

QUARTERLY MIGRATION OVERVIEW

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2020



TWO STRANDED MIGRANT MEN SITTING ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD IN ADEN ©IOM 2020

HORN OF AFRICA-YEMEN MIGRATION FLOWS IN 2020

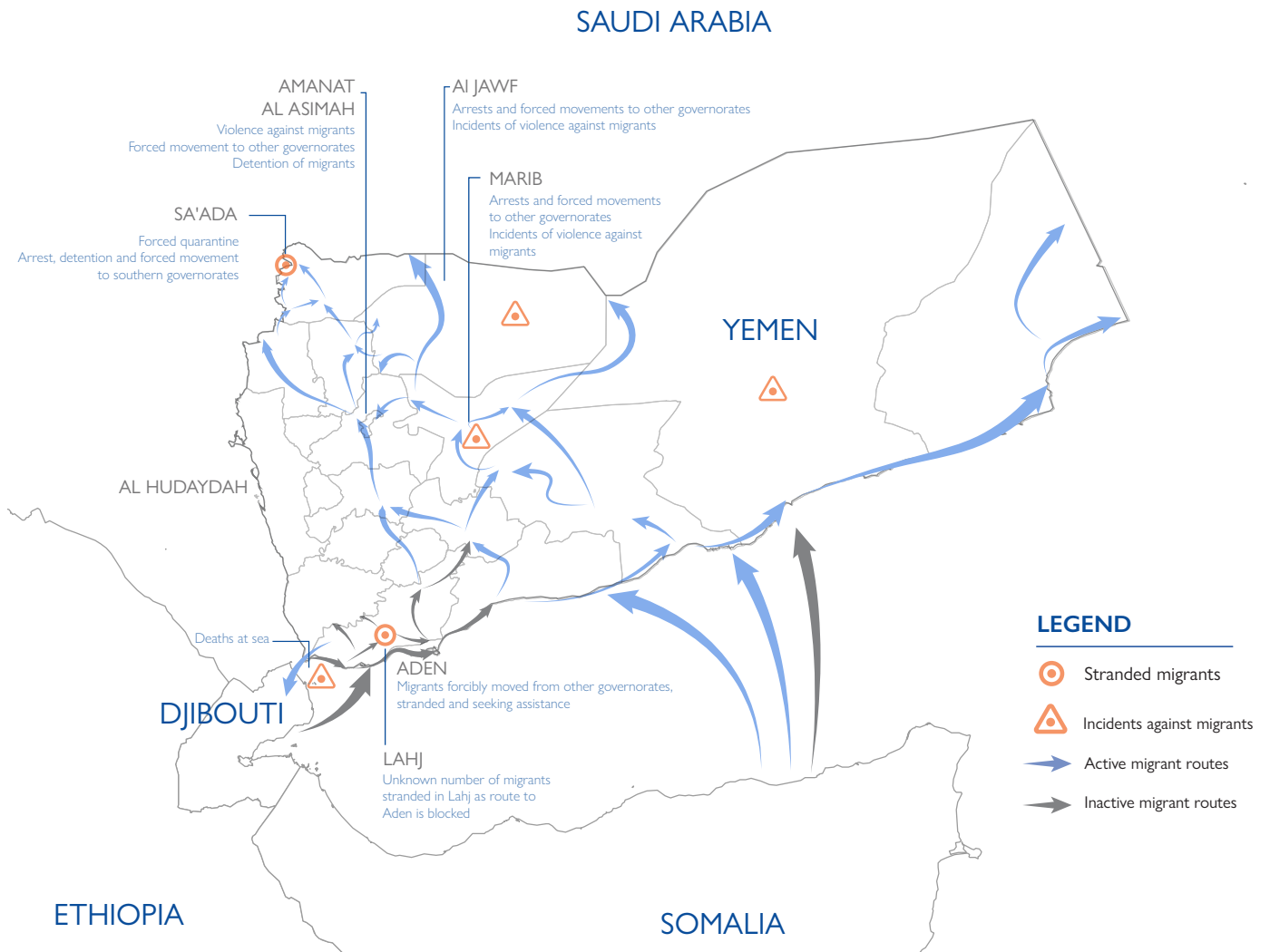
Between July and September 2020, migrant arrivals in Yemen remained extremely low, with just over 1,500 arrivals recorded compared to nearly 23,400 during the same period in 2019. However, the situation for migrants in Yemen remains precarious.

