

Zomba

Blantyre

TETE

CHIROMO

CHIRAMBA

SHAMVA

MAZOWE

## MALAWI'S POROUS BORDERS

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Malawi is bordered by Tanzania, Mozambique and Zambia. The borders are open and porous, making it difficult for authorities to detect, identify and report incidents of human trafficking, and for anti-trafficking groups to take action. This challenge is intensified by the lack of resources for immigration control, and the small number of officials working in this sector.

In addition, many migrants use unchartered routes which avoid official border points, so their movement is incredibly difficult to monitor. Borders on the continent were arbitrarily imposed by former colonial powers and are not respected. People have continued to cross the border at unofficial points even where there are fences – in many places there are none, or the physical 'border' is marked by an isolated concrete pillar or beacon a few centimeters above the ground.

People have strong and long-established cross-border socio-cultural and economic relationships and move between countries to access various services, such as healthcare, and to work. This lack of border administration is used by traffickers and migrant smugglers as a loophole that can easily be exploited.

In August 2020, the Minister of Homeland Security, Richard Chimwendo Banda, announced government plans to strengthen border security by creating a working environment that is more conducive to motivating officers and mobilizing operational resources. He emphasized that secure borders are crucial for national security and development.

## COMMUNITY POLICING INITIATIVES

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In 2008 the Malawi Police Service introduced the 'community policing' approach to promote enhanced safety and security through strengthened partnerships with the community and all stakeholders. The model is based on the idea of enhancing cooperation, trust and collaboration between local communities and the police service, and is intended to educate and train law enforcement in good policing practices, especially in regard to respect for human rights. It is also used to teach communities about trafficking dangers and the need to report illicit activity.

According to Malawian police, they have successfully intercepted a number of trafficking journeys in recent years through tip-offs from community members, demonstrating that community policing in Malawi is effective in the fight against this crime.

The Malawi Trafficking in Persons Act of 2015 provides for increased participation of individuals, institutions and communities in preventing human trafficking. In theory, involving communities in anti-human trafficking efforts means the crime can be tackled at its source and that trafficking transit routes are shut down.

However, MNAT points out that many communities around the borders are not cognizant of human trafficking and exploitation, as there are still only a few CSOs providing prevention and awareness-raising activities in these areas.

## **THE MODUS OPERANDI**

## RECRUITMENT

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Poverty is stated as the main driver for the migration of Malawi victims. The participating organizations described how recruiters make false promises of well-paid jobs abroad, which lure vulnerable individuals into risky migration journeys. Recruiters may present themselves as agents, religious leaders, or businessmen when visiting remote villages, and they promise work, school or marriage outside the country.

Child trafficking cases are common from August to November every year, which is crop-growing season for both Malawi and neighbouring Mozambique.

Most of the children are taken from their homes by traffickers who promise their families that the child will return with an undisclosed amount of money and the items important for subsistence, such as bicycles.

MNAT estimates that about 95% of Malawians seeking a better life elsewhere are trafficked without their knowledge – which shows that there is still widespread lack of awareness and understanding of the risk of exploitation, and of workers' rights.

## FACILITATION OF MOVEMENT

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Malawi migrants have been traveling to countries in the region without travel documents for many years. This is possible not only due to porous borders, but also because of the high levels of corruption at border crossing points and road-blocks. Smugglers and agents may bribe officials on both sides of the border, as well as along the route to the final destination.

In August 2020, media sources reported that 11 Criminal Investigation Department (CID) officers based in Mzuzu took bribes of 3 million Malawian Kwacha (around US \$4,000) from a human trafficker to let a group of Somalis have safe passage to Malawi's capital, Lilongwe. This may not be an isolated incident.

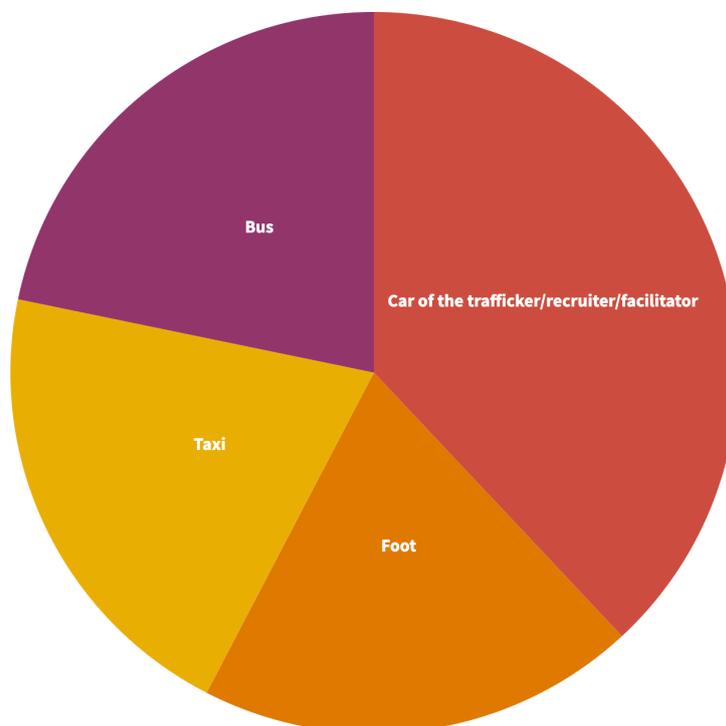
## MODES OF TRANSPORT

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The majority of victims were transported by car - in the vehicle of the trafficker/recruiter/facilitator or taxis - or, in other cases, used public buses and/or travelled by foot.

