

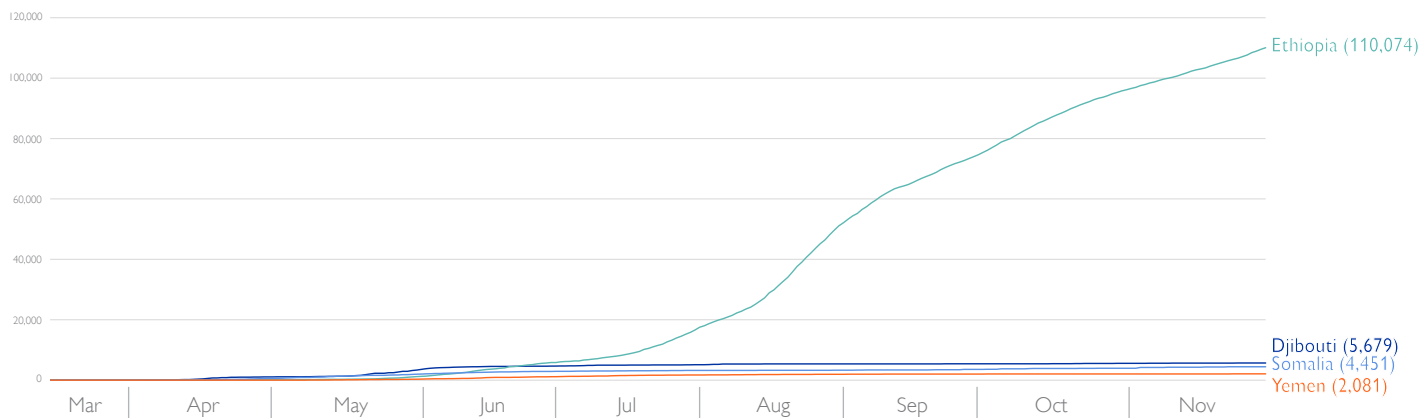
Health worker in PPE at the IOM constructed COVID-19 isolation and treatment centre in Marib, Yemen. Photo: © IOM / Hamzah Shaif

## BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 outbreak has restricted global mobility, whilst heightening the risk of exploitation of vulnerable populations. This report provides a snapshot of the **COVID-19 epidemiological situation** and **mobility restrictions**, and of the **current migration trends** along the Eastern Corridor migration route, in addition to an analysis of the impact that movement restrictions have had in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Yemen. Moreover, it provides **information on the main protection concerns for migrants** and **assistance provided**, and **COVID-19 risk mitigation measures**. This report utilizes data collected through IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs), Migrant Response Centres (MRCs),<sup>1</sup> Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) data, as well as anecdotal information provided by IOM team members working in the region.

## KEY OBSERVATIONS

Incidence Trend of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases as of 30 November 2020



Source: Ministry of Health (MHC) of Ethiopia, World Health Organization (WHO)

<sup>1</sup> Migration Response Centres (MRCs) are situated along key migration routes, where they fill critical gaps by providing direct assistance, including food and temporary shelter, information and service referrals to migrants on the move. MRCs bring together key partners to facilitate the identification of migrants in vulnerable situations, and ensure that they receive appropriate, immediate and longer-term support. Seven MRCs are currently operational in the Horn of Africa: Obock (Djibouti), Hargeisa, Bossaso (Somalia), Semera, Metema, Dire Dawa and Tog-Wajaale (Ethiopia).

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## COVID-19 EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SITUATION

As of 30 November 2020, the number of COVID-19 cases along the Eastern Corridor stood at 122,285. **Ethiopia is still experiencing community transmission but with a significant decrease in the number of new cases reported daily, while Djibouti and Somalia continue to experience a steady increase in new detected cases.** Ethiopia continued recording the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases at 110,074 (90% of total cases). Following Ethiopia is Djibouti with 5,679 confirmed cases (4.6% of total cases) and Somalia with 4,451 cases (3.6% of total cases), while Yemen cases amounted to 2,081 (1.7% of total cases). As of 30 November 2020, the number of COVID-19 related deaths along the Eastern Corridor stood at 2,486, the majority of which were recorded in Ethiopia (69% of total deaths). Yemen holds the highest case fatality rate (CFR) at approximately 29.1%, compared to Djibouti (CFR 1.1%), Ethiopia (CFR 1.5%) and Somalia (CFR 2.5%). This is much higher than the global average CFR of 2.3% and is largely attributable to the challenges of accessing a health care system which has been decimated by years of war. As of 30 November 2020, Ethiopia held the highest number of active cases (34,560), followed by Somalia (921) and Djibouti (34). **Due to Yemen's various challenges and limited testing capacity, COVID-19 figures may continue to appear relatively low and detection remains challenging.**

## COVID-19 MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS

Following an uptick in COVID-19 cases, Djibouti reclosed its land borders between 20 October and 4 November, except for the transfer of good and merchandise. Between the reopening of the country's air, land and sea borders on 17 July and the end of November, the Djiboutian health authorities recorded a 4.6% COVID-19 positivity rate and a 98.54% recovery rate among all incoming passengers screened at the various Points of Entry (PoEs). **All airports and seaports remained operational in Somalia, and due to a decrease in newly reported COVID-19 cases, a phased lifting of the lockdown of the Mogadishu Aden Adde International Airport started on 1 November.** In Ethiopia, all air and land borders have remained open following the lifting of the state of emergency in September. Meanwhile, a total of 15 sea border points and three land border points have remained partially open for informal movements in Yemen. However, the numbers of migrant entering Yemen continue to be over 80% lower than a similar period in 2019. Involuntary movements have also continued at inter-governorate level, across areas and territories controlled by different conflict parties. **The voluntary return of migrants is currently only possible out of Aden for Ethiopian migrants, and Mukalla and Aden for Somali nationals.** Spontaneous and 'self-returns' have taken place in varying numbers from key landing points Lahj and Shabwa governorates; transit points along land borders were partially open to facilitate the return of stranded Yemenis. In addition, inter-governorate public movement tracking continued at 10 internal transit points, especially in Taizz and Al-Bayda.

