

QUARTERLY MIGRATION OVERVIEW

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2020



Stranded migrants together in the Hygiene Fund Compound, Marib ©IOM 2020

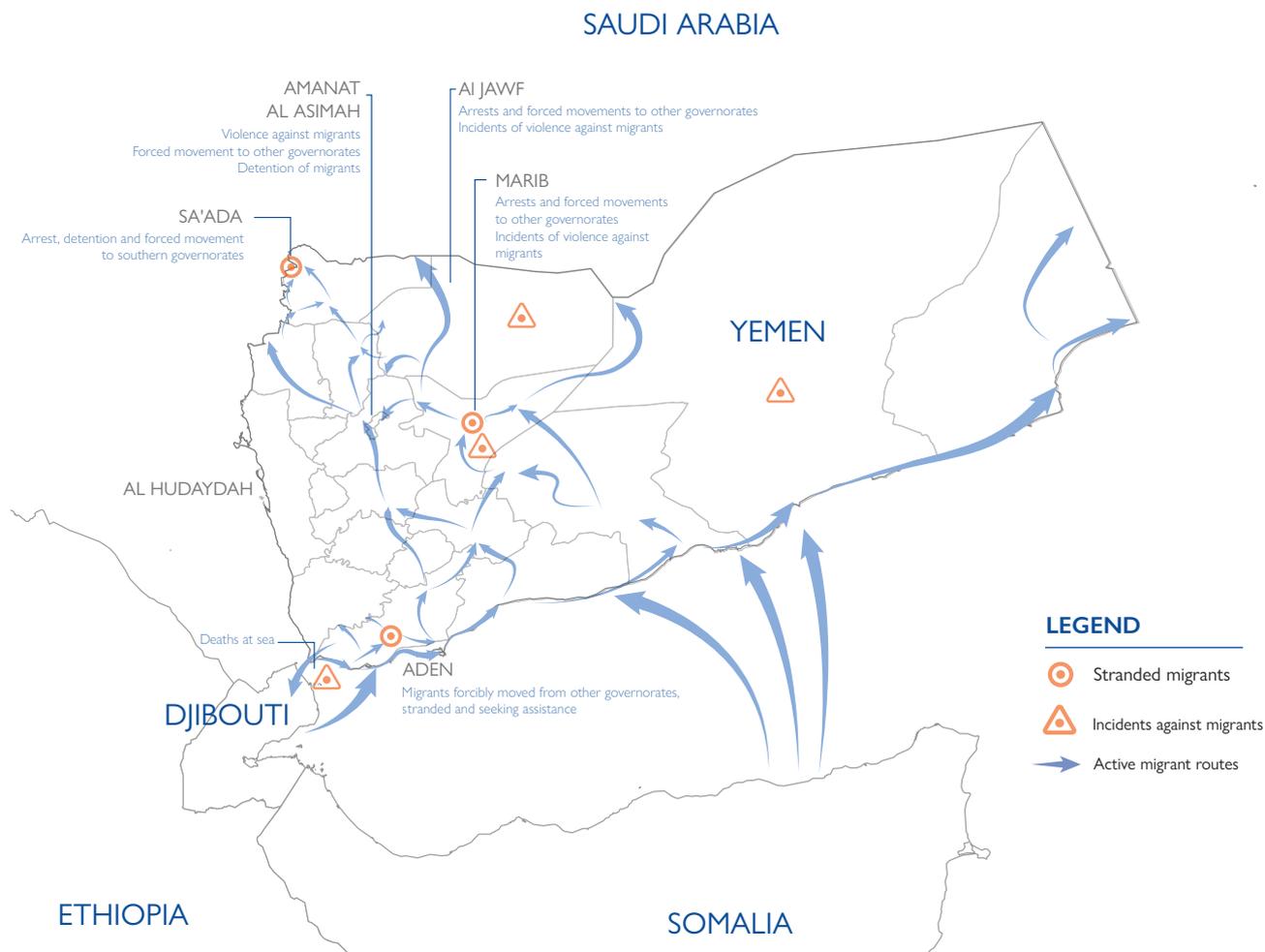
HORN OF AFRICA-YEMEN MIGRATION FLOWS IN 2020

In 2020, movement restrictions and border closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic led to an extremely low rate of migrant arrivals into Yemen. A total of 37,535 people arrived on Yemeni shores last year, compared to an estimated over 138,000 in 2019 with similar numbers arriving the year prior. As a key country on the irregular route between the Horn of Africa and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Yemen is not the intended final destination for the majority of migrants who arrive in the country. Initially hoping to transit through and find better life opportunities in KSA, thousands became stranded for months in dire living conditions at key migrant hubs across the country, with no means of returning home and at risk of contracting COVID-19. Migrants' access to assistance and support, as well as their well-being and safety conditions, progressively worsened throughout the year due to the deteriorating protection and humanitarian context in the country.