As the COVID-19 pandemic increases barriers to movement into, out of and within Yemen, more migrants are becoming stranded and are increasingly vulnerable to arrest, detention and forced transfer, as well as at risk of contracting COVID-19. With extremely limited access to services and reduced local charity, migrants are having to rely on smugglers for support while they remain unable to transit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) or return home. IOM estimates that at least 14,500 migrants are stranded across the main migrant transit hubs in Aden, Marib, Sana'a and Sa'ada governorates. However, the real figure is likely to be significantly higher. Migrants' living conditions are dire, with many sleeping outdoors or in dangerous abandoned buildings. Migrants lack access to basic services such as health care, clean water or safe sanitation, which remains a key concern as second and third waves of community-wide transmission of COVID-19 become increasingly likely. Migrants' main request to IOM and partners on the ground has consistently been to assist them to return home safely.

While it is difficult to provide an accurate picture of migrant detention in Yemen, IOM estimates that thousands of migrants are under some form of detention. Reportedly, there is a number of migrant detention sites in northern governorates managed by local authorities that are non-compliant with the obligation to provide minimum standards of living, support and care including access to legal aid. From these sites, migrants are often forcibly transferred to the Sana'a Immigration Passport and Naturalization Authority (IPNA) migrant holding facility or directly to southern governorates upon payment of 'exit fees.' At the Sana'a IPNA facility, IOM has been providing basic humanitarian and health assistance as part of lifesaving efforts. By the end of September, 1,090 migrants were detained in Sana'a, living in extremely dire conditions. In this quarter, despite high level advocacy with local authorities, approximately 2,000 migrants were brought to Sana'a from detention sites in Sa'ada and Al Jawf governorates in the north, and over 3,160 migrants (5,641 since January 2020) were forcibly moved to the south as part of the systematic forced transfer of migrants across frontlines. Furthermore, thousands of migrants reportedly remain stranded at the border with KSA.

IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) programme in the south has been on hold since the beginning of the pandemic due to COVID-19 related movement restrictions and security concerns surrounding return migration. Over the last three months, IOM has been heavily engaged in negotiations with the Government of Ethiopia to resume VHR for Ethiopian migrants departing from Aden. IOM is working with the GoE to facilitate the visit of a Consular team to Aden to allow for nationality verification, a necessary step to resume VHR. Meanwhile in the north, there continues to be no progress on dialogue with local authorities on returns from Sana'a due to their lack of acceptance of a minimum application of international standards such as the acceptance of the determination of "voluntariness", despite heavy engagement and advocacy efforts from IOM and the humanitarian community.

HORN OF AFRICA TO YEMEN MIGRATION ROUTES



MIGRATION TRENDS

This quarter, IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) recorded 1,505 migrant arrivals to Yemen coming from Djibouti (839) and Somalia (666)—nearly a 94 per cent drop from the same period in 2019 and a 59 per cent drop from the second quarter of 2020.