MNAT shared that, most often, traffickers use container trucks to transport migrants. Many have died during these journeys and victims are often subjected to trauma and torture. In May 2020, 64 migrants from Ethiopia were found dead in a container attached to a truck en route from Malawi to Mozambique.

Since borders were temporarily closed due to COVID-19, only trucks have been allowed to cross in many places and MNAT suspects that, currently, even more smuggling and trafficking activity is taking place than before. Often, what starts as smuggling ends with victims finding themselves in exploitative situations. Migrants are persuaded that recruiters will facilitate their movement at a low cost, however, these recruiters may in fact function as traffickers and pass migrants on to exploitative employers in destination countries.

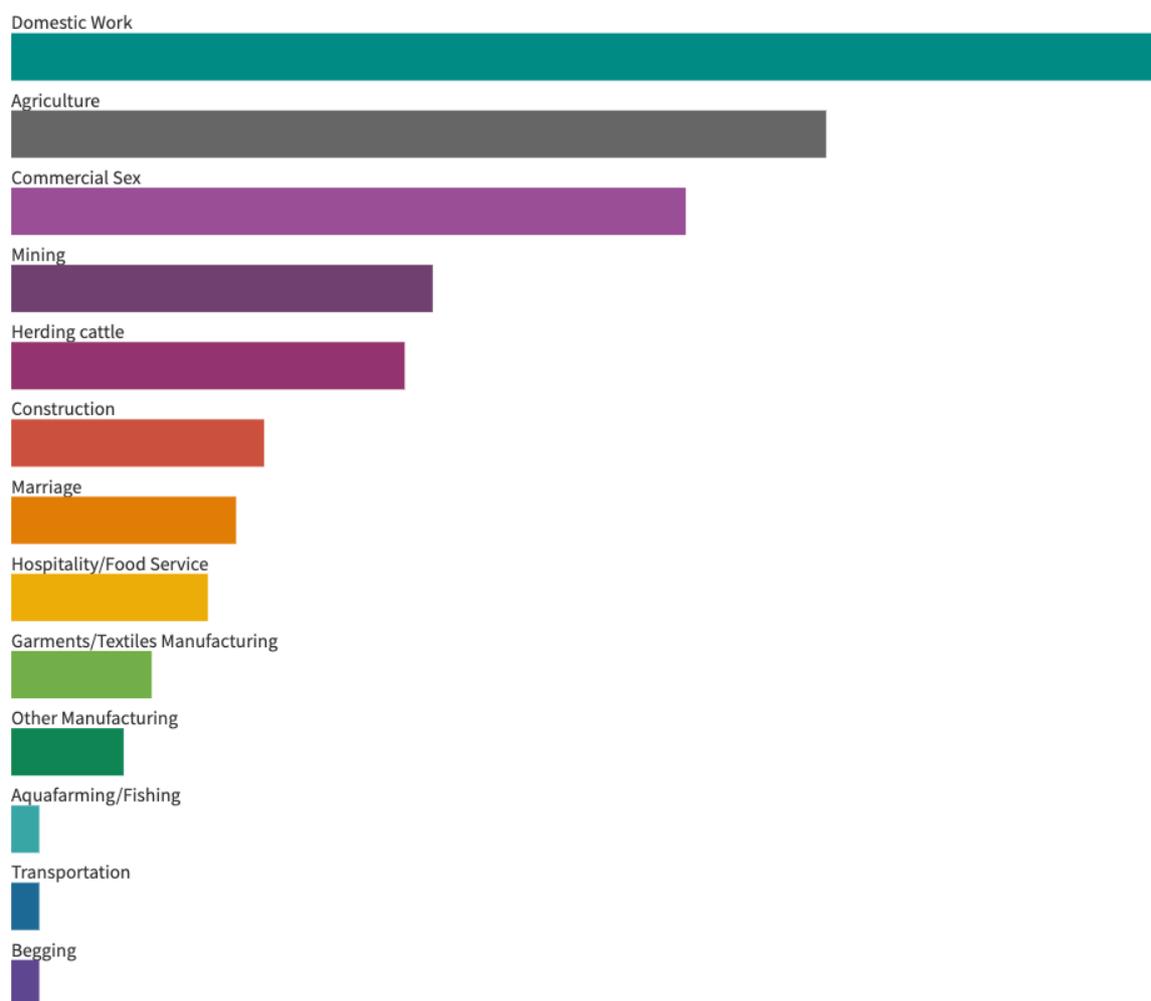


## INDUSTRIES OF EXPLOITATION

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Migrants from Malawi are exploited in many different industries abroad, most frequently in domestic work, agriculture and kettle herding, commercial sex, construction and marriage.

Other industries of exploitation include mining and the hospitality and food service industry.



## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

This data collection exercise has revealed the practical challenges of data-sharing initiatives among MNAT members and other partners. However, the resulting data, while not comprehensive, has a number of important applications and we hope it will serve as a starting point for future action.

The data identifies border crossing points and locations, and this should help to focus training for and implementation of appropriate border management, screening practices and anti-corruption efforts in the right areas. In addition, the data contributes to MNAT's recognition by and collaboration efforts with law enforcement and relevant government agencies. The joint initiative has also helped to familiarize network members with the process of data collection, demonstrate the value that can be generated from data sharing, and build support for future data collection efforts.

Following this pilot data collection, MNAT aims to share the report and data insights with the National Coordination Committee Against Trafficking in Persons and other government partners. It is hoped that the report will serve as a successful example and underscore the importance of data collection and sharing initiatives, and the group's commitment to this approach.

MNAT will also discuss the data findings with its network members to establish how these insights can be used for strategic program planning, for both individual organizations and the network going forward.

Last but not least, MNAT will engage with the anti-corruption bureau to share the report and discuss potential joint actions in the identified border areas.