From the onset of the pandemic, a discriminatory narrative labelling migrants as carriers of COVID-19 became prevalent in Yemen. For many migrants, this affected their access to basic services, such as access to the national health care system, while increasing the risk of arrest or detention in inhumane conditions. At least 6,000 migrants are estimated to be held in detention across the country while hundreds, if not thousands, of migrants are held by smugglers (these numbers are difficult to assess due to lack of access). With limited options for survival, most migrants are dependent on humanitarian assistance or on the mercy of smugglers and traffickers for support. The pandemic has also been used as an excuse to rid certain areas of migrants. Last year over 15,000 migrants were forcibly transferred from northern to southern governorates, which greatly increased their presence there, particularly in Aden city, and consequently exacerbated their needs and pre-existing vulnerabilities.

Increasing discrimination, lack of means to survive and border closures have pushed many migrants to change their initial plan to attempt to cross into KSA, and to look for ways to return home. As IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) programme to Ethiopia was temporarily paused due to pandemic related concerns, migrants lacked options for safe return. Since May 2020, over 6,000 migrants made their way from Yemen to Djibouti, travelling back on smuggling boats to once again risk their lives at sea and in the desert. IOM, in coordination with the Government of Ethiopia, is planning to resume its VHR programme to Ethiopia in 2021, as a critical life-line service for the thousands of migrants stranded in Yemen and requesting for humanitarian support to go home.

HORN OF AFRICA TO YEMEN MIGRATION ROUTES



MIGRATION TRENDS

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) recorded 4,413 migrant arrivals in Yemen between October and December 2020 at five flow monitoring points along the coast. Some 1,628 people departed from Djibouti while the remaining 2,785 departed from Somalia. This was a nearly 85.5 per cent drop from the same months in 2019 but an increase from the third quarter of 2020 when 1,505 migrant arrivals were recorded.

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. Before leaving home and along their journey, many migrants have limited or insufficient knowledge of the risks of migrating through Yemen can bring related to the conflict and instability as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. However, for those that do know of some or all of the risks, they still decide to enter the country and attempt the treacherous journey to KSA, risking their life, safety and dignity.

Smugglers are the main source of information about the route for many migrants prior to departure and appear to be in part responsible for this lack of information or supply of misinformation, as they claim the route to be easy to their potential clients. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to dangers during the journey and are more likely to be trafficked and exposed to abuses. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated their vulnerabilities and worsened migrants' living conditions, particularly for the thousands of stranded migrants. Food and water remain among the main needs, together with shelter, cash support and relief items.

The route to KSA is not as remunerative as it used prior to the pandemic: less migrants are making the journey so less money is being paid to smugglers and traffickers. Traffickers have found alternative ways to exploit migrants to still make a profit during this period. For example, many migrant women are increasingly being forced to work off debts on farms or moved to cities to work as domestic labourers.

In the north, humanitarian actors lack access to migrant populations, which prevents the provision of assistance to vulnerable groups, especially in areas close to border crossing points or in key transit locations. From those areas, over 2,800 migrants were forcibly transferred to the south during the last quarter of 2020.

IOM DTM data does not yet show an increase in migrant arrivals in Yemen related to recent hostilities in Ethiopia. People fleeing danger usually, as an immediate action, travel to the closest safe location and so a lot of crossings into nearby Sudan are being recorded. However, general instability and its effect on communities and economies can impact whether people migrate or not.

