



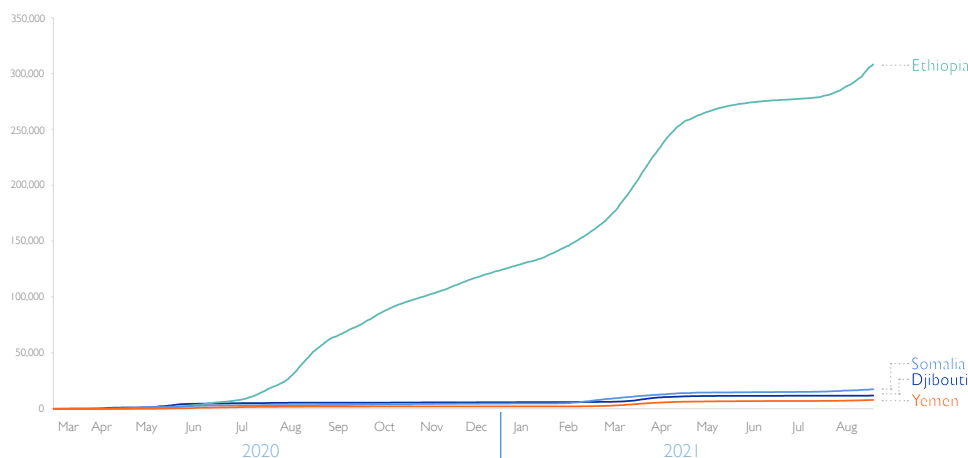
IOM staff take temperatures of migrants at Aden airport ahead of their return flight. © IOM 2021 I.M. Mohammed

## 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.

## EPIDEMIOLOGICAL UPDATE AND RESPONSE TO THE OUTBREAK

Incidence Trend of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases as of 31 August 2021



	Djibouti	Ethiopia	Somalia	Yemen
Confirmed cases	11,750	308,134	17,466	7,869
Deaths	157	4,675	977	1,472
Recoveries	11,549	276,842	8,531	-
Active cases	44	26,617	7,958	-

Source: IOM Regional Office for East and Horn of Africa, as of 31 August 2021

<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. Eight MRCs are currently operational in the Horn of Africa: Obock (Djibouti), Hargeisa, Bossaso (Somalia), Semera, Metema, Dire Dawa, Togochale and Moyale (Ethiopia).

## CONTACT

Regional Data Hub (RDH), IOM Regional Office for East and Horn of Africa:  
rdhronairobi@iom.int

For more information:  
[ronairobi.iom.int/regional-data-hub-rdh](https://ronairobi.iom.int/regional-data-hub-rdh)



## COVID-19 Epidemiological Situation

As of 31 August 2021, the number of COVID-19 cases along the Eastern Corridor stood at 345,219. Ethiopia continued recording the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases (89% of total cases). The country distributed over 2.4 million vaccine doses obtained through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) initiative by the end of August. Following Ethiopia are Somalia (5% of total cases) and Djibouti (3% of total cases), while Yemen cases represented 2% of the total cases. In an effort to mobilize the Djiboutian population, the Ministry of Health recently developed and launched a COVID-19 vaccination campaign developed in coordination with technical partners (including IOM, WHO, UNICEF, USAID). The campaign was launched in August 2021 and aims to vaccinate 25% of the Djiboutian population against COVID-19 by the end of December 2021. As of 31 August 2021, the number of COVID-19 related deaths along the Eastern Corridor stood at 7,281, the majority of which were recorded in Ethiopia (64% of total deaths). Yemen holds the highest case fatality rate (CFR) at approximately 18.7%, compared to Djibouti (CFR 1.3%), Ethiopia (CFR 1.5%) and Somalia (CFR 5.6%). This is much higher than the global average CFR of 2.1% and is largely attributable to the challenges of accessing a health care system which has been decimated by years of war. On 29 August, Yemen's Ministry of Public Health and Population received the next expected shipment of 151,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses out of 504,000 doses provided through COVAX.

