Tracking Mobility Impact - Points of Entry Analysis

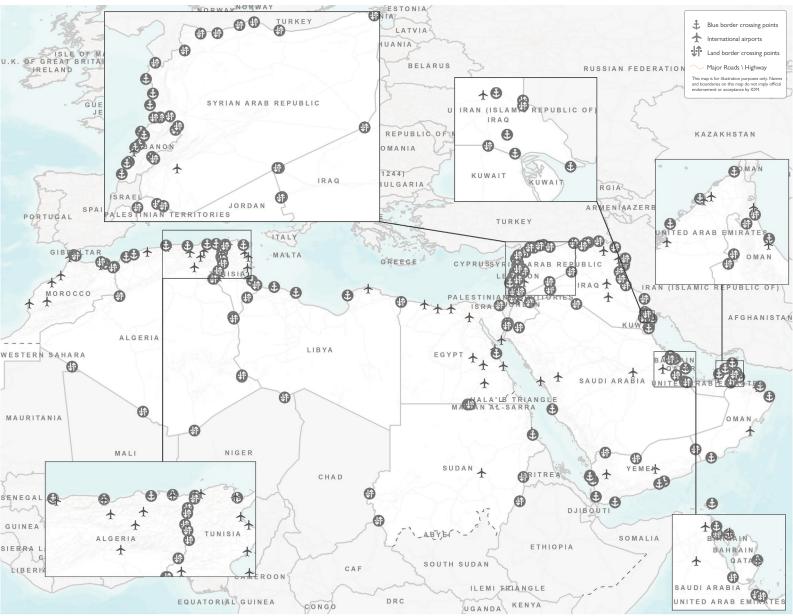## Annual Report on Points of Entry in MENA Region (April 2020 - December 2020)

The current outbreak of COVID-19 has impacted global and regional mobility in the form of various travel disruptions and mobility restrictions adopted since the declaration of global Pandemic by WHO on March 11th, 2020.

To track and better understand how COVID-19 affects global mobility, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) has developed a global mobility database to monitor the status of mobility and visa restrictions at Points of Entry (PoE), together with preparedness and response measures in place to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response in line with International Health Regulations (IHR).

Points monitored include ports of entry as airports, land border crossing points (road or rail), blue border crossing (sea, river or lake), and other locations as internal transit points and other areas of interest, which are not the object of this document. This report describes the findings from data collected between 23 April and 31 December 2020 (37 weeks), on 225 official ports of entry across the region,[1] including 106 land border crossings points, 69 airports and 50 blue border crossing points.[2] This work is based on the information collected by IOM Country Offices in the Middle East and North Africa region - see Methodology Section at the end of the report.

Such information is meant to serve IOM member states, IOM, and its UN partner agencies in responding adequately, and in a targeted manner, to the current and evolving crisis period. Moreover, this information might be relevant for the eventual transition to a regular operational mode, once the acute phase of the COVID-19 crisis is over.

The structure of the report is as follows: page Two presents the main data on the COVID-19 cases and other medical dimensions of the Pandemic in the region; page Three shows the main findings relative to the country level restrictions; page Four, Five and Six report the main trends for the three type of Ports of Entry; page Seven presents migration flows and their trend, as recorded at selected border points in the region through the DTM Flow Monitoring system, while page Eight shows a box on Affected Population - Stranded Migrants and on the Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on migrants and mobile population; finally page Nine presents briefly the Methodology used to collect the data presented in this Annual Report. The Annex page focuses on the country level analysis.

Overview of monitored International Airports, Land border crossing points and Blue border crossing points in MENA

1- This analysis focuses on the official Points of Entry (PoE) in the countries; nevertheless, we acknowledge the presence of at least 27 unofficial Points of Entry in the region, consisting of 22 land border crossing points and 5 blue border crossing points.
2- The number of PoEs varies from 160 in Round 1, 196 in Round 3, 204 in Round 5, 206 in Round 10 and 226 in Round 37.

