

QUARTERLY MIGRATION OVERVIEW

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2021



A young migrant stands in her shelter in Ma'rib © IOM 2021 / Rami Ibrahim

HORN OF AFRICA TO YEMEN MIGRATION TRENDS IN 2021

Yemen continues to be a major transit point along the eastern migration route between the Horn of Africa (HoA) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) for migrants seeking better economic opportunities. Irregular migrants, most commonly from Ethiopia, travel to Yemen via boats from Somalia or Djibouti and face severe protection risks, which worsen upon arrival to Yemen. Whilst flows have decreased due to the COVID-19 pandemic, increased barriers to movement brought on by the pandemic and the reinforcement of anti-migrant policies have left thousands of migrants stranded across Yemen with limited options for safe movement. From January to September 2021, there were 16,349 new migrant arrivals, a decrease from 33,122 migrant arrivals during the same period in 2020. However, of the number of migrants who arrived in 2020, almost 75 per cent came in the first three months of the year before strict COVID-19 measures came into force.

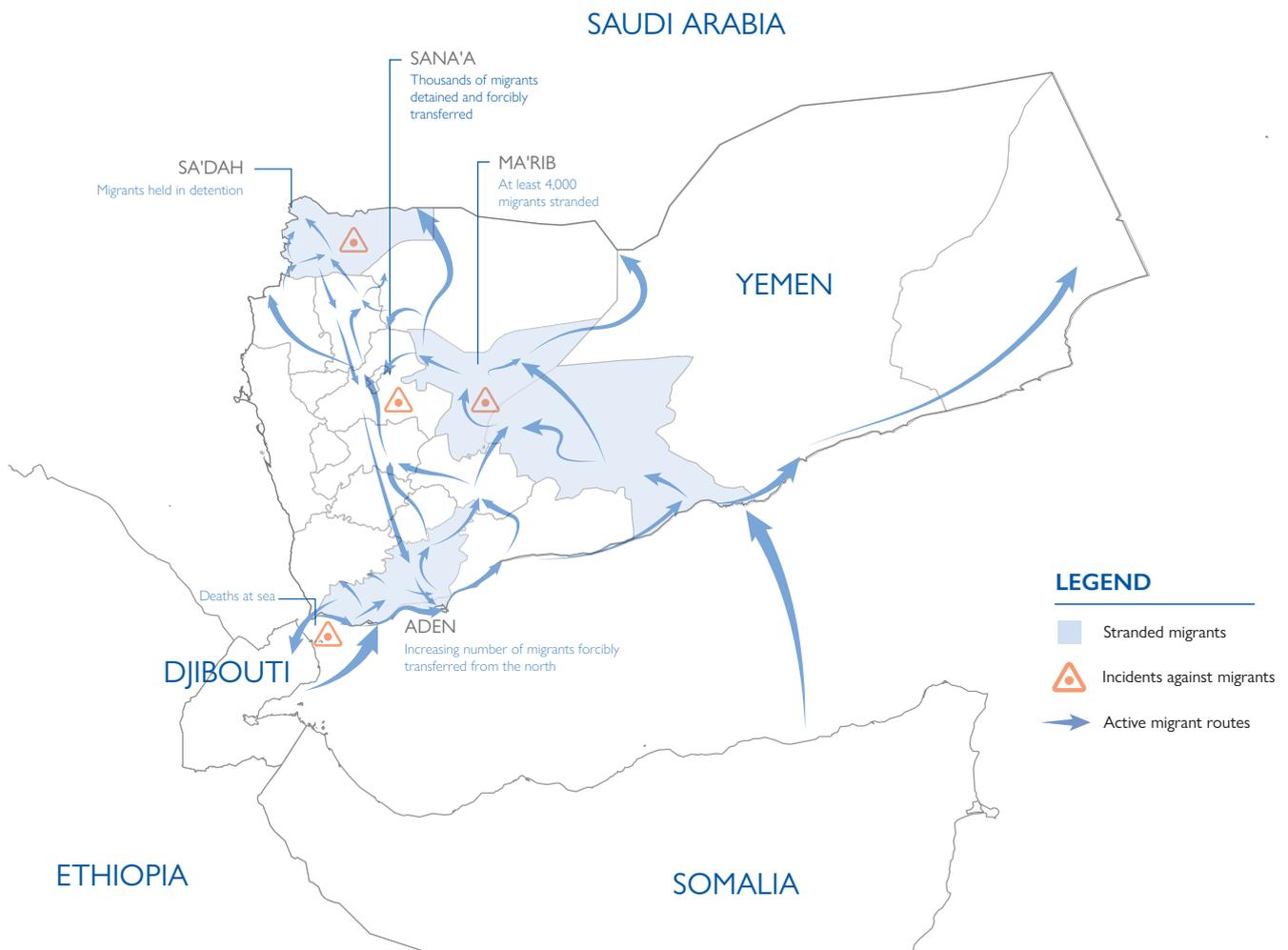
Migrants are amongst the most underserved, marginalized and at-risk population groups in Yemen. With the deepening of the political and security crisis in Yemen, migration dynamics in the country have remained perilous. Fleeing destitution, poverty and often violence, migrants in Yemen experience egregious violence, abuse and exploitation. The majority of are living in dire conditions with extremely limited-to-no access to essential services such as shelter, food, water and health care. Migrants are often unable to reach out for support themselves because they do not have freedom of movement, are grappling with language barriers, lack access to reliable information on available services, or are reluctant to seek support because they are concerned about their safety and the intentions of those providing support. Women and children, who make up approximately 20 per cent of migrant arrivals, often face sexual violence, forced labor and other risks.