## COVID-19 Mobility Restrictions

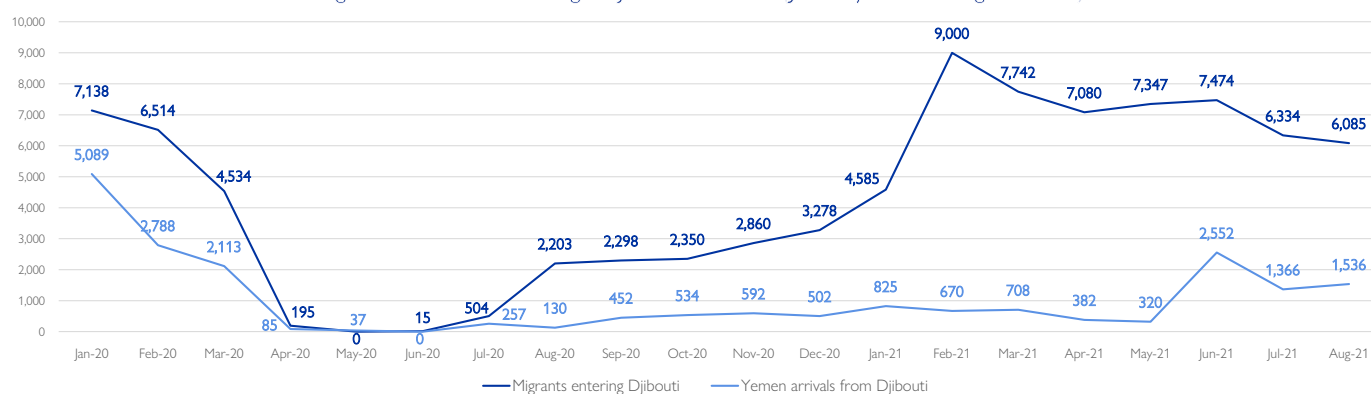
Mobility restrictions remain largely unchanged in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia as of the end of August 2021. More than a year after the reopening of the country's air, land and sea borders in July 2020, the Djiboutian health authorities recorded a 3.04% COVID-19 positivity rate and a 100% recovery rate among all incoming passengers screened at the various Points of Entry (PoEs). In Yemen, mobility restrictions as well as health screenings at internal transit points have remained lifted, with a total of 15 sea border points and three land border points open for movement.

## DJIBOUTI SITUATION

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

- As the Tigray crisis continues to unfold, access to Djibouti through the Afar Region continues to be difficult. Migrant movements into the country continued to decrease, with 6,085 entries observed in August 2021 from Djibouti's western borders, which is 4% lower than the entries observed in July. This brings the total entries into the country in 2021 to 55,647. Migrants entering Djibouti in August were all Ethiopian nationals and mainly adult males (75%), followed by adult females (12%), and children (13%).<sup>2</sup>
- With 1,536 new migrant arrivals in August, a total of 8,359 migrants arrived in 2021 from Djibouti to Yemen. All August arrivals disembarked near Al-Aarah FMP in Lahj governorate; the continued decrease in arrivals this month is likely due the extreme weather conditions, including strong winds, heavy rainfall, and high tides, which made it difficult for migrants to travel by boat. A majority of the migrants tracked were men (85%), 8% were boys, 7% were women, and less than 1% were girls. Contrary to the previous month, 37 unaccompanied migrant children (UMCs) were tracked upon entry from Djibouti (up from 5 UMCs tracked in July); these make up 30% of all children arriving in Yemen from Djibouti.

Migrant Movements through Djibouti to Yemen (January 2020 - August 2021)



Note: Spaces for unaccompanied children into Djibouti were decreased slightly (from 5 to 37) due to a restriction of the monitoring.

<sup>2</sup> The sex and age disaggregated data of entering migrants is an estimation because of the data collection methodology.