COVID-19 situation in MENA region

The year 2020 was marked by the onset of a novel coronavirus. Over the first six weeks, the novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, had spread from the People's Republic of China to 20 other countries. The first case of the disease outside of China was reported in Thailand on 13th January 2020.
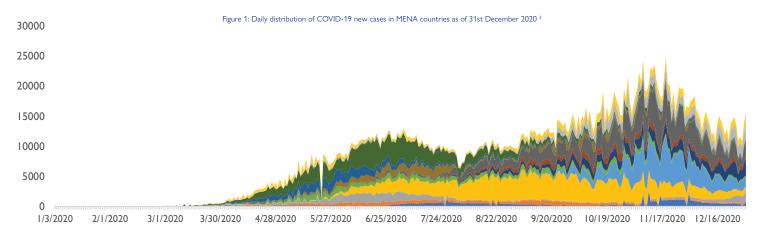
Thereafter, more cases were reported outside of China and in more countries. Due to the global spread, and following recommendations from the Emergency Committee, the Director General of WHO declared on 30th January 2020 that the outbreak constituted a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). Due to alarming levels of spread and severity of COVID-19, an assessment was done and on 11th March 2020, COVID-19 was characterized as a pandemic.

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the first case of COVID-19 was reported in the United Arab Emirates on 29th January 2020, imported from China. Thereafter, more countries reported cases and at the close of the year all the 17 countries in the region had reported cases of COVID-19 but with varied burdens.
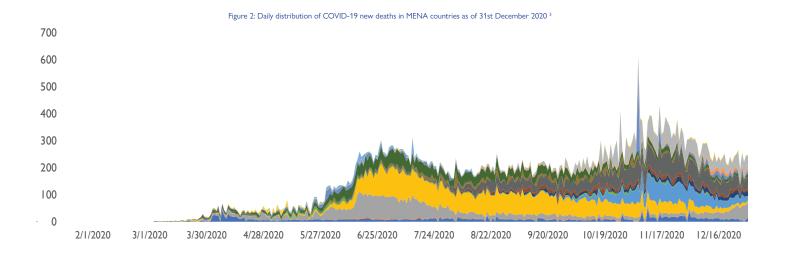
As of 31st December 2020, a total of 3,098, 644 cases of COVID-19 had been reported out of which 54,069 succumbed to the disease. The region peaked between June and July and towards the end of the year as more people were travelling for end year holidays. The case fatality ratio was at 1.7%. the top three countries in terms of COVID-19 burden were Iraq, Morocco and Saudi Arabia and accounted for 48% of all the cases in the region. Yemen (29.1%), Sudan (6.4%) and Egypt (5.7%) had the highest case fatality ratios.

At the close of the year, COVID-19 transmissions were in different phases in the region with Algeria, UAE, Syrian Arab Republic, Qatar, Sudan, Oman, Lebanon, Libya, Jordan, Kuwait, Iraq, and Tunisia experiencing Community transmission. Egypt, Morocco, and Bahrain reporting a cluster of cases while Saudi Arabia and Yemen reported Sporadic cases.

To control the spread of COVID-19 in the region, several preventive measures were put in place: including mobility restrictions through closure of points of entry, closure of public places like schools and social places and strict enforcement of PCR testing prior to traveling.

Figure 1: Daily distribution of COVID-19 new cases in MENA countries as of 31st December 2020 [3]

Algeria ■ Bahrain ■ Egypt ■ Iraq ■ Jordan ■ Kuwait ■ Lebanon ■ Libya ■ Morocco ■ Oman ■ Qatar ■ Saudi Arabia ■ Sudan ■ Syria ■ Tunisia ■ UAE ■ Yemen

Figure 2: Daily distribution of COVID-19 new deaths in MENA countries as of 31st December 2020 [3]

Algeria ■ Bahrain ■ Egypt ■ Iraq ■ Jordan ■ Kuwait ■ Lebanon ■ Libya ■ Morocco ■ Oman ■ Qatar ■ Saudi Arabia ■ Sudan ■ Syria ■ Tunisia ■ UAE ■ Yemen

3- Data sources: World Health Organization (WHO)

International Borders Analysis

From the beginning of the outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, countries in the MENA region applied complete, partial or no restrictions on their external borders, as well as internally to limit movement between areas and cities. Implementation of complete restrictions means that no movement is permitted within and to/from the country, while implementation of partial restrictions indicates that some movement is permitted. Figure below shows the trends observed in 2020:

- **Complete restrictions** at national territory level were implemented in few countries at the beginning of the considered period till the end of May to prevent or deal with the rising number of COVID-19 cases; for the remaining part of the period no country in the region adopted 'complete restrictions' to face the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic;

- **Partial restrictions** have always been the most common measures applied in the region throughout the period although a decreasing trend was observed during the months of June and September.