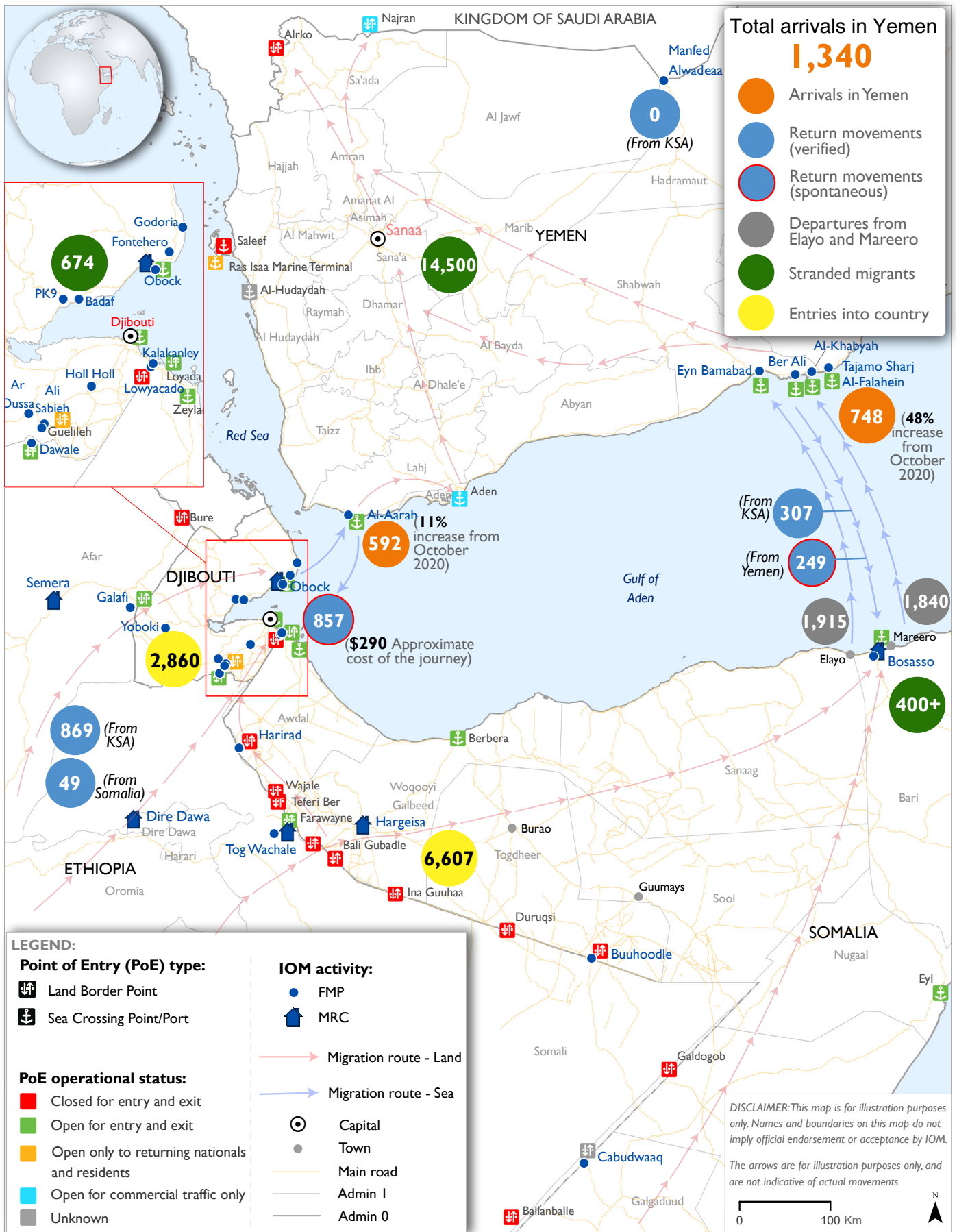
## COVID-19 IMPACT ON MIGRANT FLOWS

**Overall migrants' arrivals to Yemen from the Horn of Africa increased by 29% between October (1,038) and November (1,340) as restrictions on mobility eased.** However, this represents a decrease of over 72% in relation to overall arrival trends between January and November of 2019 (127,275 arrivals in 2019 and 35,500 arrivals in 2020). During November 2020, 44% of the arrivals came from Djibouti while 56% originated from Somalia. Meanwhile, spontaneous return movements of Ethiopians from Yemen to Djibouti continued to be observed with over 5,180 returns since May 2020, 857 of which occurred in November. Please see Map 1 on the following page for an overview of the impact of COVID-19 on migrant flows along the Eastern Corridor.

## MIGRANT PROTECTION CONCERNS

**By the end of November 2020, it is estimated that over 14,500 migrants remain stranded in Yemen, 674 in Djibouti and between 400 and 500 in Somalia.** The situation of migrants in some countries is now normalizing with the reopening of borders and some resumption of AVR and Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) assistance which would assist in allowing migrants to return. In Yemen, the situation remains complex with spontaneous self-returns occurring from Aden, with other forms of return not restarted yet. **With the instrumentalization of COVID-19 mitigation measures, migrants in Yemen continue to face the threat of arrest, detention and forced transfers by governing authorities.** Furthermore, migrants in Yemen face barriers to accessing health support, food, and essential supplies due to the restrictive operational context that impacts the provision of aid. Spontaneous returnees from Yemen to Djibouti continue reporting extreme violence experienced in Yemen not only at the hands of smugglers, armed groups and government authorities, but also from other Ethiopian migrants of different ethnic groups.

MAP 1 | COVID-19 IMPACT ON MIGRATION ALONG THE EASTERN CORRIDOR (NOVEMBER 2020)



## MIGRANT ASSISTANCE (MRC/AVR)

IOM continues to provide basic life-saving assistance and psychosocial support at the MRCs. IOM Djibouti is currently assisting 540 vulnerable migrants at the MRC in Obock, as AVR assistance is still severely limited. COVID-19 risk sensitization is ongoing among stranded migrants and IOM is providing search and rescue operations along the coast of Obock. **AVR services resumed at the MRC Bossaso in September, although no movement took place in November due to operational difficulties and slower procedures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.** A total of 215 new migrants were assisted at the MRCs in Bossaso and Hargeisa, while approximately between 300 and 400 migrants continue awaiting AVR.<sup>2</sup> In Yemen, movement restrictions, the deterioration of migrants' living conditions and the increased danger migrants are facing due to a variety of factors, are pushing many to seek to return home while others increase their debt to smugglers to wait out until the border with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reopens. In this scenario, the resumption of VHR assistance is a priority to address life-threatening conditions migrants are living in Yemen. **On 30 November, a Government of Ethiopia delegation arrived in Aden to conduct a verification of registered migrants to support return. IOM Yemen has registered over 3,500 migrants of which 1,200 will be prioritized for return.** It is expected that returns will take place in January, but the demand for return will continue to grow in 2021. In Sana'a, voluntary return remains suspended further to negotiations with the De Facto Authorities (DFA) on a voluntary mechanism for return in line with international standards and independence of operational space. While the Government of Ethiopia continue the preparations for the planned repatriation of 1,200 Ethiopians from Aden in southern Yemen, in the north, little progress has been seen as negotiations are still pending with DFA. Migrants remain stranded in Marib governorate, unable to continue northward—though willing to do so—or reach Aden and/or other governorates where eventual return may be possible.

