

SITUATION REPORT MARCH 2020



An IOM doctor checks in with an Ethiopian migrant prior to his departure home from Aden, Yemen ©IOM 2020/ Rami Ibrahim

161,367 

Health consultations
conducted

602,500 

People reached through
cleaning campaigns (indirect)

5,456 

Households provided with
emergency shelter materials

SITUATION OVERVIEW

While no positive COVID-19 cases were officially reported in Yemen during March, the humanitarian community rapidly scaled up preparedness and response measures, recognizing the devastating impact that the virus will have in the already fragile state. IOM Yemen observed an increase in targeted abuse and scapegoating of migrants as carriers of disease — anti-migrant rhetoric spiked in the media and quarantine sites proliferated across governorates. Meanwhile, the closure of air, land and sea borders led to a reduction of migrant arrivals from February to March by 35 per cent. IOM is working closely with the Ministry of Health and Population, WHO and the health cluster to ensure that migrants are represented in national response plans and to advocate against the exploitation of COVID-19 to instrumentalize encampment, detention and deportation agendas. It is predicted that even with mitigation measures, 55 per cent of the Yemeni population will contract COVID-19, 292,000 will require hospitalization and that nearly 42,000 will die.

This month humanitarian operations continued to be severely hampered by excessive restrictions and directives, particularly in northern governorates. Even as the humanitarian community scaled up COVID-19 preparedness activities, IOM's efforts to move critical medical supplies to equip health facilities continued to be blocked. In March, IOM experienced the highest volume of permits denials recorded; 82 permits (88 per cent) to move staff and humanitarian supplies were not approved, more than twice the number in February. Under these unprecedented restrictive conditions, IOM, along with the rest of the UN, has activated its Business Continuity Plan, keeping essential staff presence in Yemen in response to the closure of borders. Of IOM's 64 internationals, 11 are currently in Sana'a, 12 in Aden, 12 in Marib, four in Djibouti and 25 abroad in 17 different locations and working remotely.

Despite these challenges, IOM remains at the forefront of the humanitarian response and field operations continue. IOM's response to the displacement crisis in Marib and surrounding areas continued to reach the most vulnerable, as conflict activities showed little sign of easing. By the end of March, 33,992 internally displaced persons (IDPs) affected by the crisis received essential aid items, shelter, health, safe water and sanitation support (for more information on the displacement situation in Marib, see [IOM's Marib Displacement Update](#)).

With offices in Sana'a, Aden, Al Hudaydah, Marib, Ibb and Hadramaut, and satellite presences in all 22 governorates, IOM supports the most vulnerable throughout Yemen, including displaced people, conflict-affected communities and migrants. IOM's sub-office and humanitarian hub in Marib and the field office in Hadramaut were newly established in 2019. IOM takes a holistic approach to humanitarian response across the health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), shelter, non-food item (NFI) and cash-based assistance, camp coordination and camp management (CCCM), protection and displacement tracking (DTM) sectors.



HEALTH



94

Health workers and
IOM staff trained

3,774

Cholera cases
treated

23

Health facilities received
medical supplies and
equipment

In March 2020, IOM began refocusing its health programme in the north towards the provision of medical support to migrants and the prevention of COVID-19 transmission through increasing preparedness activities in its existing migrant-focused clinics. IOM also began COVID-19 response activities in March in the north and south with a small number of facilities and will scale up further in response to a potential outbreak if conditions permit. However, IOM's health team continued to encounter repeated movement denials for assessments, monitoring and oversight purposes, and critical cargo movements of medical supplies – all of which may hinder further scale up and operational capacity. IOM continued to support the National Malaria Program to distribute Anti-Malaria Drugs in northern targeted governorates. During the reporting period, 966 of a total target of 1,263 health facilities in 14 governorates were covered by this mass distribution campaign. Through mobile medical teams, IOM reached 1,049 migrants along the southern coast with medical evaluations to identify any further medical support or treatment needed. IOM also ensured that all of the 442 migrants and refugees returning home through the Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) and Assisted Spontaneous Return (ASR) programmes in March received a pre-departure medical screening and medical escort, if required, in addition to COVID-19 awareness sessions.

IN FOCUS: FIRST HEALTH CENTRE IN YEMEN'S LARGEST DISPLACEMENT CAMP

“We are now better able to combat infectious diseases and provide support to people with chronic illnesses in this camp. The camp is overcrowded, and the living conditions are poor; this means that disease can easily spread,” explained Dr Samar Al-Qadi, a doctor working in IOM's new health centre in Al Jufainah Camp, which opened at the start of March.