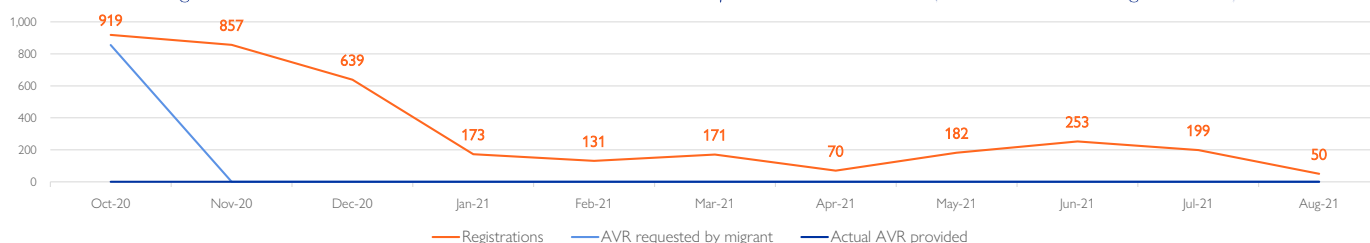


- Spontaneous return movements from Yemen to Djibouti continued in August 2021 with a total of 316 Ethiopian migrants, which is a marked decrease from the 950 returns reported in July 2021. A vast majority of the returns were men (93%). Since May 2020, IOM tracked a total of 15,689 spontaneous returns of Ethiopian migrants, 9,595 of which were in 2021.

### Migrant Protection and Assistance

- Three migrants (2 male adults and 1 female child) lost their lives near Obock in Djibouti in August. While the nationality and circumstances of the first death are unknown, one of the men and the child were Ethiopian nationals who both died in the Obock MRC due to natural causes/sickness.
- As of 26 August 2021, 1,547 migrants on their way to the Arabian Peninsula were stranded in Djibouti and had gathered in 11 spontaneous sites located along the migration route; most migrants were stranded in the Dikhil region. Immediate needs included water, food, hygiene kits and non-food items (NFIs).
- 50 new migrants were registered at the Obock MRC in August 2021, which is a drastic 75% decrease from the previous month and also the lowest number of registrations recorded so far this year. This is due to the fact that spontaneous returns from Yemen have decreased and that few AVR took place during the month which limited the capacity of the MRC to host additional migrants.
- During this month, a group of 49 migrants were returned to Ethiopia as part of IOM's AVR programme.

Registrations at the MRC in Obock and AVR Services Requested and Provided (October 2020 - August 2021)



## SOMALIA SITUATION

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

- Migrant entries into Somalia decreased by 20% between July (2,496) and August (1,990). Of these, almost 98% were Ethiopian nationals, while 41 Yemeni nationals were also tracked; the latter were intending to return to Yemen through Somalia. Overall, in 2021, a total of 20,639 migrants entered Somalia.
- Migrant arrivals to Yemen from Somalia stood at 220 in August 2021, which represents a 10% increase compared to the 200 arrivals recorded in Jul 2021 as the rough seasons and windy weather conditions during the late summer months continue to make the sea-crossing almost impossible. This brings the total arrivals from Somalia in 2021 to 4,952. Contrary to what has been observed in the past, a majority of the migrants tracked upon arrival in Yemen from Somalia were Somali nationals (55%) with the remaining being Ethiopian nationals (45%); all of the arrivals from Somalia were tracked through the new FMP established at Arqah in Shabwah governorate. More than half of the arrivals were adult males (53%), while 19% were adult females (same as July), and 28% were children (down from 46% in July). Unlike reports from previous months, though similar to July, no UMCs from Somalia were tracked during this month.