## MIGRANT RETURNS

**Returns from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia towards Ethiopia (869) continued in November though no returns of Yemeni nationals to Yemen occurred in this month.** Returns to Ethiopia decreased by over 65%, between March and April 2020, falling from 8,963 to 2,757. After a one-month suspension throughout May, 387 migrants were returned to Addis Ababa in June, but no other return had been carried out since then until September. **Overall, the cumulative returns between January and November decreased by over 67% (36,019 in 2020 and 109,684 in 2019).** Returns from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Yemen had also been put on hold until September, although there was a brief resumption in activity during July when 363 returnees were tracked in Manfed Alwadeeya, and 478 returns occurred in September. Overall, the returns of Yemeni nationals from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since January 2020 have amounted to 13,895, almost one-third of the returns recorded in the same period in 2019 (44,777). Additionally, 259 Yemeni returnees travelled from Djibouti to Yemen in June and an additional seven travelled from Somalia to Yemen in July. **Similarly, returns to Somalia from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia continued, and 307 were flown back to Mogadishu as confirmed by the Immigration and Naturalization Directorate (IND), and were all referred for assistance to IOM.**

## QUARANTINE MEASURES

During the month of November, IOM, in coordination with the National Office for Assistance to Refugees and Disaster Victims (ONARS) organized five movements of migrants (635 migrants in total) from IOM's MRC in Obock region to the Ar-Aoussa quarantine site in the Ali Sabieh region, where migrants were COVID-19 tested and quarantined before their travel to Ethiopia. In early October, the Ethiopian Ministry of Health announced a new directive according to which persons arriving in Ethiopia with a negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test result no older than 120 hours were to home quarantine. **After the closure of all quarantine centres in the country in late October, returnees from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are no longer being quarantined, but are accommodated for one or two nights at government-managed facilities in order to receive direct assistance from the Government of Ethiopia, IOM and other partners.**

<sup>2</sup> The number of migrants awaiting AVR assistance is an estimate based on the number of unattended requests received. However, as the service has been suspended for over six months due to COVID-19 restrictions and stranded migrants have spontaneously returned to Ethiopia, the precise number of migrants awaiting AVR would be available only by conducting a new registration.

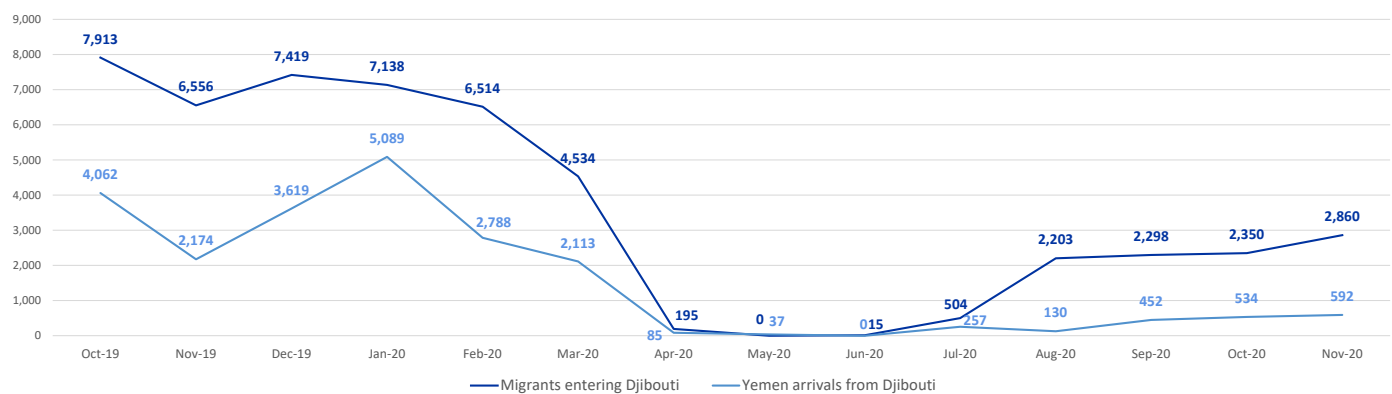
## DJIBOUTI SITUATION

As of 30 November, Djibouti recorded a total of 5,679 confirmed individuals, 61 deaths and 5,584 recoveries. The number of new COVID-19 positive cases followed a slight decrease between October (145) and November (118). Following a recent uptick in COVID-19 cases, Djibouti ordered the closure of all land borders between 20 October and 4 November. Exceptions were in place for the transfer of good and merchandise, and only nationals of Djibouti were allowed to return to Djibouti through land border crossings. Since 17 July, Djibouti's borders have remained open under strict health protocols for travellers issued by the Ministry of Health, and the Djiboutian health authorities recorded a 4.6% COVID-19 positivity rate and a 98.54% recovery rate among all incoming passengers screened at the various PoEs.

### Migrant Flows Observed Through Djibouti and at Yemen Points of Entry

- In November, migrant movements into Djibouti increased for the fifth consecutive month with 2,860 migrants (33.6% female and 66.4% male) compared to 2,350 observed last month. From May to October, 10,230 arrivals from Ethiopia have been recorded. All of these were Ethiopian nationals tracked along Djibouti's western borders at various FMPs; this is an increase of 22% from the 2,350 migrant entries observed in October as migrants continue to attempt to migrate along the Eastern Route. Interestingly, this increase in arrivals occurred despite the temporary closure of borders during the latter half of the month;
- 592 arrivals from Djibouti were tracked in Yemen near Al-Aarah (562) and Henath (30) FMPs in Lahj and Abyan governorates respectively, all of whom were Ethiopian nationals. A majority of the migrants were adult men (503) and only 47 were women, while 36 male and six female children were also tracked. In addition, unlike previous months, a boat from Djibouti was also tracked upon arrival at Henath FMP, carrying 30 passengers

*Migrant Movements through Djibouti to Yemen (October 2019 - November 2020)*



- Spontaneous return movements from Yemen to Djibouti, although organized through smugglers, continued in the current month with 857 arrivals (19 females, and 838 males) in November, and a total of 5,180 (691 females and 4,489 males) returns tracked between May and November.