The medical facility's examination rooms, small laboratory, pharmacy and in-patient beds will help to meet the health needs of displaced families in the country's largest displacement camp and is a vital resource for the displaced community in Marib as the world grapples with COVID-19. Apart from the doctors and nurses, the Al Jufainah centre has a midwife, pharmacist, lab technician and nutrition and vaccination assistants on staff.



Dr Al-Qadi with a patient in the first week of the Al Jufainah health centre's operations ©IOM 2020/ Headon

IOM operates two mobile health clinics in the vast Al Jufainah camp, reaching those unable to travel to the new centre. They also serve as ambulances when people need to be transferred to the IOM centre or a hospital outside the camp. The mobile health clinics treat an average of 160 people per day and the new health centre is expected to see 100 patients daily.

Marib city has hosted a large number of displaced people since the start of the conflict. In recent months, over 9,000 families have sought safety in the city and surrounding areas where IOM has been dedicated to providing immediate humanitarian assistance.



CAMP COORDINATION & CAMP MANAGEMENT (CCCM)

**10,468**

Displaced households reached in 54 IOM-managed hosting sites

**3**

Site rehabilitation or construction works completed

**4,916**

Displaced households supported through emergency response in Marib

In March, Marib governorate was hit by strong winds and heavy rains that damaged hundreds of shelters in Marib city, Sirwah and Medghal districts. In response, the IOM CCCM technical team conducted shelter assessments for storm damage in IDP hosting sites and supported 180 households by providing sandbags to weigh down and protect tents as well as making referrals to S-NFI for further assistance. In Taizz, the construction of seven committee spaces for community committee meetings and coordination, awareness raising sessions and other activities that will benefit an estimated 1,098 households is ongoing. IOM field teams also visited IDP hosting sites to monitor water trucking and carry out a cleaning campaign in 21 sites in coordination with the WASH team. IOM continued to respond to newly displaced persons in Marib governorate, initiating site planning, demarcation and flood risk mitigation works in new sites in Sirwah. Through the mobile operations centre established by IOM to support the Executive Unit, IOM registered new IDPs and supported them with rapid response mechanism (RRM) kits and referrals to receive additional services and assistance (please see the last weekly [IOM Marib Displacement Update in March](#)). As a precautionary measure against the spread of COVID-19, IOM field teams have reduced staff numbers both in the office and in the field, adapted their approach, including alternative methods for awareness raising activities such as megaphones and smaller group sizes, and ramped up SMS and hotline communication with site committee members for referrals, incident reporting and communication with communities. The team is prioritizing critical activities in Marib, Taizz and Ibb to ensure people in need are still able to access services, and that urgent site risk reduction and site improvement construction works continue.



An elderly displaced woman stands with her family in their shelter in a site where IOM provides camp management support ©IOM 2019/ Headon



SHELTER & NON-FOOD ITEMS (S-NFI)