- **No restrictions** were adopted only in the Syrian Arab Republic, in the first week considered. Since June 2020, countries started reopening their borders, bringing to seven the number of countries applying no restrictions by the end of 2020.

A general continuity in the different approaches with respect to the implementation or not of nation-wide restriction measures was reported and it seems to reflect the main decisions to curb or control the spread of COVID-19 in the country. No significant changes happened during the second wave of the Pandemic.

In addition to partial or total closure of borders, some countries - around 10 on average, over the considered period, also declared a national emergency and applied additional measures at national level as the adoption of national quarantine for arrivals from other countries, or modified or loosened visa restriction both to prevent entry of selected nationals and to allow for overstays upon the expiry of visas.

The most common measures implemented with respect to visa were:

- "Leniency towards or removal of fines for visa overstay, expiration of residency or work permit" and "temporary opening of the borders to allow otherwise stranded migrants to go home" applied by around half of the countries.

- "Suspension of movements into this location for all residence permit holders" on one hand, and "suspension of movements into this location for all valid visa holders" on the other hand, that have been implemented in a smaller number of countries.
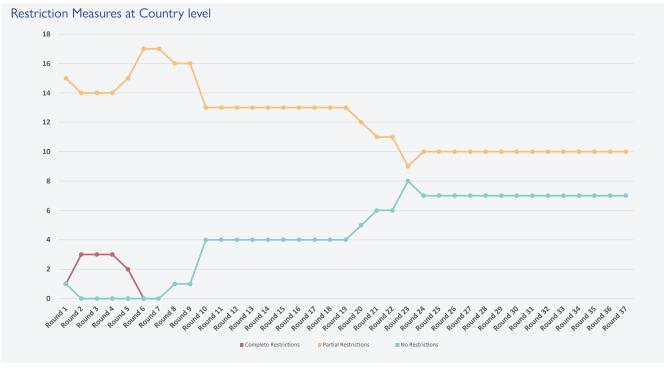
Figure 3: Measures at Country level from April 23rd to December 31st 2020

Restriction Measures at Country level

■ Complete Restrictions   ■ Partial Restrictions   ■ No Restrictions

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BOX 1

Unofficial Points of Entry

Unofficial Points of Entry are those without border officials and related monitoring of travellers and/or goods. Through this exercise, the status of 27 unofficial points of entry in the region, or 22 land border and 5 blue border crossing points were monitored.

- **The five unofficial blue border points** are all located on the Yemeni coast. All of them remained fully operational during the entire period.

- **The 22 unofficial land border points** are identified in Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen. They changed their operational status during the period considered. The number of land borders classified as completely closed and partially operational slightly decreased in the considered period from more than 10 in the month of April to six in the last quarter of the year.

International Airports

In this section, the main trends were observed for international airports at regional and sub-regional: North Africa, Middle East, and Gulf Cooperation Countries:

- **Fully operational international airports** were not recorded from March till the beginning of June 2020. This month marked the reopening of international airports in the region - see Annex at the end of the report;
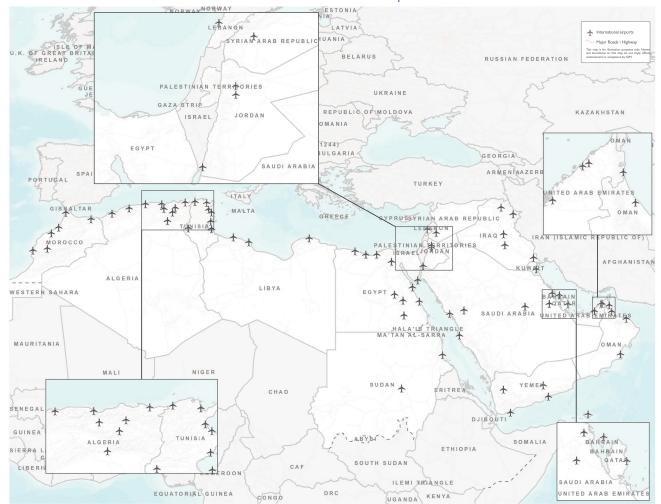
- **Northern African countries** differed in the operational status of their airports, with countries, such as Tunisia and Egypt that have left their airports open for the largest part of the considered period;

- **GCC countries' airports** were mostly closed until September when a reopening trend was observed in the sub-region. All airports re-opened in the months of October and November.