### Migrant Protection Concerns

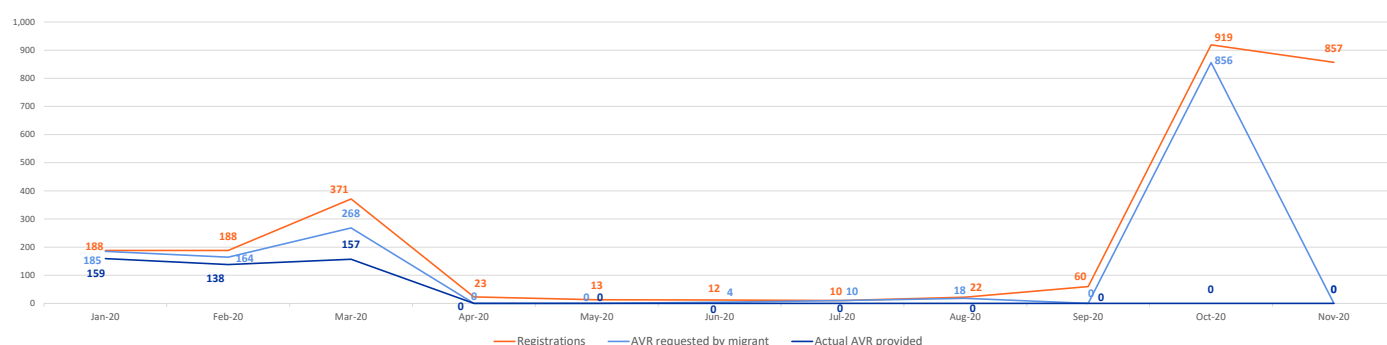
- Migrants returning from Yemen to Djibouti continue to report experiences of violence, deprivation and abuse. Most migrants return because they are unable to proceed into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia due to border closures and strict controls and are given the option by smugglers to be taken back to Ethiopia. Allegedly the cost of the journey from Yemen to Djibouti is around 10,000 ETB (around 294 USD) but migrants that are dropped off at the coast in Obock are in much worse conditions as compared to the journey outwards as a result of the difficulties faced in Yemen and the scarcity of financial resources. The 50 km return journey through the deserts often results in tragedy as more migrants go missing or are unable to survive during this leg;
- As of October, the government-managed Massagara site was closed, so most of the migrants returnees have been referred and accommodated at the MRC in Obock for first assistance, before being transferred to the Ar-Aoussa quarantine site in Ali Sabieh region. This has caused a significant increase in the population of migrants at the MRC, due to which, conflict amongst the migrants has increased, exacerbated by the unbalance in the representation of different ethnicities;
- Both the closure of the Djibouti-Ethiopia border and the stricter border controls in Yemen have left many migrants stranded in the country. As of 26 November, 674 migrants on their way to the Arab Peninsula were stranded in Djibouti and had gathered in 14 spontaneous sites located along the migration route, majority being housed at the MRC in Obock (412). All the stranded migrants were Ethiopian nationals and most of them were men (94%). Immediate needs included water, food, hygiene kits and non-food items (NFIs);

- When asked about COVID-19 awareness, around 61% of all migrants tracked through Djibouti reported to be aware of the COVID-19 outbreak.

## Migrant Assistance (MRC/AVR)

- The MRC in Obock was assisting, as of 30 November, 540 vulnerable migrants including new arrivals from Ethiopia, returns from Yemen, as well as migrants who have been stranded for several months. A total of 857 new migrants were admitted to the centre in November, which is a slight decrease from the 919 registered in the previous month; the MRC continues to house and provide assistance to migrants as well as returnees redirected there following the closure of the government-run Massagara reception site;
- Similar to previous months, AVR assistance remains suspended for all but the most vulnerable of migrants. IOM is currently coordinating the return process for 44 vulnerable migrants registered at the MRC in the month of November;
- With the increased number of spontaneous arrivals from Yemen and the many casualties witnessed in the past two months due to the reckless practices of smugglers and the difficulties in which migrants have to walk to reach Obock town, the MRC has set up search and rescue activities between Obock City and Khor Angar. An ambulance with medical staff assists migrants en route, providing medical care and water to those in distress.

Registrations at the MRC in Obock and AVR Services Requested and Provided (January - November 2020)



## Quarantine Measures

- IOM with the support of the Djiboutian authorities and in coordination with partner UN agencies, set-up the Ar-Aoussa quarantine site in Ali-Sabieh region in order to quarantine and treat people transiting through Djibouti before their return to their countries of origin. Since its establishment in May 2020, more than 3,500 migrants have transited through the site where they receive food, water, non-food and medical assistance. IOM is currently supporting the government by ensuring that transiting migrants have access to food, water and medical assistance during the quarantine period.

## SOMALIA SITUATION

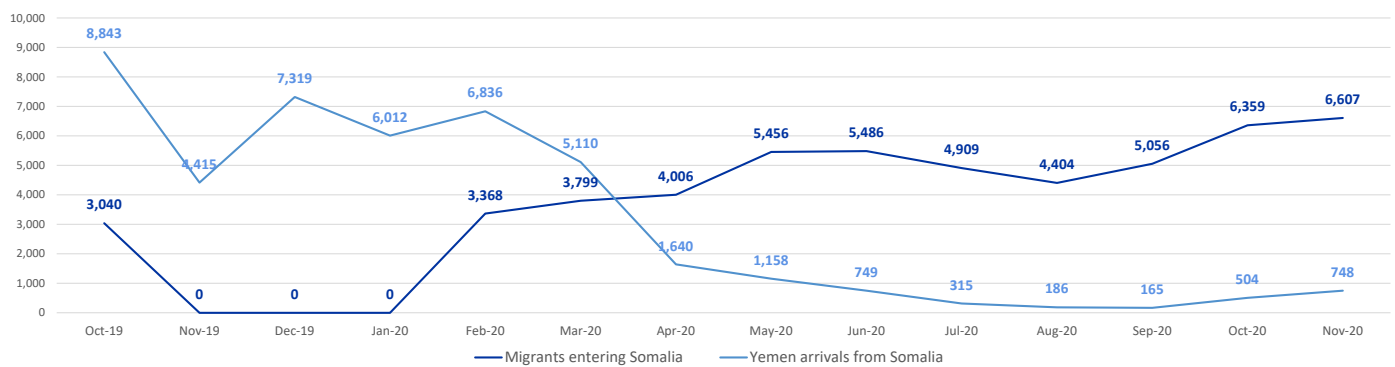
As of 30 November, Somalia reported 4,451 confirmed positive COVID-19 individuals, 113 deaths and 3,417 recoveries. A total of 510 new COVID-19 infections were recorded in November, compared to 353 new infections in October – a 44% increase. Due to an overall decrease in newly reported COVID-19 cases, a phased lifting of the lockdown of the Mogadishu Aden Adde International Airport started on 1 November. International and domestic air services continued to operate in November, while all seaports remained open for cargo. The border between Somalia and Kenya remained closed throughout November as well as the border with Ethiopia, though some movement of people and commodities is allowed, subject to agreements between local authorities in the border area. Meanwhile, the border with Djibouti reopened for cross-border commercial trade only on 4 November, following the end of the official closure period announced by the Government of Djibouti to curb the sharp increase in COVID-19 cases.