**5,456**

Households provided with emergency shelter materials

**3,130**

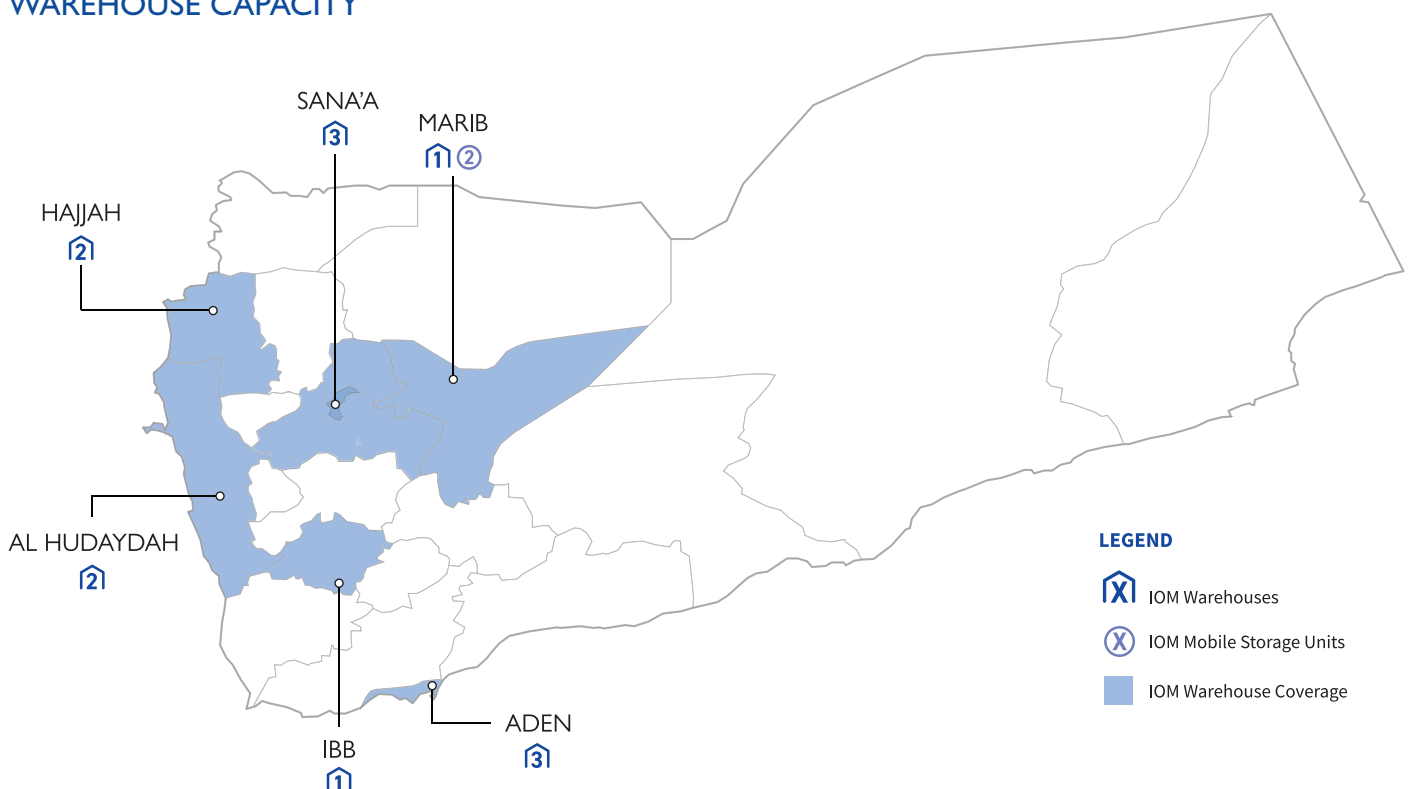
Households received MPCA

**7,917**

Households provided with NFI kits

In March, IOM supported a total of 12,945 vulnerable families in Marib, Al Hudaydah, Hajjah, Ibb and Al Dhale'e governorates through the provision of emergency shelter materials, NFIs, MPCA and RRM kits. All distributions by IOM and partners in March considered infection prevention and control measures as a precaution against the potential spread of COVID-19. Overall, S-NFI activities in March continued to focus largely on ensuring that IDPs displaced by the ongoing conflict in Marib and Al-Jawf, as well as families severely affected by heavy rains and floods across the country, received rapid S-NFI support (both in kind and cash). The Marib S-NFI and CCCM field teams scaled up the S-NFI response significantly, reaching more than 5,900 families with family tents, plastic sheets, winter kits, blankets and shelter kits. IOM worked with four local implementing partners to support these distributions. Multi-purpose cash transfers (MPCA) were conducted for 3,130 newly displaced households and 2,257 RRM kits were distributed to newly displaced households in Marib. In Al Dhale'e (Aden Hub), IOM, through its implementing partner, distributed 815 emergency shelter kits and 1,500 NFI kits as part of emergency response. IOM and its partners continued to scale up pre-positioning capacity across major hubs in Aden, Al Hudaydah, Hajjah, Marib, Sana'a and Sa'ada in preparation for further movement restrictions as a result of COVID-19 and in case of further internal displacement near active front lines. As of 31 March, IOM has pre-positioned more than 10,000 essential core relief items in 10 warehouses.

WAREHOUSE CAPACITY





WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)