By the end of 2020, a regional overview showed that around **36 per cent** of international airports were fully closed, **nine per cent** were partially operational and **54 per cent** of these Points of Entry remained fully operational.

Figure 4: Restriction Measures by Round at Regional and Sub-regional level

Restriction Measures

Restriction Measures in North Africa, Middle East and GCC

Notes:
- Under the category "Partially Operational" we include "closed for entry", "closed for exit", "open only to returning nationals and residents" and "open only for commercial traffic only". The totals are relative to the monitored Points of Entry.
- Sub Regions are North Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Sudan, Middle East is: Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Syrian Arab Republic and Republic of Yemen and GCC are: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates

Overview of monitored International Airports in MENA

International Land Borders Crossing Points

The main findings for what concerns Land Border Points at regional level are:

- **Fully closed land borders** accounted for more than 60 per cent since the beginning of the considered period; a decreasing trend started in July to reach less than 30 per cent at the end of 2020.
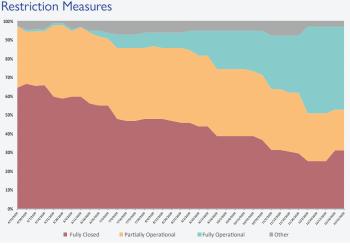
- **Fully operational land borders** were extremely rare till mid-September; by the end of the year, however, they reached about 47 per cent, following a period of progressive re-opening especially in Northern African countries.

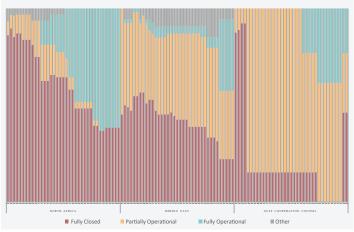When looking at the same land borders at sub-regional level, it is observed that:

- In **North Africa,** most of land border crossing points were classified as fully or partially closed till the end of June, until they began to reopen. More than half were recorded as fully operational in the last part of the considered period;

- In **Middle East countries** most of the land borders remained fully closed during the period considered except for the month of December;
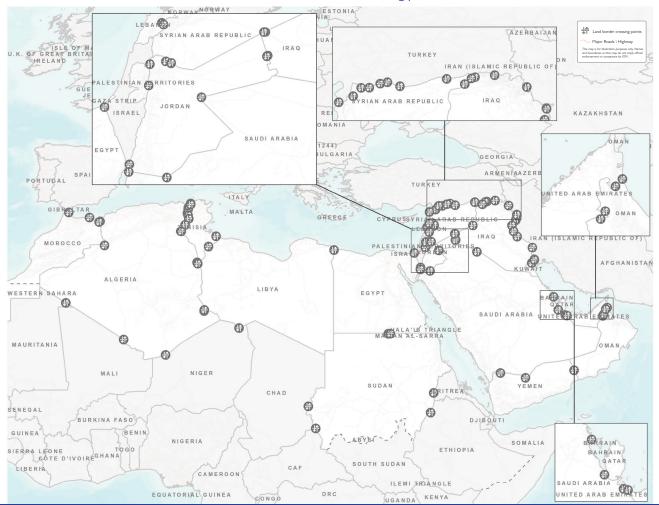
- In **GCC countries,** the number of completely and partially closed land border points remained stable in the first six months and changed in late September when countries started to re-open their land borders with an inverted trend in the last two weeks of 2020.