While previously migrants in Yemen were able to seek support from local Yemeni communities, particularly food, water and temporary shelter, this has all but collapsed since the COVID-19 pandemic began. In this increasingly hostile environment for migrants, between July and September, IOM saw a drastic increase in the number of migrants expressing the desire to return to their countries of origin. However, with IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) programme on hold since the beginning of the pandemic in the south, migrants in Yemen are relying on smugglers for return support. During this quarter, 2,768 migrants, the majority of whom are Ethiopian, made their way back to the Horn of Africa via Djibouti. The migrants travelled on barely sea-worthy boats from Lahj, the same point where many would have arrived in Yemen. This crossing is dangerous, and migrants report being forced to swim to reach the Djiboutian shores and then being forced to walk through the desert to continue their journey. In the first week of October, [eight migrant drowning victims](#) were found on the Djiboutian coast, and [twelve more migrants were found dead](#) after being thrown off a boat by smugglers the following week. In Djibouti, IOM is providing emergency assistance (medical care, food, water, tents), however this assistance is barely able to meet the large needs of migrants who have been stranded in Yemen since the beginning of the pandemic as well as those who are attempting to return to Ethiopia.

In northern Sa'ada, larger groups of migrants are known to gather in preparation for their final crossing into KSA but are increasingly facing the threat of arrest and detention by authorities, are trapped in conflict areas, or face discrimination and stigmatization from host communities. These risks have remained heightened through 2020 as the discriminatory narrative that migrants are carriers of COVID-19 has become prevalent in Yemeni communities. Migrants in detention who can afford to pay for their release are reportedly loaded on trucks and moved to other governorates where they are left in secluded areas, on the outskirts of towns, or forcibly transferred to the Sana'a IPNA facility.

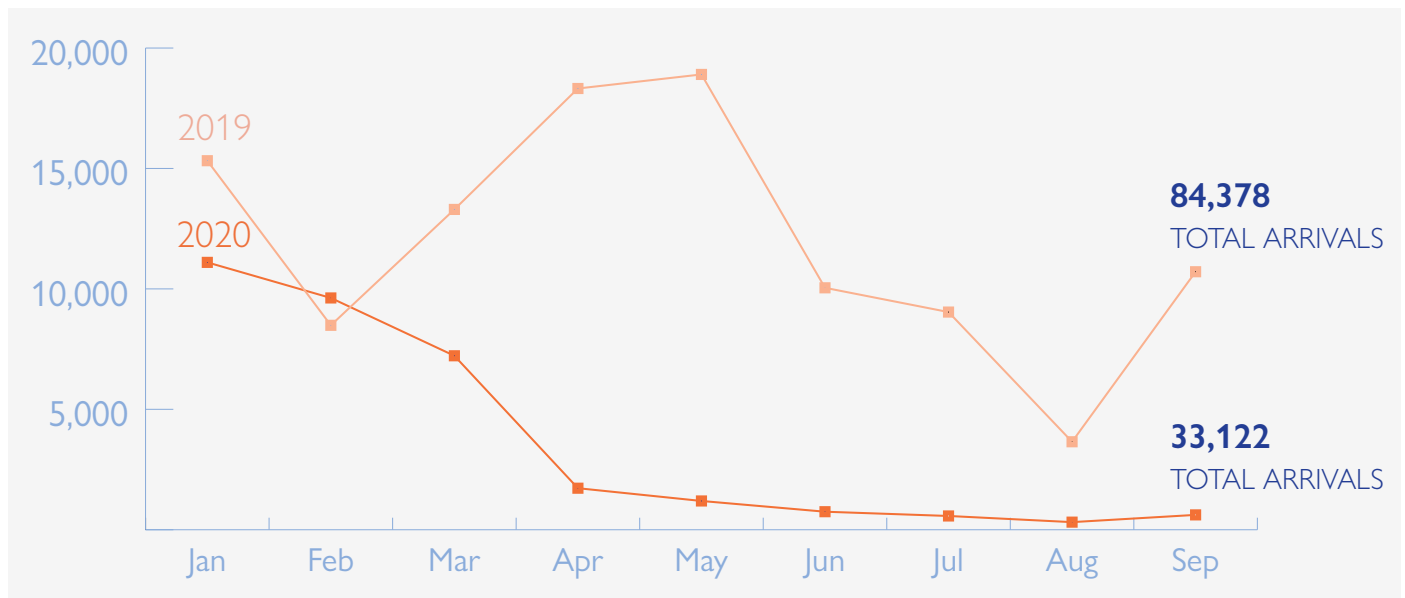
MIGRANT PROFILES

Despite the significant decrease in arrivals to Yemen between the second and third quarters of 2020, the migrant profile remains the same – with 87 per cent of migrants being Ethiopian, and the remaining 13 per cent originating from Somalia. The majority of the migrants are young boys or men with a low level of education and often cite their unawareness of the conflict in Yemen or COVID-19. As a result, many arrivals report that they did not take any precautionary measures during their trip.