## Migrant Flows Observed Through Somalia and at Yemen Points of Entry

- Yemen arrivals from Somalia stood at 748 in November, a 48% increase from the 504 arrivals recorded in October; the increase was likely affected by the calming of unfavorable weather conditions following the later summer months and the relative opening of borders between the various countries, as well as the relaxation of movement restrictions following the COVID-19 outbreak. Similar to previous months, the largest proportion of these migrants were Ethiopian (88%), with the remainder being Somali (12%) nationals. As in October, the majority of the migrants arriving in Yemen from Somalia were adult males (77%), while 14% were adult females, and 9% were children, of which 62% (48) were UMCs;

- FM data showed a continued increasing trend of migrant entries into Somalia with 6,607 movements observed in November versus 6,359 movements tracked in October; almost all of the migrants were Ethiopian nationals (99.1%). A total of 57 Yemeni nationals were also tracked intending to return to Yemen from Somalia;
- As in October, a significant number of Ethiopians travelled through Djibouti to Somalia (1,378), which is a marked increase from the 1,056 recorded in October. These movements made up 13% of all the migrants tracked entering Somalia;
- Similar to Djibouti, spontaneous return movements from Yemen are currently ongoing, and an overall 249 migrants were tracked upon arrival in November, of which 69 migrants arrived in Berbera (all Yemenis) and 180 arrived in Bossaso (153 Somalis and 27 Yemenis). IOM provided Onwards Transportation Assistance (OTA) to 141 Somali migrants to support travel to their communities of origin;

Migrant Movements through Somalia to Yemen (October 2019 - November 2020)



Note: Figures for migrants entering into Somalia for the period from November 2019 to January 2020 are 10% below the actual figures due to the temporary closure of Berbera International Airport in Somalia.

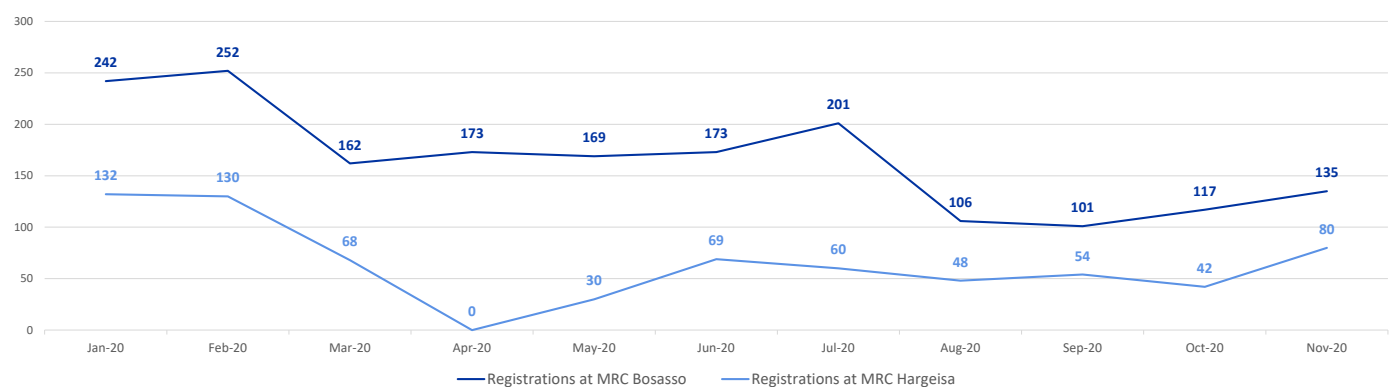
- Unverified reports received by IOM stated that 1,840 migrants departed by boat to Yemen from Mareero, a small town 15 km east of Bossaso. These departures represent an increase of 34% as compared to October when 1,372 departures were reported. Spontaneous returns of Ethiopians continue with approximately 30 migrants leaving Somaliland each week crossing at Wajaale border.

### Migrant Protection Concerns

- IOM estimates that between 400 and 500 migrants continue to be stranded in and around Bossaso, with few options available to continue their journey or to return home;
- The Ethiopian border with Somaliland at Wajaale town remains closed from Ethiopia’s side, yet irregular migrants continue entering Somaliland via two main routes. The first route goes through the east of Somaliland, and migrants usually pass through Hargeisa, Berbera and Burao with the main aim of reaching Puntland. The second route cuts across the west side, through Borama, Hariirad and Lowyado. Migrants on this route often aim to reach Obock via Djibouti and then continue to Yemen;<sup>3</sup>

### Migrant Assistance (MRC/AVR)

Registrations at the MRCs in Bossaso and Hargeisa (January - November 2020)



<sup>3</sup> Source: Somaliland Immigration Officer.

### Bossaso

- Migrant registrations increased slightly between October (117) and November (135). This is similar to the trend seen in the summer of 2019, when smugglers slowed down the departures in the summer months due to the windy season which leads to unfavorable conditions at sea, but picked up again later in the year;
- No AVR requests were received at the Bossaso MRC between September and November;
- In November, 29 migrants have been provided with primary health care while 105 received NFIs;
- Migrants in Puntland started to gradually arrive in the proximity of Laaksa reception points. The livelihood of migrants has been already severely impacted by the economic effects of COVID-19, and many are attempting to return to Ethiopia by foot, increasingly stopping for informal work opportunities in farm settings in Bari Region. This is starting to create pressure on farmer communities, already impoverished, due to influx in recent months;
- The conditions of migrant communities have further worsened due to the effects of Cyclone Gati which has swept the shores of Bossaso creating extensive damages in the region. As a response, on 24 November, an emergency outreach was conducted in Bossaso by MRC and IOM staff for the distribution of NFIs emergency shelter kits to 55 Ethiopian migrants (37 male, 18 female) affected by Cyclone Gati. Meanwhile, the Shelter-NFI Team is planning a more coordinated response;
- No tensions or conflict have been registered within Ethiopian communities although there is a fear of tensions linked to ongoing clashes in Ethiopia;
- IOM continued to raise awareness on the risks, signs and symptoms and mode of transmissions of COVID-19, and appropriate mitigation measures at the MRC in Bossaso and in Bossaso town along with NFIs distribution. Three sessions were held on 5, 17 and 18 November reaching 141 (98 male, 43 female), all Ethiopian migrants.