35,000

Individuals supported
with water and sanitation
systems


50,000

Individuals supported with
access to safe water


2,848

Hygiene kits distributed to
displaced households

In March, the IOM WASH team supported the second phase of the Cleaning and Hygiene Awareness Campaign in six districts (Old City, Azal, Ma'een, Al-Thawra, As Sabe'en, and Bani Al-Harith) in Amanat Al Asimah, benefitting an estimated 602,500 indirect beneficiaries. This Campaign was the second phase of the Cleaning and Hygiene Awareness Campaign that was completed in Al-Wehdah, Al-Safiah, Sho'ub, and As Sabe'en districts in Amanat Al Asimah in December and January, reaching 715,029 individuals. This month, 21 water sites were under rehabilitation across Abyan, Shabwah, Taizz and Lahj governorates. Once completed, these water sites will benefit 174,433 individuals. In Marib, the construction of a water analysis lab at the National Water Authority (NWA) Office is ongoing, including the procurement of laboratory equipment. The water analysis lab will enable IOM and local authorities to ensure that the water that is being supplied to the population in Marib meets adequate drinking water standards. Once completed, the WASH team will begin trainings on the utilization of the laboratory and will plan monitoring campaigns of water sources and water supplied through water trucking. In March, IOM WASH reached 769 households in Marib governorate with hygiene kits as part of ongoing emergency response activities. A total of 5,551 individuals in four IDP hosting sites were also reached with 955,000 litres of safe water and an additional 11 water points have been installed to increase access to water. The construction of emergency latrines also continued, with 107 latrines completed in March.



An IOM WASH team member assembles a hygiene kit for distribution to a displaced family in Lahj ©IOM 2020/ Rami Ibrahim



TRANSITION AND RECOVERY

In March, the IOM transition and recovery team conducted technical assessments for the construction of a primary and a secondary school in Marib. Once completed, the schools are expected to provide improved access to education in displacement-affected communities, accommodating up to 1,260 and 1,643 students, respectively. The team has partnered with local NGOs in Marib and Hadramaut to conduct cash for work, vocational training and small business grant activities, with activities planned to begin in April. In March, IOM worked to develop a contingency plan with each NGO in case activities are constrained due to COVID-19 response and preventative measures. As part of ongoing activities conducted jointly by IOM and FAO, a context assessment in Hadramaut was completed, highlighting the potential risks, mitigation measures and methods to empower women and youth. The assessment provided actionable recommendations for a context sensitive project approach and viable channels for local water conflict resolution which will be incorporated during implementation of the project activities. A gender assessment will also be conducted to identify social and economic inequalities in the target area and pathways to women and youth empowerment.


2

Public infrastructure reha-
bilitation or construction
ongoing

DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX (DTM)



5,672*

Households were forced to leave their homes in January



7,223

Migrants arrived in Yemen



4,809

Yemeni returns from KSA

Migrant arrivals in March saw a reduction from February (with similar trends experienced in Somalia and Djibouti), while Yemeni returns from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) increased. In March, local security forces increased security along the southern coast to prevent migrants from landing in southern governorates (e.g. Lahj and Shabwah) as a precautionary measure against the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, a government directive in mid-March stated that the land border with KSA would be closed as of 17 March. In the latter half of March, border officials continued to only allow Yemeni returnees from KSA to enter Yemen by land. Due to movement restrictions as a precautionary measure to combat COVID-19 in both the south and north, many DTM teams were unable to conduct regular field activities. As an alternative measure, Rapid Displacement Tracking and Flow Monitoring teams began collecting information via mobile communication and with limited movement and continued to release displacement and migrant flows throughout the period.

Find all DTM reports on displacement and migration [here](#).

**Monitored across southern governorates*



PROTECTION

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, IOM's protection team continued to scale up its support to migrants in partnership with the health team, including at the migrant foster families in Sana'a and Aden. While Migrant Response Points and Community Response Points (CRPs) remained open in the beginning of March, most facilities have been temporarily closed as a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect staff and beneficiaries. An IOM hotline number for health emergencies has been activated in Aden in order to ensure minimum health assistance for migrants. This month IOM was a key actor in advocacy efforts for the full inclusion and non-discrimination of migrants and refugees into the National COVID-19 Plan for Yemen, as well as overall response processes coordinated through the humanitarian system in Aden and Sana'a. Advocacy aimed to prevent attempts by the authorities, most notably in the north, to create "quarantine" sites specifically for migrants and refugees giving rise to concerns that quarantine may be instrumentalized to facilitate the containment, detention, encampment and eventual deportation of the migrant population. In March, IOM supported the development of a protocol on quarantine that will serve as the key guidance for authorities in Yemen and produced an advocacy note outlining safety concerns related to migrants stranded at the border between Yemen and the KSA, and providing key recommendations to address these issues with donors, diplomatic missions and other influencers. Prior to the temporary suspension of movements due to global travel restrictions, IOM assisted 247 migrants with return to their home countries through the VHR programme and 195 refugees through the ASR programme in March.



27

Vulnerable Yemenis supported through community response points



442

Migrants and refugees assisted with voluntary return

IOM YEMEN'S ACTIVITIES IN MARCH 2020 WERE SUPPORTED BY