Migrants in Yemen continue to face the most egregious forms of abuse at the hands of smugglers and traffickers, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), torture, abduction for ransom, forced labour, and physical violence. Women and girls are considered to be particularly vulnerable and more likely to be trafficked and exposed to sexual abuse. These risks are also compounded by armed hostilities concentrated around Shabwah, Abyan, Al Bayda, Al Jawf, Marib and Sa’ada governorates and internal movement restrictions due to COVID-19 that affect migrants’ mobility. The result is far more migrants becoming stranded or trapped for longer periods in areas without assistance and at risk of being injured or killed.

Additionally, as social distancing, thorough hygiene practices, and access to water and sanitation facilities are often not an option, migrants are at a high risk of contracting communicable and water-borne diseases, while at the same time often being denied access to health facilities.

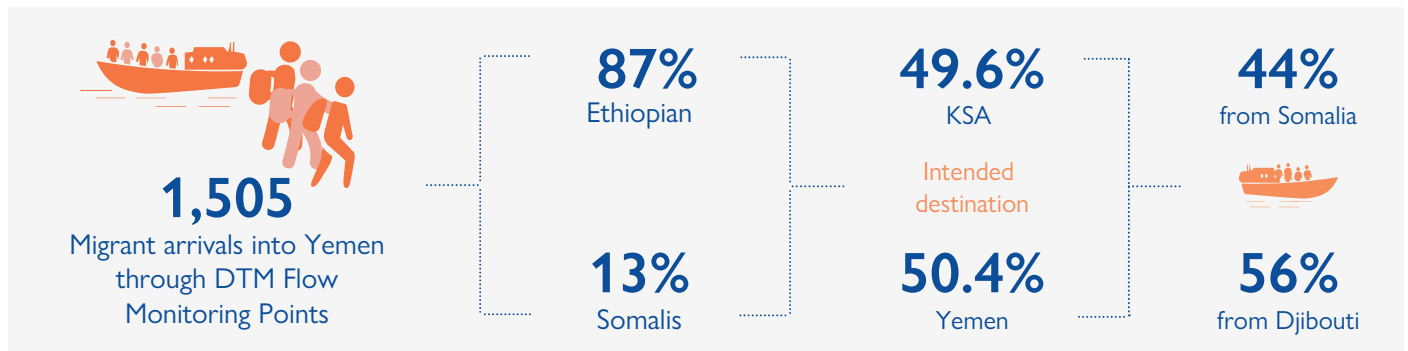
MONTHLY MIGRANT ARRIVALS 2019 & 2020



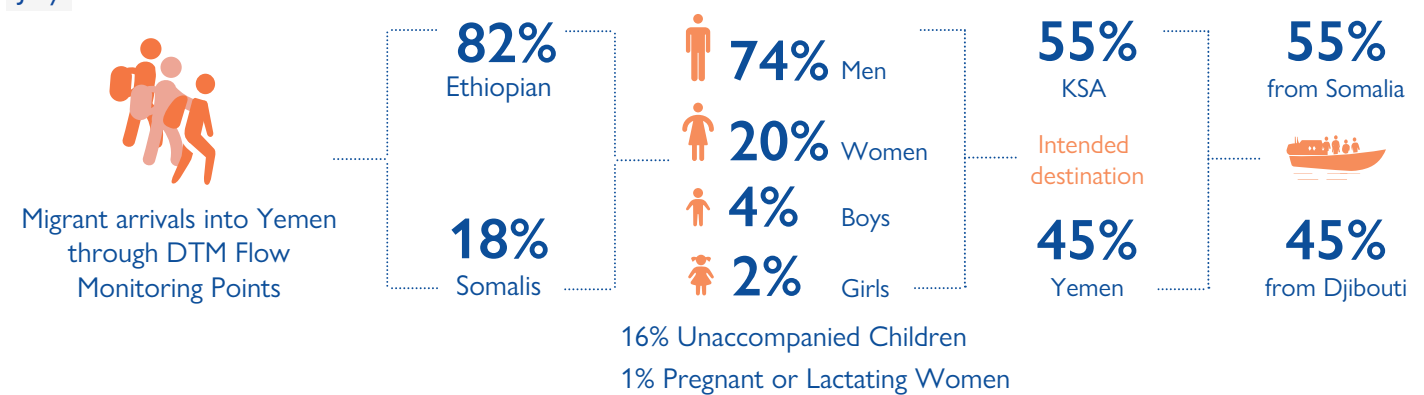
STRANDED MIGRANTS TAKING SHELTER IN AN ABANDONED BUILDING IN ADEN ©IOM 2020/ RAMI IBRAHIM

BREAKDOWN OF ARRIVALS IN QUARTER 3

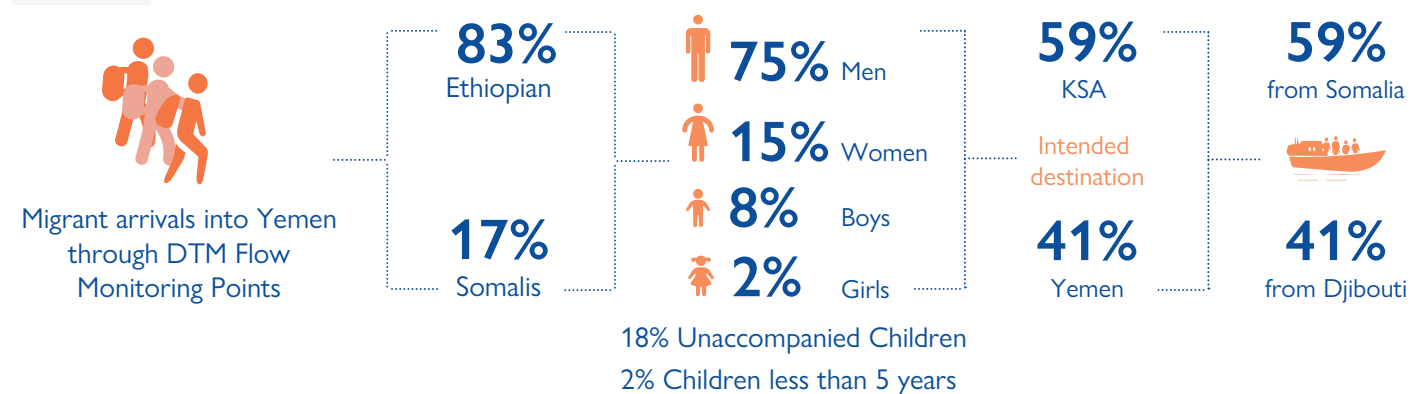
ARRIVALS JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2020