For more than a year, IOM and partners have been responding to larger groups of stranded migrants in what were traditionally transit hubs, mainly because controls along borders are much stricter, and the conflict has disrupted internal flows. In Ma'rib, for example, at least 4,000 migrants are stranded, living in overcrowded informal settlements or are being held by smugglers. At the same time, new migrants continue to arrive through Al Bayda and Shabwah governorates. Women migrants are increasingly being forced into domestic labour to pay off debts and concerningly, many report experiencing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Migrants are also falling victim to the consequences of the conflict. In August, four migrants died in a suspected mine explosion in Ma'rib. In Sa'dah, reports of migrants being caught in the crossfire are frequent. Detention of migrants and forced transfers have continued – thousands have been transferred this year from north to the frontline, at unprecedented rates.

As migrants in Yemen continue to face these terrible conditions, IOM continues to prioritize voluntary return solutions for those who wish to return home. In July 2021, IOM was able to support a second nationality verification mission for 2,200 Ethiopian migrants who requested support through IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) programme. In close collaboration with the Government of Ethiopia and authorities in Yemen, 16 VHR flights have taken place this year, and 1507 stranded migrants were able to return in this quarter alone. Progress was also made in Sana'a, where VHR assistance had been blocked since 2019, and one flight supporting 79 migrants took place in August. Upon arrival in Ethiopia, migrants receive tailored support and post-arrival assistance. A third nationality verification mission is scheduled for the next quarter in Aden to give the opportunity to other stranded migrants who have requested help to return. In Sana'a, IOM continues to await approval from the authorities to resume registration of migrants in accordance with its mandate and humanitarian principles.

Through mobile teams, IOM is also extending its coverage in the main areas, routes and transit hubs, particularly those in the south, Ma'rib and the west coast where the Organization has humanitarian access. IOM has recently established a Migrant Response Point (MRP) in Ma'rib city and is coordinating with health authorities to provide access to COVID-19 vaccinations to stranded migrants. Through this facility, IOM is providing health, psychosocial support, food, shelter, water, sanitation, hygiene and other essential items to migrants. IOM is also exploring options to expand its Voluntary Humanitarian Programme to support stranded migrants in Ma'rib.