Migrant Movements through Somalia to Yemen (January 2020 - August 2021)



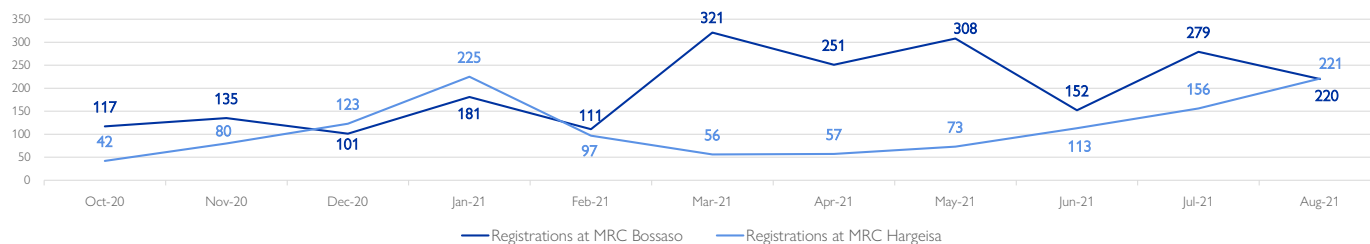
Note: Migration through Somalia to Yemen in 2021 was 4,952 arrivals. This is a decrease from 2020 arrivals of 15,687. The decrease is due to a combination of factors, including the impact of COVID-19 on migration routes and the establishment of the new FMP at Arqah in Shabwah governorate. The decrease is also due to the fact that the majority of arrivals from Somalia were tracked through the new FMP established at Arqah in Shabwah governorate. The decrease is also due to the fact that the majority of arrivals from Somalia were tracked through the new FMP established at Arqah in Shabwah governorate.

- According to unverified reports received by IOM, the departures from Mareero, a small town 15 km east of Bossaso, as well as Elayo, increased by more than two-fold, with 300 such migrant departures reported, compared to July, with only 145 migrants boarding boats to Yemen. These reports also stated that Elayo is becoming the preferred port of departure for migrants, with most migrants departing from there. Following an Al-Shabaab attack against the Bossaso prison in March 2021, the Puntland police has established security bases near Mareero.
- Similar to what observed in Djibouti, spontaneous movements from Yemen to Somalia are occurring, and 71 movements were tracked upon arrival in Bossaso in August (61% males and 39% females). The majority of movements were returning Somalis (64), while 7 Yemeni nationals were also tracked. This brings the total returns from Yemen to Somalia since May 2020 to 2,915, of which 1,917 occurred in 2021.

## Migrant Protection and Assistance

- IOM estimates that 570 migrants continue to be stranded in and around Bossaso (270), Hargeisa (100) and Burao (200), with few options available to continue their journey or return home.
- A total of 441 migrants were registered at the Hargeisa (221) and Bossaso (220) MRCs; a slight 1% increase from July. This increase in registrations is primarily attributed to greater migrant movements along the border with Ethiopia triggered by the ongoing Tigray conflict which has spilled over to other regions in the country. In August, the MRCs in Somalia registered 15 Tigrayan migrants (5 female and 10 male), and most were young people aged between 6 and 29 years old.
- 176 AVR requests were received at the MRCs in Hargeisa (129) and Bossaso (99) in August. During this month, two AVR movements took place from the Bossaso MRC back to Ethiopia.
- During the month of August, Saudi Arabia returned 100 Somali migrants to Mogadishu, including 28 children (11 male, 17 female). All returnees received onward transportation assistance (OTA) to their community of return.

Registrations at the MRCs in Bossaso and Hargeisa (October 2020 - August 2021)