### Hargeisa

- In November, a total of 80 new migrant registrations were carried out by the MRC in Hargeisa and 46 AVR requests were recorded, while 125 migrants were assisted with health care and 66 received NFIs;
- IOM continued to raise awareness on the risks, signs and symptoms and mode of transmissions of COVID-19, and appropriate mitigation measures at the MRC in Hargeisa. One session was held on 28 November, reaching 35 (27 female, 8 male) who were also provided with personal protective equipment (PPE).

In September 2020, a qualitative data collection was carried out in Hargeisa (Somaliland) and in Bossaso (Puntland). The aim of the assessment was to investigate the complex and multifaceted impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and mobility restrictions on vulnerable migrants living and/or stranded in urban and peri-urban settlements in Hargeisa and Bossaso and their social, economic and protection concerns. Key findings were:

- **Main challenges faced by respondents:** inability to purchase and access basic goods and the loss of opportunities for daily income generating activities
- **Coping mechanisms:** reduction of the quality and quantity of the food consumed daily, efforts in negotiating extension on rental payments, reliance on the wider network of migrants for basic needs and on the MRC for medical assistance
- **COVID-19** greatly reduced the level of interaction with the host community; in certain instances migrants feel stigmatized and rejected because seen as carrier of the virus; in other experiences and especially for migrants longer settled in Hargeisa, the community represent a source of support, provided that physical contact is avoided

### Migrant Returns to Somalia

- According to the Immigration and Naturalization Directorate (IND), a total of 307 Somalia migrants (58 female adults, 18 female children, 220 male adults, and 11 male children) were returned from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and arrived at the airport in Mogadishu in November, IOM provided Onwards Transportation Assistance (OTA) to their communities of origin.

## ETHIOPIA SITUATION

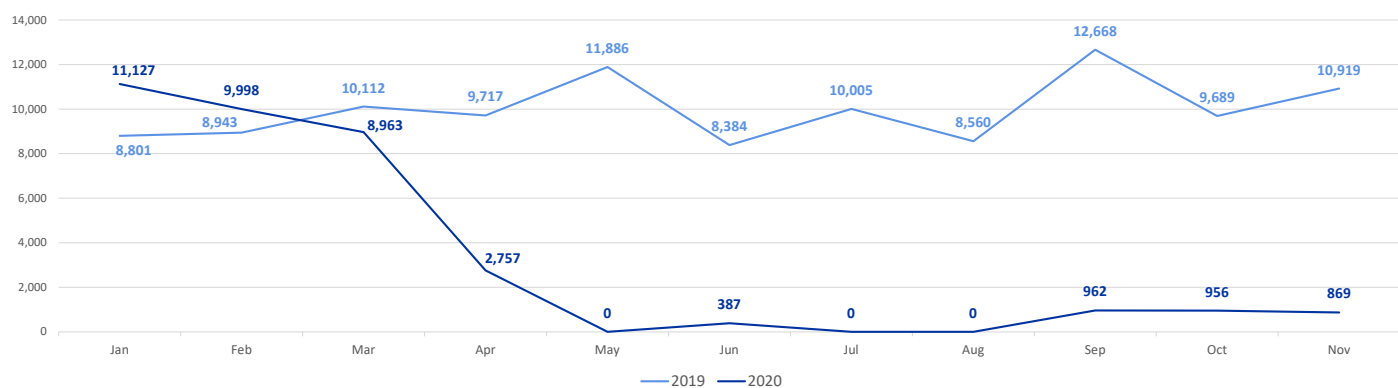
As of 30 November, the Government of Ethiopia recorded the highest number of COVID-19 cases among the countries on the Eastern Corridor, with a total of 110,074 confirmed individuals, 1,706 deaths and 73,808 recoveries. However, the country experienced a significant 50% decrease in the number of new cases reported daily (13,905 new cases in November, and 20,801 new cases in October). Despite this decrease, community transmission within Ethiopia is still ongoing, resulting in increased pressure on quarantine, isolation, and treatment facilities as well as the health system in general. Meanwhile, all air and land borders have remained open following the lifting of the state of emergency in September.



## Migrant Flows, and Protection Concerns

- The returns of Ethiopian nationals from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Addis Ababa continued in November with 869 Ethiopians returning as part of a government-to-government agreement between Ethiopia and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Returns continued at the rate of one flight per week, with an average of 300 returnees arriving on each flight, though returns were halted in late October due to the closure of quarantine sites (please see section below);
- In comparison, November 2019 saw the return of 10,919 migrants, while the cumulative returns between January and November decreased by over 67% (36,019 in 2020 and 109,684 in 2019). Returns across land borders also continued;
- IOM welcomed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's labour reform initiative which was launched on 4 November. These reforms aim to ease foreign workers' contractual restrictions, and could have a tangible impact on the prevention of exploitation and abuse of vulnerable foreign workers in the Kingdom (see [IOM](#));

Returns of Ethiopian Nationals from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Electronically Registered by IOM in 2019 and 2020



- During the month of November, a total of 2,482 spontaneous returns were also tracked in Ethiopia, arriving from Sudan (1,747), Djibouti (542), Kenya (100), Somalia (49), and Yemen (44, via Djibouti);
- The flow of migrants has shown an increase mainly due to the relaxation of restrictions previously placed by the government to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The lifting of the state of emergency has allowed for easier movement within the country;
- Due to the ongoing crisis in Tigray, DTM teams in Ethiopia are closely coordinating with DTM colleagues in neighbouring countries to assess the scale of cross-border movements that could be triggered across the Eastern Corridor.<sup>4</sup> As of November, there have been anecdotal reports of Ethiopians arriving in Sudan towards the North-West, although similar movements have not been witnessed towards the East in Djibouti or Somalia yet. IOM Ethiopia and partners provided assistance to one group of 100 Ethiopian university students who had escaped from Adigrat (a town in Tigray quite close to the Eritrean border) to Asmara (Eritrea) and were assisted by the government to return to Addis Ababa.