Figure 5: Restriction Measures by Round at Regional and Sub-regional level

Restriction Measures

Restriction Measures in North Africa, Middle East and GCC

Notes:
- Under the category "Partially Operational" we include "closed for entry", "closed for exit", "open only to returning nationals and residents" and "open only for commercial traffic only". The totals are relative to the monitored Points of Entry.
- Sub Regions are North Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Sudan, Middle East is: Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Syrian Arab Republic and Republic of Yemen and GCC are: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates

Overview of monitored Land border crossing points in MENA

International Sea Border Crossing Points

Seaports in the region recorded a relatively stable trend either at regional or sub-regional level:

- **Fully closed sea borders** accounted for more than 50 per cent as of beginning of May until mid-October when a reopening trend was recorded mostly in Northern Africa and the GCC. By the end of December 2020, out of 50 blue border crossing points in the region, less than half, 23 sea border points, were fully closed and 15 partially operational, while 11 blue border crossing points were fully operational for passengers.

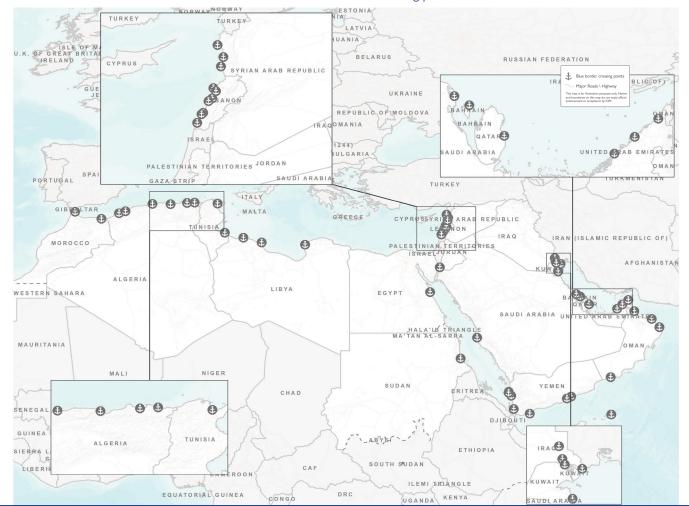When looking at the sea borders at sub regional level, it is observed that:

- In **GCC countries,** all blue border crossing points were closed to passengers till October when half of them returned fully operational;

- In **North Africa,** most of the seaports, more than half, remained fully closed while, at the end of the year around, one fifth of the seaports in the region was fully operational;

- In the **Middle East,** it was classified as partially operational in 48 per cent of cases, while 39 per cent were closed. The status did not change from May onwards. Only two seaports were fully operational by the end of the observed period.

Figure 6: Restriction Measures by Round at Regional and Sub-regional level

Restriction Measures

Restriction Measures in North Africa, Middle East and GCC

Fully Closed   Partially Operational   Fully Operational   Other

Notes:
- Under the category "Partially Operational" we include "closed for entry", "closed for exit", "open only to returning nationals and residents" and "open only for commercial traffic only". The totals are relative to the monitored Points of Entry.
- Sub Regions are North Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Sudan, Middle East is: Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Syrian Arab Republic and Republic of Yemen and GCC are: Bahrein, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates

Overview of monitored Blue border crossing points in MENA

BOX 2

Flow Monitoring at Points of Entry in the Region- the Eastern Mediterranean Route and the Horn of Africa- Arabian Peninsula Route and the Impact of COVID-19