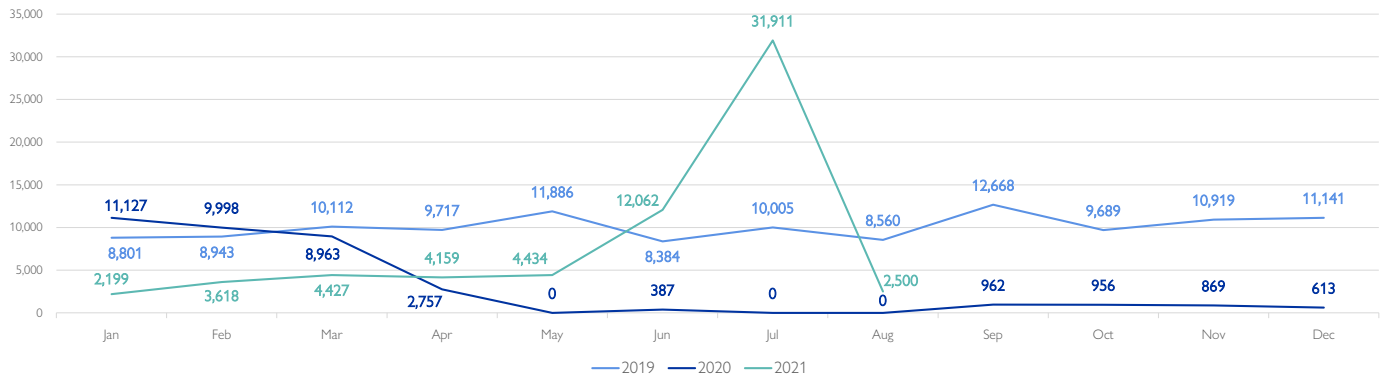


## ETHIOPIA SITUATION

### Migrant Flows, and Protection and Detention Concerns

- Returns of Ethiopian nationals from Saudi Arabia resumed on 18 August at a rate of over 1,000 returns per week. A total of 2,500 returns to Ethiopia were recorded throughout August. Tigrayan returnees continue to arrive in great numbers from Saudi Arabia, roughly 20% of all arrivals (475 in total) in August. The vast majority were females (90% versus 10% males), and a total of 92 returnees were children under the age of five years old. The Government of Ethiopia has arranged dedicated shelter sites in Addis Ababa for Tigrayan returnees to accommodate for a possible extended period of time, while those with relatives in Addis Ababa are encouraged to reunite with their family members.
- Access to the Tigray Regional State and conflict-affected areas in northern Amhara and western Afar remains very limited and risky. Migrants from these areas who cannot reunify with their family/relatives, or find other accommodation in Addis Ababa, or other safe and accessible locations are at a high risk of becoming stranded without access to safety networks and support for basic needs. Many migrants also need specialized support (medical, psychosocial, psychiatric). Furthermore, women, small children and UMCs are among the most vulnerable; UMCs whose families are unreachable are in need of alternative care arrangements, which are currently not available in Addis Ababa to the level required.
- A total of 108 migrants, including 13 UMCs, were registered at MRCs bordering Djibouti and Somalia in August 2021, namely in Togochale (88), Semera (12) and Dire Dawa (8). Migrants mainly departed from Oromia (81%) and Amhara (16%). No Tigrayans were registered by MRCs in Ethiopia in the month of August.

Returns of Ethiopian Nationals from Saudi Arabia Electronically Registered by IOM