## Migrant Assistance (MRC/AVR)

- Since the adoption of travel restrictions by the Government of Ethiopia last 23 March 2020, IOM's AVR operations have been significantly reduced; only two AVR arrivals were reported in Ethiopia in November, one each from Switzerland and Indonesia;
- IOM and partners provided post-arrival assistance to 869 returnees from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. 75 UMCs returned from Saudi Arabia were assisted with family tracing and reunification;
- IOM also supported returnees upon arrival at several PoEs, including Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa, and temporary shelters designated for returnees in the capital and in regional states (namely Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somali, Dire Dawa). OTA was provided to 903 returnees in Addis Ababa;
- IOM Ethiopia strongly advocates for the inclusion of stranded Ethiopian migrants in the national, multi-stakeholder COVID-19 response plans of host and transit countries – in terms of humanitarian responses, socioeconomic and psychosocial support, as well as legal assistance to migrant workers.

## Quarantine Measures

- In early October, the Ethiopian Ministry of Health announced a new directive on the prevention and control of COVID-19 pandemic replacing the state of emergency lifted in September. According to the directive, persons arriving in Ethiopia with a negative PCR test result no older than 120 hours are to home quarantine. However, returnees from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were nonetheless quarantined by a decision of the Ethiopian Public Health Institute as a precaution.

<sup>4</sup> The movements assessed by DTM do not include the nearly 50,000 Ethiopian refugees who fled the conflict in Tigray region and crossed into neighbouring Sudan (see [UNHCR](#)).

In the last week of October, with the last operational quarantine centre resuming its normal functions as a university dormitory, returns from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were postponed while the Government of Ethiopia began efforts to identify, designate and operationalize an alternative quarantine centre;

- In November, quarantine centres in Addis Ababa and the regional states remained closed with the re-opening of schools and universities. Two government-managed temporary shelters in Addis Ababa, and around 10 government-managed temporary shelters in regional PoEs continued to accommodate migrants for a short time, while direct assistance was provided, and OTA support arranged. All returnees from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Eritrea were thus accommodated in Addis, as were all returnees from Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen at land border PoEs. Needs at PoEs continue to be NFIs, OTA, family tracing and reunification, and vulnerability screening/referrals. The needs of migrants and the capacities of stakeholders in different regions and different PoEs vary considerably.

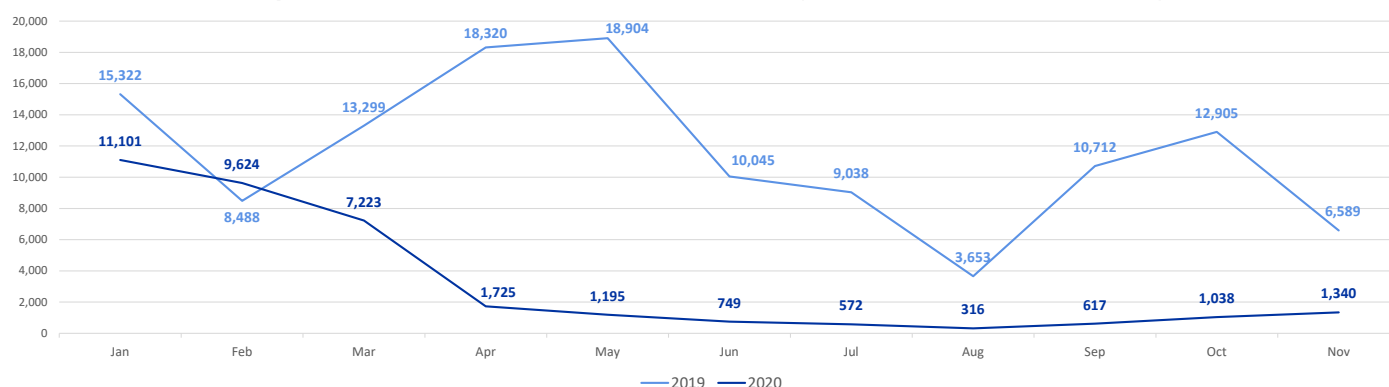
## YEMEN SITUATION

As of 30 November, the Yemeni authorities have reported 2,081 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 606 associated deaths. The high case fatality rate of 29.1% is largely attributable to the challenges of accessing a health care system which has been decimated by years of war. The lack of testing and contact tracing continues to place significant limitations on understanding the extent and scale of the transmission and infection rates. Migrants continue to face significant barriers to accessing primary health care support and services, and are amongst the most exposed population groups in Yemen to public health risks and conflict. Whilst 15 sea border points and three land border points remained open throughout November, flows continue at a reduced level. Involuntary movements have also continued at an inter-governorate level, across areas and territories controlled by different conflict parties. The voluntary return of migrants is currently only possible out of Aden for Ethiopian migrants, and Mukalla and Aden for Somali nationals. Spontaneous and 'self-returns' have taken place in varying numbers from key landing points Lahj and Shabwa governorates; transit points along land borders were partially open to facilitate the return of Yemenis. In addition, inter-governorate public movement tracking continued at 10 internal transit points, especially in Taizz and Al-Bayda. While mobility restrictions have eased for Yemenis travelling internally and returning to Yemen, travel within, into and out of Yemen for migrants remains challenging and dangerous.

### Migrant Flows Observed in Yemen

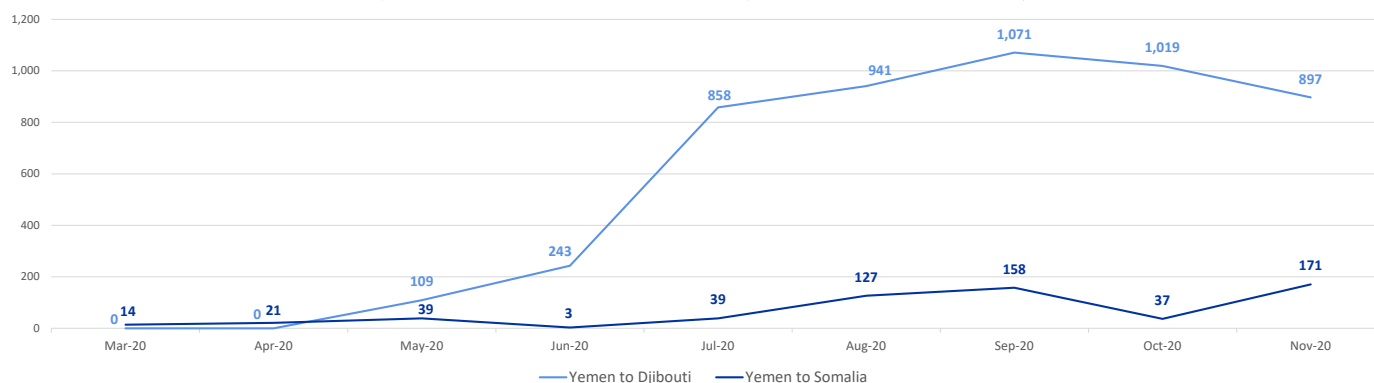
- Overall, 1,340 migrant arrivals to Yemen from the Horn of Africa were recorded in November, a 29% increase from 1,038 arrivals in October, but more significantly, an 80% decrease in relation to arrivals during the same period in 2019 (6,589). Al-Aarah (562) in Lahj and Eyn Bamabad (546) in Shabwah continue to be main landing points.;
- In particular, arrivals to Yemen from Somalia increased by 48% in November (748) as compared to October (504), while arrivals from Djibouti increased by 11%, from 534 in October to 592 in November;
- Similar to previous months, and contrary to the last two months, most migrants travelled to Yemen from Somalia, with 44% of migrants travelling from Djibouti, and 56% from Somalia;
- Most migrant arrivals were Ethiopian nationals (88%), while the remainder were Somali nationals (12%); Unlike previous months when all of the latter were travelling from Somalia, in November, 20% of Somali nationals were travelling from Djibouti;
- Overall, the majority of the migrants were adult males (77%), while 14% were adult females, and 9% were children, of which 40% (48) were UMCs;