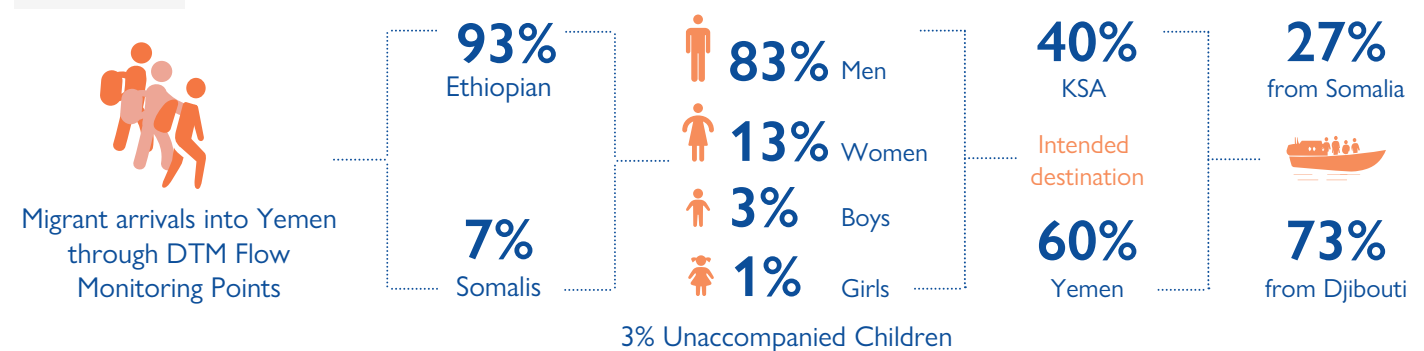
July



AUGUST



SEPTEMBER



MIGRANT VOICES

Fikru, Aden

"I don't have a place to stay; no sleep, no food, no nothing every day. We are tired, very tired. There is no food or water, or anything. To sleep, we use cartons and sleep at the traffic lights [by the roundabout]. I went to Sana'a and they sent me back to Aden. We have to leave this country. They don't want us in Sana'a, they don't want us in Aden, so we have to leave. The airport must open so we can leave. At the restaurants, they hit us. Before it was OK but now they hit us and hit us. They say 'Get out, get out, get out! Corona, corona, corona! Get out, get out! We won't give you food! Go, go corona. No food, no water!' I don't to be in Aden, I want to leave."

Melaku, Aden

"I am eighteen years old and I come from a family of seven in Ethiopia. I wanted to have a better future and decided to go to Saudi Arabia. I hoped I would get a job and be able to send money home to my family. On the boat from Africa to Yemen, I witnessed death for the first time in my life. Two of my friends died during that sea journey. All of us on the boat had to mourn in silence. When we reached land, we were picked up by more smugglers. I thought they would help us get to Saudi but instead they held us. They beat us daily for ransom until we could get enough money together from our families for our release. For women, the situation was even worse. Before the smugglers captured us, I had gotten a small thorn embedded in my foot but did not think about it too much. But when we left the smugglers after paying them and were walking to Aden, it started to hurt a lot. I hardly could walk, and my friends even had to start helping me. Then we met a white car on the road. We were worried we were going to be captured again but it was IOM. They treated my infected foot. Now, I am here in Aden, waiting to go home to Ethiopia."



A YOUNG MIGRANT SITS IN THE ABANDONED BUILDING WHERE HE IS SHELTERING IN ADEN ©IOM 2020/ RAMI IBRAHIM




Gebre, Sana'a

"When I saw my friends were working in Saudi Arabia and becoming rich, even buying houses, I decided that I had to join them. I needed to do something to end my family's poverty. Nearly two years ago, I left home. First, I travelled to Addis Ababa and then to Somalia by car. We were in touch with a smuggler that we met in Somalia. Then, we travelled to Yemen by sea, which took nearly a whole day. We landed on a beach and straight away we got into a car for three more days of travel to Sana'a. The next morning, we start walking to the border at 8:00 AM. We were sitting in a hilly area near the border and I was talking on my mobile phone. I guess someone heard us because suddenly we were being shot at. I was injured in my groin area and rushed to hospital where I stayed for eight nights. I was in a coma but somehow, I was moved to Sana'a. When I woke up, I was still in bad health and I had no money to pay for health care. I have heard that IOM can return migrants so I came to their centre. I was alone and needed help. Now, they are proving me with health care, food and shelter. But I want to go back to my family and country. To help my community, I'm in touch with my family and friends and I always warning them to not make this journey. It's really dangerous and puts your life at risk. I told my wife about my health situation and she is extremely worried and wants me to come back home. Really, my biggest problem now is that I need to go home."