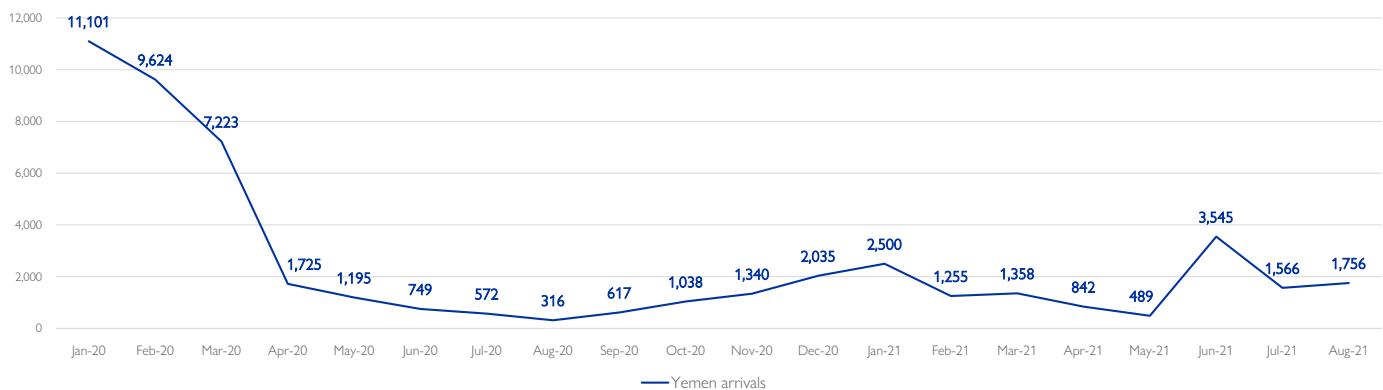


## YEMEN SITUATION

### Migrant Flows Observed in Yemen

- Overall, 13,311 migrant arrivals from the Horn of Africa were tracked on the shores of Yemen in 2021, of which 1,756 arrivals were recorded in August; this is a 12% increase from July 2021, however, the harsh weather conditions at sea continue to impact the arrival of migrants to Yemen.
- The majority of the migrants who arrived in August travelled from Djibouti (87%), with the remaining travelling from Somalia (13%); the arrivals from Somalia increased by 10% while the arrivals from Djibouti increased by 12%.<sup>3</sup>
- Most migrant arrivals were Ethiopian nationals (93%), with the remainder being Somali nationals (7%).
- The majority of the migrants were adult males (81%), while 8% were adult females, and 11% were children (same as July). 37 UMCs were tracked during this month – these make up 20% of the overall number of children arriving in Yemen.

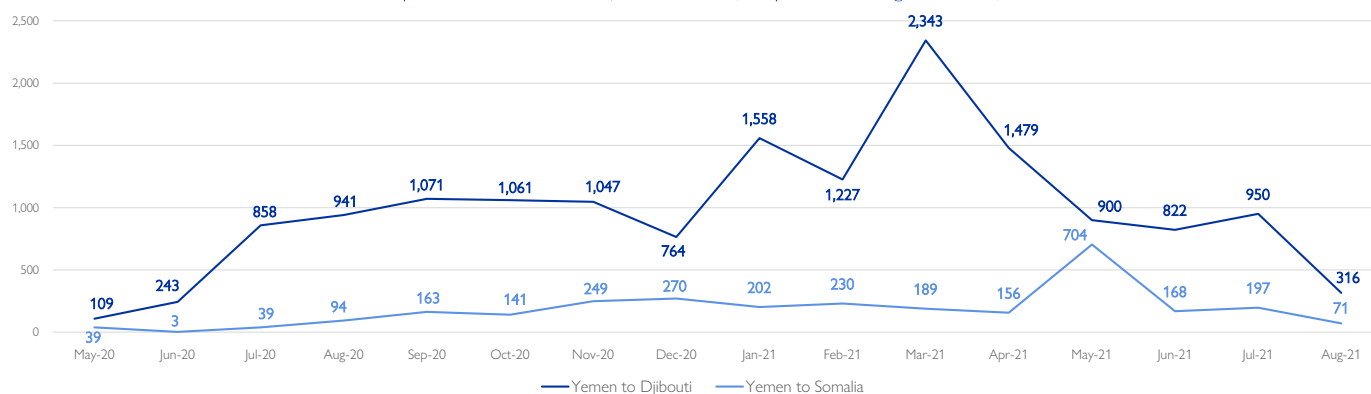
Migrant Arrivals to Yemen from the Horn of Africa (January 2020 - August 2021)



- DTM Yemen continued tracking returning migrants from Saudi Arabia in August 2021 as access to the FMP at the Saudi Arabia-Yemen border remains possible. During this month, 2,769 such returns were tracked, which is more than double (52%) from the 1,821 arrivals tracked in July.
- Due to the difficulties faced by migrants upon arrival in Yemen with their inability to move onwards towards Saudi Arabia, as well as ongoing conflict and living conditions in Yemen, many migrants opt to return back to the Horn of Africa. Since May 2020, a total of 18,604 migrants have made this perilous return journey back to Djibouti (15,689) and to Somalia (2,915).