Migrant Arrivals in Yemen from the Horn of Africa (October 2019 - November 2020)



- Spontaneous returns: due to the difficulties faced by migrants upon arrival in Yemen with their inability to move onwards towards the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as the protection environment and living conditions in Yemen, those that are able to afford it often opt to return back to the Horn of Africa. Since March 2020, almost 6,000 migrants have made this return journey, using the same network of smugglers utilized on the journey towards the Arab Peninsula.

Spontaneous Returns from Yemen (March - November 2020)



## Migrant Protection and Detention Concerns

- Risks of arrest and detention remain a concern for migrants in Yemen. Over 1,500 migrants are estimated to be held in detention in Sa'ada governorate. The forced transfers of migrants have increased between key border areas of Sa'ada and Al Jawf governorates towards Sana'a and then to Taizz and Al Dhale'e governorates. In November, 2,516 migrants arrived at the Sana'a migrant detention facility in Sana'a city and were then transferred to governorates in the south. This movement is part of an effort to 'deport' migrants. Concerns remain about the conditions during these movements, as well as living standards and access to assistance in detention which falls below minimum global standards;
- Over 5,000 migrants are reportedly stranded around Marib governorate where conflict and COVID-19 border restrictions have forced migrants to remain. Reports of smugglers committing grave violations against migrants have been reported including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), forced labour and harassment;
- Migrants' living conditions across the country continue deteriorating due to a reduction in support from the local community since the beginning of the pandemic and widespread discrimination that prevents them from accessing essential services such as health care. As migrants often turn to smugglers to seek services and shelter, exposure to abuses and exploitation is increasing, especially for women and girls – the most vulnerable to SGBV and trafficking. As living conditions are unbearable for many, seeking smugglers' support to return home via sea is the only option left, despite the well-known risks awaiting in the journey;
- The discrimination of migrants continues in the COVID-19 context in Yemen. Migrants continue to report refusals when accessing public health facilities and support and unable to obtain support from host communities as has previously been the case, with some migrants becoming wholly reliant on external aid assistance while others are able to find work on farms, engaging in domestic labour, or through Cash for Work programmes through local Hygiene Funds.

## Migrant Assistance

- Migrant Response Points (MRPs) continue to operate in Aden and to a smaller extent in Sana'a to support awareness raising and referrals to IOM health support, food, water and NFIs. MRPs continued to provide a safe service for migrants in need. In November, 2,011 migrants were supported with emergency health care, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and referrals for specialized support, while 1,827 migrants received food vouchers, snacks and water, and COVID-19 awareness raising. Needs and vulnerabilities continue to be identified through a case management process;
- IOM has scaled up its Cash for Work scheme in Aden to support migrants seeking return to access temporary support including material support to self-sustain. The measure has been well received by authorities in Aden. Cash for Work is a specific initiative aimed at supporting the high numbers of individuals stranded in Yemen and to provide some protection prior to return;
- VHR preparations from Aden continue. The Government of Ethiopia has verified 1,160 individuals who will be part of the first VHR movement that will take place once relevant travel documents are received for the Ethiopian Government. No voluntary return took place from Sana'a this year and is unlikely to take place in the following months due to limited progress on negotiating a safe return mechanism;
- In Marib, IOM has conducted protection screening of 118 migrants, including 63 women and 30 minors, providing food, tents, hygiene/dignity kits, baby kits, NFIs (blankets, sleeping mats), cash-based support (in exceptional circumstances), health care and referrals for SGBV services;

- Operational constraints remain in northern governorates impacting IOM and partners. Efforts are underway to continue support in the form of distribution of NFIs and health referrals where possible through a coordinated approach;
- IOM has been leading efforts to strengthen inclusion and the prioritized targeting of migrants into multi-sector assistance programming as part of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) process for 2021. Acknowledging significant gaps in support for migrants, IOM continues to advocate for other UN agencies and INGOs to support efforts to address migrants needs and vulnerabilities.

## Quarantine Measures

- Due to the complex conflict dynamics and migrant protection concerns across the country, IOM and partners continue to advocate against discriminatory policies and human rights abuses against migrants. This includes detention and forced transfers, the establishment of quarantine centres to hold migrants (de facto detention centres that do not follow COVID-19 standard protocols), and the lack of inclusive solutions in the management of the COVID-19 crisis throughout the country. IOM also keeps advocating against quarantine centres for migrants and refugees only, as a measure to avoid discriminatory policies of arrest, encampment, or detention.



Health worker in PPE at the IOM constructed COVID-19 isolation and treatment centre in Marib, Yemen. Photo: © IOM / Hamzah Shaif

ANNEX 1 | 2020 MRC REGISTRATION DATA

MRCs	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	MRC Total
Bossaso	242	252	162	173	169	173	201	106	101	117	135	1,831
Metema	149	220	246	41	8	0	0	0	13	0	0	677
Tog-Wajaale	200	267	38	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	538
Dire Dawa	182	168	89	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	439
Hargeisa	132	130	68	0	30	69	60	48	54	42	80	713
Obock	188	188	371	23	13	12	10	22	60	919	857	2,663
Semera	56	92	235	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	383
Monthly Total	1,149	1,317	1,209	270	220	254	271	176	228	1,078	1,072	7,244

ANNEX 2 | STATUS OF POINTS OF ENTRY IN THE EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA REGION