In Africa, IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring (FM) methodology monitors the flow of migrants between countries and collects information on numbers and characteristics of migrants on the move at selected points of high transit, mainly in the vicinity of land border crossing points.
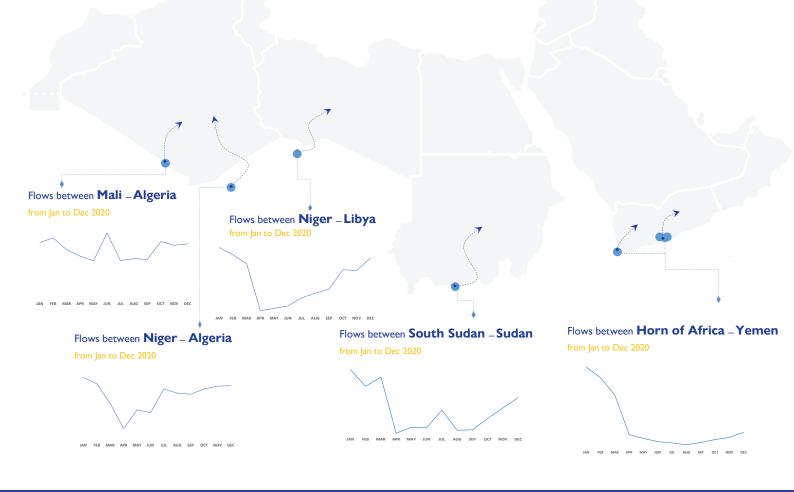
In this box, it is analysed flow data collected in the last two years at the borders between a) Sudan and South Sudan, b) the Horn of Africa (Somalia and Djibouti) and the Arabian Peninsula or Yemen and c) in the Sahel region (between Mali and Algeria, Niger and Algeria and Niger and Libya) with the objective of comparing the volume of people on the move between the pre and post COVID-19 period and assess how COVID-19 related restrictions and closures impacts the mobility of migrants between countries. Migrants' mobility has been affected regardless of the operational status of the Points of Entry (Official or Unofficial) through several channels and an overall reduction is recorded in selected border points presented below.

At the Abyei border point between Sudan and South Sudan, for example, the analysis shows a 36% decline in volume of flows in 2019 compared to 2020. However, by the end of the year, an increasing trend is observed even if volume of flows did not reach the same level of 2019. Nevertheless, this data clearly shows sharp reductions of flows as consequence of the COVID-19 Pandemic despite the fact the official borders and unofficial PoE remained operational.

COVID-19 related movement restrictions show a significant impact on migration flows from the Horn of Africa to Yemen too. In fact, the number of arrivals in Yemen in 2020 declined by 73 per cent compared to 2019. Looking at the overall trend from the beginning of 2019, a declining trend was observed from March 2020, when mobility restrictions started to be implemented. Until now, flows have not reached the 2019 levels.

Looking at movements between sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, it was observed a sharp decline in outgoing flows from March 2020 onward with a slight stabilization trend in the following months. Flows from Niger to Algeria declined by 20% in 2020 compared to 2019. Flows from Mali to Algeria also show a 6% drop during 2020 compared to 2019. The considered Algeria borders remained closed since the outbreak of the Pandemic. For what concerns the border between Niger and Libya and looking at the same period considered above, it is observed a decrease of 39 per cent and confirm the huge impact of mobility restrictions between countries. Flow numbers never reached the same levels of the period before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is partially explained by movement restrictions imposed at country level and at Point of Entry level as well as other socio-economic factors.

Overview of the impact of border closures on population movement

Flows between **Mali – Algeria**
from Jan to Dec 2020

Flows between **Niger – Libya**
from Jan to Dec 2020

Flows between **Niger – Algeria**
from Jan to Dec 2020

Flows between **South Sudan – Sudan**
from Jan to Dec 2020

Flows between **Horn of Africa – Yemen**
from Jan to Dec 2020

BOX 3

Stranded Migrants and Returnees in Middle Eastern and Northern African Countries

With outbreak of the pandemic at global and regional level, a rising number of migrants were stranded in countries in the region while other migrants from the region could not come back to their respective countries. After this period, and with the progressive reopening of Points of Entry in the region from the beginning of July 2020, the attention of policy makers and public opinion is less focused on affected populations compared to the initial months of the pandemic. Stranded migrants are migrants who are unable to return to their country of origin or travel to another country, due to movement restrictions, border closures, lack of regular travel documentation. Some migrants are returnees that are not able to return in the region decreased sharply after the first months of the pandemic. The left-over of the movement restriction measures in several regions and especially those of destination of migrants from the Middle East and North Africa is still a relevant issue in selected countries.

The situation is different for stranded migrants in countries as Libya and Jordan and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries that are international migration hubs. A decreasing presence recorded in line with the progressive reopening of points of entries, especially airports, in most of the countries in the region that are international migrants' hubs. Migrants affected by movement restrictions in GCC countries are mostly from Asian countries and Jordan, while Sub-Saharan Africans are predominant in Libya.[4]

Numbers were generally high in GCC countries due also of the high number of international migrants in the region. These affected populations, returnees and stranded migrants are subjects to the implementation of these restriction measures. They are likely to see an increasing trend in case of re-adoption of restriction measures to curb the spread of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

BOX 4

Socio Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Migrants and Mobile Population in Middle East and North Africa[5]

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is vulnerable to the devastating socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Across the region, it has exacerbated structural issues and exposed vulnerabilities across societies, institutions, and economies.