<sup>3</sup> Six migrants were also tracked internally, travelling within Yemen.

Spontaneous Returns from Yemen (May 2020 - August 2021)



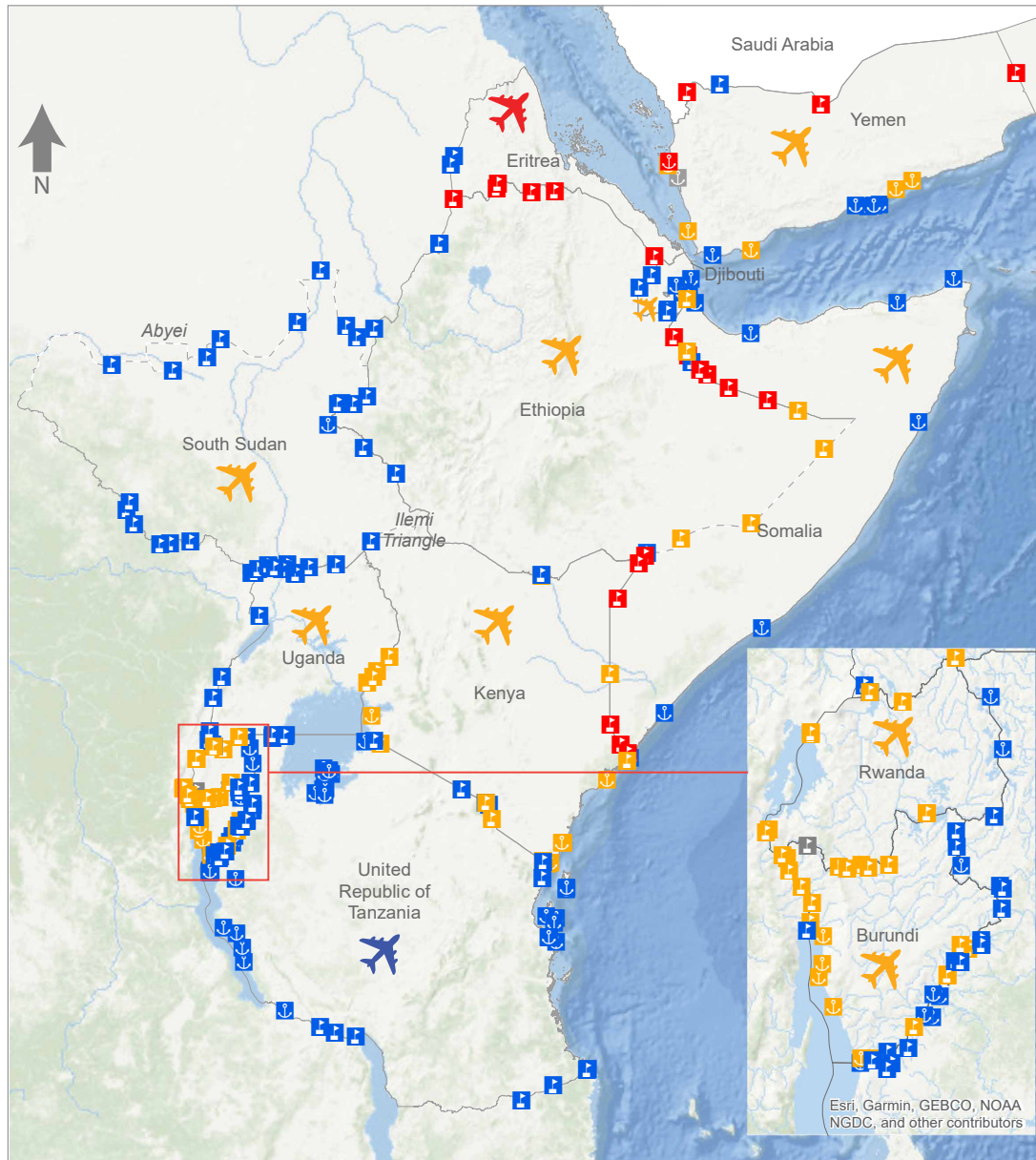
## Migrant Protection and Assistance

- IOM estimates that approximately 30,000 migrants are stranded or trapped within Yemen's borders, requiring urgent humanitarian assistance and being at-risk of grave protection risks along endemic smuggling and trafficking routes. Migrants are stranded in urban locations or areas considered hard to reach along migratory routes in uninhabited areas or at border points in Sa'ada governorate. Protection monitoring indicates that restrictions at the border with Saudi Arabia continue. There has also been a 20% increase in indiscriminate shelling in areas of Monaibh, Sa'ada where migrants pass, and casualties have been reported. There is, however, no verified information available to date.
- IOM continues to receive credible information about forced transfers or forced deportations occurring in the north of Yemen. IOM estimates that 700 persons a week are being arrested, temporarily detained and made to transit through Sana'a governorate before crossing into Internationally Recognized Government (IRG) controlled areas of Lahj. The movements are organized in trucks, under cramped conditions with migrants provided with limited to no water, food, or other forms of assistance and lack information about their journey or options to seek asylum or other forms of protection.
- The COVID-19 pandemic continues to hinder the free movement of migrants, with increased restrictions and continued conflict between various armed elements despite the pre-agreed cessation of hostilities. The protection environment continues to be affected by shifts in frontlines in areas such as Ma'rib, leaving migrants susceptible to increased protection risks and threats and often diverting their journeys and making them more transient. Lack of access to services continues to exacerbate migrants' vulnerability often leaving them in displacement-like situations. Furthermore, the