IOM MIGRATION RESPONSE IN YEMEN IN 2019

INTEGRATED COVID RESPONSE

IOM Yemen aims to ensure that principled health and protection interventions are integrated into COVID-19 response, inclusive of all population groups, including migrants and irrespective of status. Interventions include:

-  Hygiene and health prevention and awareness
-  Ongoing protection monitoring of protection risks and violations
-  Support to the Ministry of Public Health and Population
-  Provision of PPEs and COVID-19 awareness to field staff



IOM and partners continued to provide standard health and protection assistance through IOM migrant centres, IOM-supported clinics and mobile teams at main transit hubs, along migratory routes and at arrival points along the southern coastline. As the operational space in the north remains restricted, preventing access to areas where needs are acute (i.e. Sa'ada governorate), most migrant assistance activities are unable to be implemented by IOM and partners.

In Marib, over 4,000 migrants are estimated to be stranded across the governorate, with many of them having lived there for over six months, unable to continue their journey northwards due to movement restrictions along the main roads. In addition, over 500 migrants are under risk of eviction in Marib due to a lack of acceptance of their presence from the local community. The IOM protection team, in coordination with Doctors Without Borders and partners on the ground, is providing mobile assistance through the distribution of relief items, health referrals, cash assistance and counselling.

In Aden, over 5,000 migrants are estimated to be stranded in the city and living in critical conditions, desperate to return home. IOM is expanding assistance, introducing food voucher distributions and registering migrants for a cash-for-work initiative scheduled to start in October in collaboration with the local governmental Hygiene Fund. This initiative will serve as interim assistance to migrants as they await VHR. Moreover, with the partial reopening of the Aden and other airports in September, IOM was able to assist eight migrants of various nationalities, including Indian, Bangladeshi, Egyptian and Moroccan nationals to return home. In coordination with UNHCR and the Government of Somalia, preparations are also ongoing to resume the Assisted Spontaneous Return of Somali refugees from Aden to Berbera, Somalia.

The operational coverage of humanitarian actors supporting migrants remains limited in Yemen and as a result, there is a real need for other humanitarian actors to support efforts to respond to urgent needs migrants face.



IOM RESPONSE JULY-SEPTEMBER 2020

- 11,147** Migrants provided with health consultations
- 12,308** Migrants supported with protection assistance
- 3** Internal protection monitoring monthly reports released, in coordination with partners
- 3** Regional Migration Response Plan (RMRP) consultative meetings

JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	
4,130	2,311	4,706	Migrants provided with health consultations
3,802	3,452	5,054	Migrants supported with protection assistance
1	1	1	Internal protection monitoring monthly reports released, in coordination with partners
1	1	1	Yemen Regional Migration Response Plan (RMRP) consultative meeting

KEY ADVOCACY MESSAGES

- IOM urges authorities in the north to allow independent access to areas where migrants’ needs are acute, primarily in Sa’ada, Al Jawf, Sana’a, Al Bayda and Dhamar governorates.
- IOM urges De Facto Authorities to consider migrant detention as a measure of last resort, especially for children and the most vulnerable, and to decongest detention sites where there is a high risk of infectious disease outbreaks.
- IOM urges De Facto Authorities to stop the practice of the forced transfer of migrants to territories outside of their control, across frontlines and areas of hostilities.
- IOM urges authorities in the north and south to ensure the protection of migrants from abuse at the hands of smuggling and trafficking networks and from the risk of being caught between ongoing hostilities.
- IOM encourages donors and the humanitarian community in Yemen to include migrants in humanitarian targeting for assistance.
- IOM encourages donors to increase financial support for Voluntary Humanitarian Return as a key life-saving measure for the thousands of migrants currently stranded in Yemen with no available durable solutions.

IOM MIGRANT ASSISTANCE LOCATIONS