HORN OF AFRICA TO YEMEN MIGRATION ROUTES



MIGRANT PROFILES & TRENDS

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) recorded 16,080 migrant arrivals into Yemen from 1 January to 30 September 2021 at six flow monitoring points along the coast, in Lahj, Shabwah and Hadramawt. More than 6,000 migrants arrived in Yemen during the third quarter of 2021 alone. This is a rise from the same period in 2020 when 1,505 migrants arrived, an increase which is large due to the easing of COVID-related mobility restrictions. As in previous years, the majority of migrants arrived from Djibouti to Lahj (9,821 migrants) and through Somalia to Shabwah and Hadramawt (6,259) governorates. However, September saw a change in the routes migrants used to enter Yemen: there was a sudden increase in the number of migrants arriving through Yemen's Hadramawt coast due to the intensified security measures in Shabwah's coast (194 migrants arrived through this entry point in September, while none did in July and August 2021).

As has been the case for years, most migrants travelling on this route are young boys or men from rural areas with little to no education, and they express intentions to travel to KSA in search of economic opportunities. The majority are Ethiopian (88%) and a smaller number are Somali (12%). While a smaller percentage of arrivals are women, when compared to their male counterparts, 38 per cent of female migrants have no education (compared to 21% of men), 45 per cent are literate (compared to 68% of male migrants) and only 6 per cent can understand Arabic (compared to 16% of men). Many migrants report not being aware of the conflict or the risks that come with the journey.

Despite the smaller number of migrants making the journey through Yemen, smuggler networks are being maintained. While the consequences of the pandemic have meant that the smuggler network is not as remunerative as it used to be, they are finding alternative ways to make up for financial losses. Reports of some of the most egregious forms of abuse at the hands of smugglers and traffickers persist, including SGBV, torture, abduction for ransom, forced labour and physical violence. Women migrants and children are especially vulnerable, many are increasingly forced to work to pay off debts.

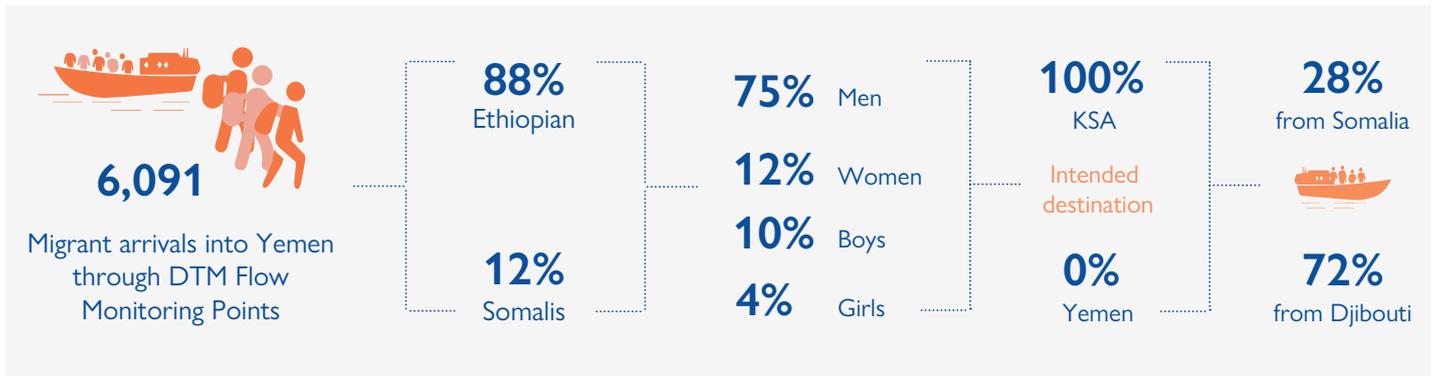
At the same time, IOM estimates at least 5,000 migrants are being held in detention, but this number may be much higher. Without sustained access to migrants in detention, IOM and partners face challenges acquiring accurate estimates on migrants, including children, being detained. Migrants who are held in detention in Sa'dah are often transferred to Sana'a where they transit through a closed facility until they are forcibly moved to the south. So far in 2021, estimates are that tens of thousands of migrants have been pushed across active frontlines.