While the outbreak of COVID-19 has affected entire communities, migrants, and displaced populations, who often exhibit high levels of pre-existing vulnerabilities and face significant structural barriers are also severely affected. A growing body of evidence outlines the ways that the socio-economic outcomes of mobile and displaced populations are negatively affected by the pandemic,[6] including experiencing xenophobic attacks due to perceived links between migration and disease transmission, being unable to access health services or national social protection, being unable to send or receive remittances; being stranded in host country and experiencing increased violence as a result of quarantine.

Analysis relative to impact of COVID-19 also used some of the data that have been presented in this report. With the focus on eight countries, the first indicator looks at freedom of movement at national level, which assesses the time spent by each country in lockdown/under movement restriction. Results show no significant difference between countries and between humanitarian and non-humanitarian context. Egypt, Sudan, and Tunisia are the countries with highest degree of freedom of movement internally. The second indicator is based on the operational status of points of entry into each country, (i.e. open, partially closed, closed). Interestingly, Algeria and Jordan reported very low levels of freedom of movements through Points of Entry. This was due to the high numbers of fully closed airports, land and seaports that remained consistently closed over the period analysed. With current data available, it is not possible to determine any direct causality between the restriction measures at internal and international level with their consequences from the socioeconomic point of view.

Some of the main consequences are reported below:

- For instance, in North Africa countries, key informants expressed the opinion that irregular migrants were likely to avoid any movement – including to health facilities – for fear of being detected by law enforcement officers.

- Across humanitarian contexts, border closures and movement restrictions disrupted supply chains, inducing bottlenecks to procure basic goods including drugs, fruits, and vegetables.

- The pandemic significantly disrupted access to WASH services in humanitarian but not in non-humanitarian contexts

- In countries, such as Libya, individuals who were in transit for short-term or middle term stay, were the most affected by the contraction of the labour market, as they were not able to rely on any other networks.

- Between February and June 2020, Iraqi production decreased by 67 percent. All sectors but medical such as manufacturing and textile (31 percent decrease in production); hospitality (34 percent decrease in production) and education and technology (77 percent decrease in production) have been highly impacted.

- The above table outlines that, overall, prices are more stable in non-humanitarian contexts, compared to humanitarian contexts. In Libya, Sudan, and Yemen, prices considerably increased after April 2020, which coincides with the start of the pandemic.

4- Numbers at the base of this analysis have been collected during the final months of 2020 through media sources

5- The Regional Office is currently finalising the first round of data collection for this study. More detailed findings are expected

6- The Regional Office in Cairo developed a tool aiming to systematically study how and to what extent COVID-19 affects the socio-economic outcomes of migrants and displaced populations throughout the region. Building on the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) framework for the socio-economic assessment of COVID-19, the regional office examines the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on six key pillars, namely (1) Health services and systems during the crisis; (2) Access to social protection and basic services; (3) Economic response and recovery; (4) Macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration; (5) Social cohesion and community resilience; and (6) Mobility.

Methodology

To better understand how COVID-19 affects global mobility, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) has developed a global mobility database mapping the locations, status, and different restrictions of Points of Entry (PoE) by country or territory, globally. These points include airports, land border crossing points, water border crossing points (including sea, river, and lake ports), internal transit points and areas of interest (including regions, cities, towns, or sub-administrative units). Data is collected by utilizing DTM's local expertise from IOM offices globally who adhere to a systematic and structured approach to data collection.[7]

Information collected include: (1) Movement restrictions on entry and/or exit (1) closed for entry and exit, (2) closed for entry (3) closed for exit (4) open for commercial traffic only (5) open only to returning nationals and residents (6) open for entry and exit (7) other and (8) unknown), (2) Changes in visa requirements, (3) Restrictions applied to certain nationalities to disembark at this location, (4) Changes in identification documents needed to disembark, (5) Medical measures applied such as Health Staffing/Medical Personnel, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), Infection prevention and control (IPC) and Surveillance and Referral.