economic pressure exerted by the pandemic continues to reduce the purchasing power amongst migrants as push factors for their movement into Saudi Arabia to search for better economic opportunities. This has resulted in them falling prey to smugglers along migratory routes and often resorting to negative coping mechanisms.
- Thousands of stranded migrants have approached IOM's Aden MRC asking for return assistance to Ethiopia through VHR. These VHR flights resumed in March after months of disruption, and 194 migrants were returned to Ethiopia in August (138 males and 56 females, including 32 children). Planned movements are now occurring every Tuesday and Thursday on a regular basis. However, challenges remain due to delays in the process of verification of nationality.

## ANNEX 1 | 2021 MRC REGISTRATION DATA

MRCs	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	MRC Total
Bossaso	181	111	321	251	308	152	279	220	1,823
Dire Dawa	0	0	0	0	6	14	1	8	29
Hargeisa	225	97	56	57	73	113	156	221	998
Metema	0	0	72	80	15	36	336	188	727
Moyale	-	-	187	230	44	59	51	314	885
Obock	173	131	171	70	182	253	199	50	1,229
Semera	0	0	71	33	34	213	112	12	475
Togochale	31	126	14	61	49	45	76	88	490
<b>Monthly Total</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>892</b>	<b>782</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>885</b>	<b>1,210</b>	<b>1,101</b>	<b>6,656</b>

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



### Status of international flights\*

- Not Restrictive
- Partially Restrictive
- Totally Restrictive
- Not available
- Disputed Areas
- Countries East and Horn of Africa

### Status of other border points

- Sea Border Point
- Land Border Point
- Closed for entry and exit
- Partial closure
- Open for entry and exit
- Unknown

\*Details of the travel restriction can be found on IATA website: <https://www.iata.org/>

SOURCE:  
International Air Transport Association (IATA)  
Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)

DATE: 31 August 2021

DISCLAIMER: These maps are for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.