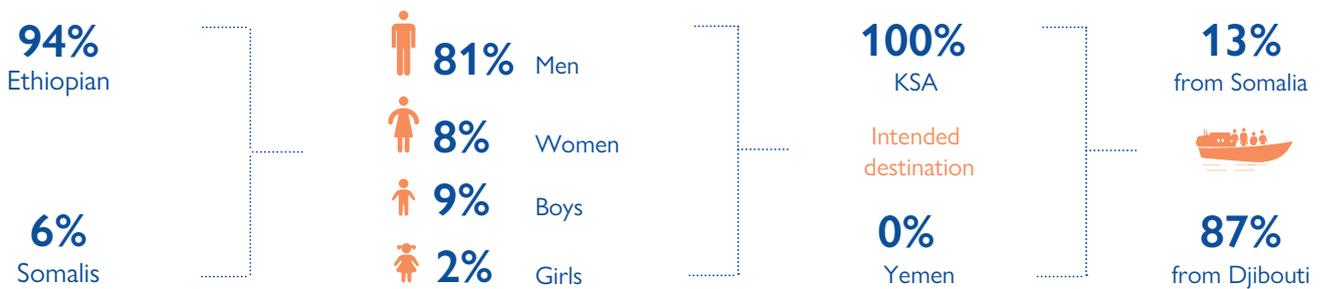
Migrants in Ma'rib receive essential items from IOM © IOM 2021 / Elham Al-Oqabi

BREAKDOWN OF JULY, AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER ARRIVALS

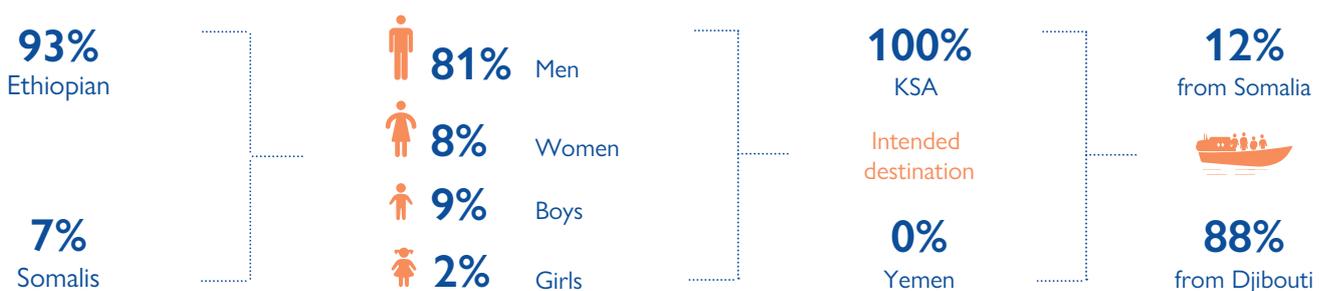
ARRIVALS JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2021



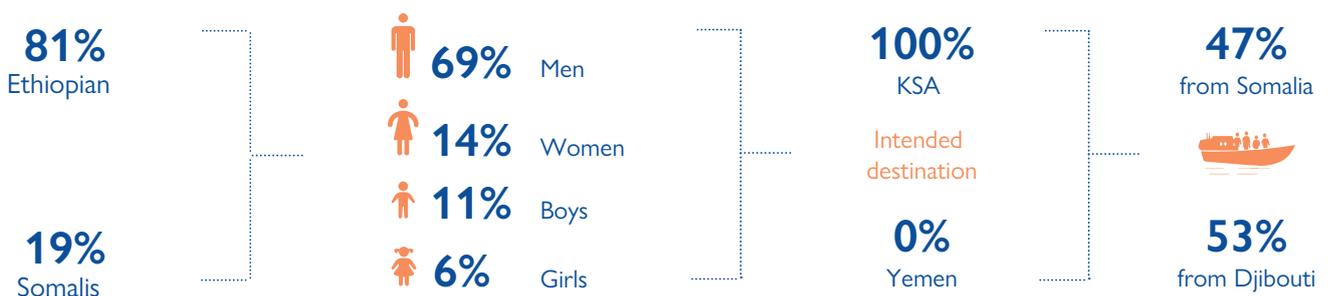
1,566 MIGRANT ARRIVALS IN JULY



1,756 MIGRANT ARRIVALS IN AUGUST



2,769 MIGRANT ARRIVALS IN SEPTEMBER



MIGRANT VOICES

Sami*, 27-year-old migrant in Mar'ib city

Two years ago, I left Ethiopia on a journey that I hoped would change my life for the better. But the journey was hard and terrible. We spent 36 hours on the sea even though it should not take more than 24 hours. The smugglers spoke Somali, a language we do not know. They became nervous and angry, but we could not understand why or what they were saying. One of the women with us could understand and she told us they were talking about throwing us overboard to get rid of us. When we arrived in Ataq city, in Shabwah, one smuggler started to beat us badly and asked us for more money. I eventually reached Ma'rib and have been here for two years. I started working on a farm and then found work cleaning the streets here in Ma'rib for a small daily wage. I cannot return to my country, and I can't go to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to work there. I have no place I can be but here. We are stuck.