Data collected by DTM includes information on types of restrictions, measures applied, and the population category affected by such measures. This information is collected for each type of observation point, which includes points of entry, transit points, and areas.

DTM developed the global mobility impact assessment database and dashboard. They are based on the methodological framework, which includes details on sources, observation units, planned analysis and limitations.

For more information on the categorization of the major types of restrictions, please see the methodology and other documents on the COVID-19 portal (see: https://migration.iom.int/).

Limitations of this analysis and data collection mechanism are related to the extremely time sensitive nature of the data being collected.

Restrictions, and who they affect, are continually changing, and it is often difficult to collect accurate information in real time. Considering this, all DTM data made available is timestamped, to reflect the reality of the situation at the specified time. In this report we cover the entire region regardless if the country is or not part of DTM. This report does not include the analysis of internal transit locations.
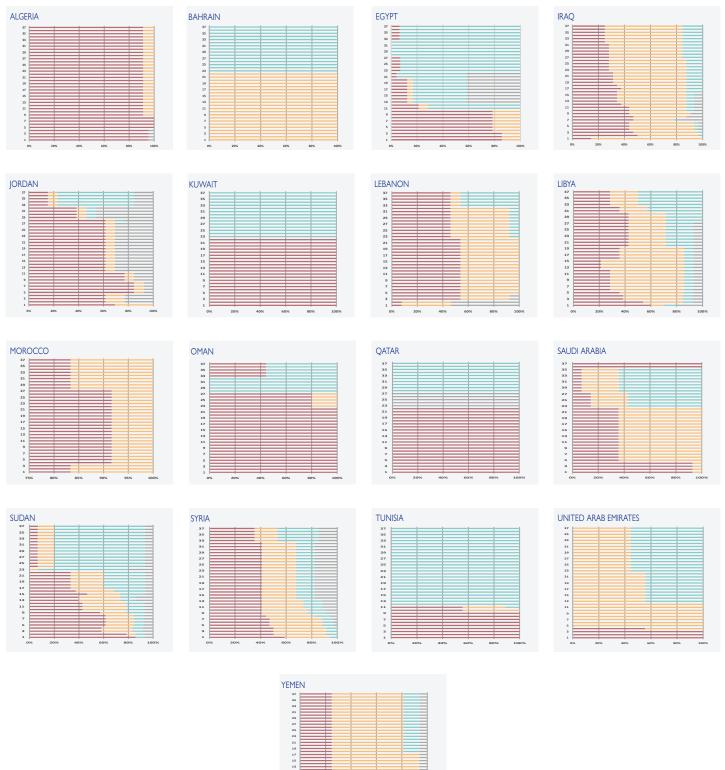
7- Data and Information regarding Syrian Arab Republic are based on Humanitarian Needs Assessment Program (HNAP)

Annex: Operational Status of Points of Entry at country level in 2020

The figures below present the operational status in the period from data collected between 23 April and 31 December 2020 (37 weeks), on 225 official ports of entry across the region, including 106 land border crossings points, 69 airports and 50 blue border crossing points. These figures aggregate the three types of Points of Entry to present the country level analysis on the general measures adopted in every single country as consequence of the spread of the global Pandemic.

As reported, the first part of the considered period shows that in most of the countries the largest number of PoEs were completely or partially closed while in following months a progressive process of reopening characterized several countries and sub-regions starting from North Africa and Middle East countries and GCC countries. Country cases are different within the same subregions, where it can be observed , for example Algeria, and to a lesser extent Morocco, whose borders remained almost closed during the entire 2020 and Tunisia that reopened completely since the beginning of June 2020. At the end of the year, since a reclosing trend is observed in some countries as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, only some countries in the Region present fully operational points of entry as Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Tunisia.

ALGERIA — BAHRAIN — EGYPT — IRAQ

JORDAN — KUWAIT — LEBANON — LIBYA

MOROCCO — OMAN — QATAR — SAUDI ARABIA

SUDAN — SYRIA — TUNISIA — UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

YEMEN

Legend: ■ Fully Closed ■ Partially Operational ■ Fully Operational ■ Other