Sami*, 27-year-old migrant in Mar'ib city, July 2021 © IOM 2021 / Elham Al-Oqabi

**Name was changed to protect his identity*

IOM MIGRATION RESPONSE IN YEMEN IN 2021

PILLARS OF INTERVENTION

Since IOM began operations in Yemen, its Migrant Assistance Programme has aimed to ensure that migrants in Yemen have access to life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection of their rights, safety and dignity.

1. Protection and life-saving humanitarian assistance is provided through fixed centres (health clinics, migrant response points) and mobile teams that provide access to immediate medical care, relief items (clothes, shoes and hygiene items), food, information on safe migration, case management, psychosocial support, cash for work and options for voluntary humanitarian return.
2. Opportunities for safe and voluntary return assistance for undocumented Ethiopian migrants and stranded migrants from other nationalities is offered through IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Return mechanism. Assistance includes the provision of 'fit-to-travel' medical screenings and medical escorts as needed before and during travel.
3. Analysis of trends including inflows, push and pull factors, migration routes, protection dynamics, risks and mitigation measures.
4. Development and implementation of a regional approach to safe, dignified and orderly migration to promote engagement within the region on a coordinated rights-based response at the governance level, a component of which involves strengthening the capacities of relevant actors in counter-trafficking and assistance to victims.
5. Enhancing coordination with partners on multi-sectorial migration responses, strengthening advocacy and ensuring clear referral mechanisms at both regional and country level.



Migrants prepare to travel to Addis Ababa on one of IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Return flight © IOM 2021 / Majed Mohammed

COVID-19 RESPONSE

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

1. Hygiene and health prevention awareness among the migrant population and local communities.
2. Access to life-saving assistance including food, water, and hygiene and relief items.
3. Continuation of standard health and protection assistance through IOM migrant centres, supported clinics and mobile teams at main transit hubs, along migratory routes and at new arrival points along the southern coastline.
4. Protection monitoring to continue identify, mitigate and respond to protection risks and violations of human rights, exacerbated by conditions created by COVID-19.
5. Equitable inclusion of migrants in vaccination campaigns in Aden and Ma'rib
6. Awareness raising about the COVID-19 vaccine among migrants.
7. COVID-19 PCR testing through the establishment of a testing laboratory at the Migrant Response Point in Aden.
8. Resumption of safe and dignified return of Ethiopian migrants who express a desire to return home.

IOM RESPONSE APRIL-JUNE 2021

7,473	Migrants provided with health assistance
14,050	Migrants supported with protection assistance
2	Internal protection monitoring monthly reports, in coordination with partners
3	Regional Migration Response Plan (RMRP) meetings between IOM and partners working on migration responses in Yemen

JULY

2,271	Migrants provided with health assistance
7,252	Migrants supported with protection assistance
1	Internal protection monitoring monthly report, in coordination with partners
1	IOM Regional Migration Response Plan (RMRP) regional workshop

AUGUST

2,223	Migrants provided with health assistance
3,457	Migrants supported with protection assistance
1	Internal protection monitoring monthly report, in coordination with partners
1	Yemen Regional Migration Response Plan (RMRP) coordination meeting

SEPTEMBER

2,979	Migrants provided with health assistance
3,341	Migrants supported with protection assistance
1	Yemen Regional Migration Response Plan (RMRP) consultations meeting



An IOM nurse screens a migrant at a mobile medical clinic in Ma'rib © IOM 2021 / Elham Al-Oqabi

IOM'S MIGRANT ASSISTANCE IN YEMEN IS SUPPORTED BY