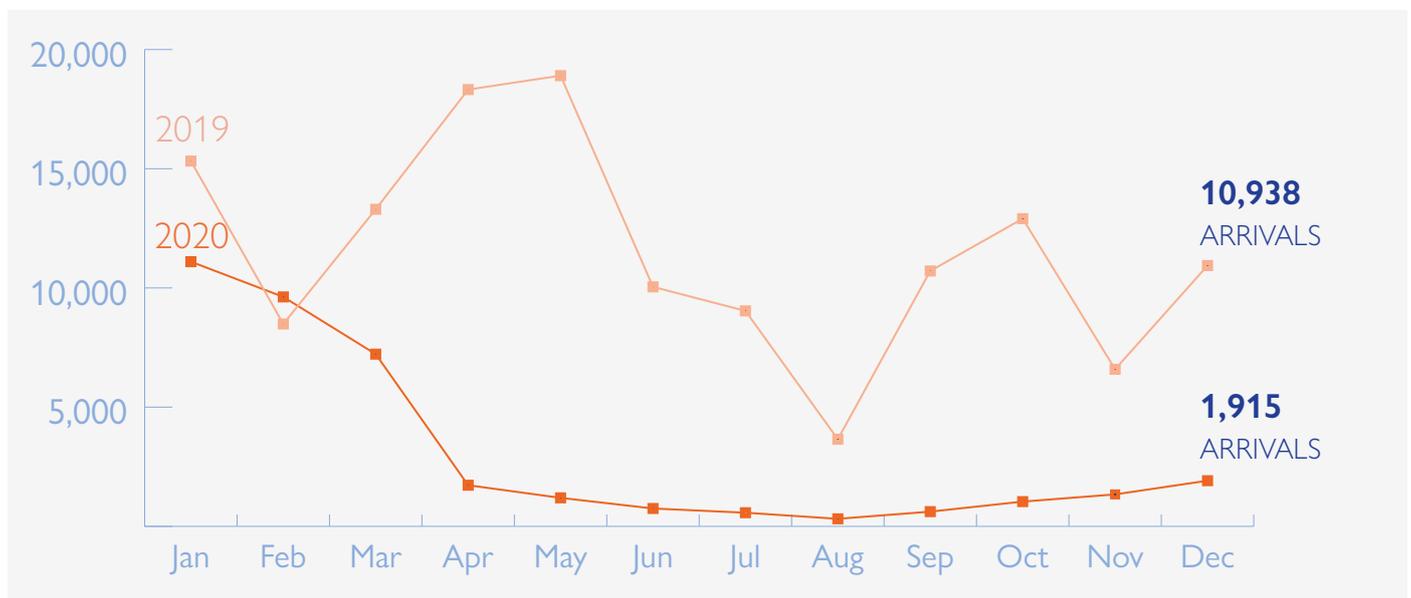
MIGRANT PROFILES

Despite the significant decrease of arrivals in the country, the profile of migrants in Yemen has remained the same throughout the year 2020, with majority of migrants (89%) being Ethiopian and the remaining being Somali (11%). Most are young men with a low level of education, originating from rural communities. Only 19 per cent of all recorded arrivals in Yemen in 2020 were women or girls. The majority are unaware of the conflict in Yemen as well as COVID-19's presence in the country, for which many reported that they did not take any precautionary measures during their trip.

While reasons for migration vary, in general migrants from the Horn of Africa are traveling to or through Yemen for economic or forced migration reasons, and sometimes both. According to the data available, 85 per cent initially migrated in 2020 for economic reasons, for example, employment, better economic opportunities and food insecurity. Though women and men report migrating for largely similar reasons, women's migratory movements are often driven by discrimination linked to gender roles back home preventing them to seek better life opportunities in their country of origin.

As traditional support from local communities in Yemen has progressively decreased since April and migrants are turning to smuggling networks to meet their basic needs (food, water and shelter), there are increased reports of migrants becoming victims of exploitative practices, for example, forced labour, torture, physical and sexual abuse, and abduction for ransom. As physical distancing and thorough hygiene and sanitation facilities are often not an option for stranded migrants sleeping rough in Yemen, they are at high risk of contracting communicable and water-borne diseases, while often denied access to health facilities.

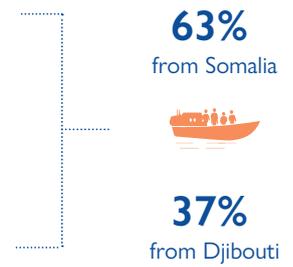
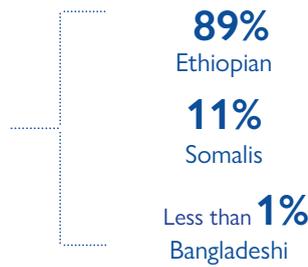
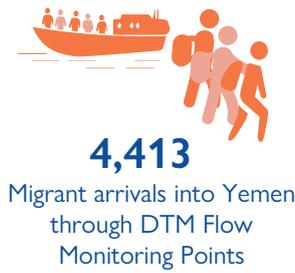
MONTHLY MIGRANT ARRIVALS 2019 & 2020



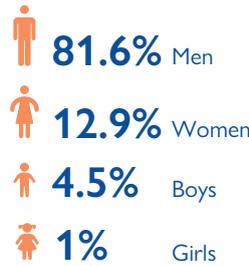
Migrants in Marib drink tea together outside the tents where they are sheltering ©IOM 2020

BREAKDOWN OF ARRIVALS

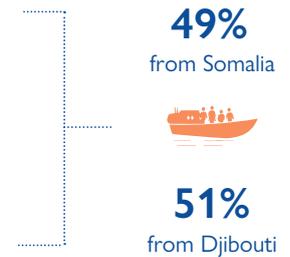
ARRIVALS OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2020



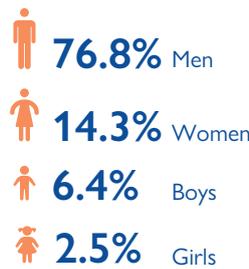
OCTOBER



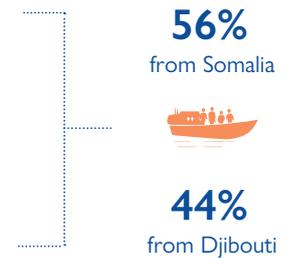
4% Unaccompanied Children
1% Pregnant or Lactating Women



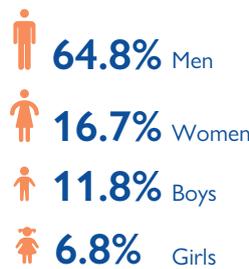
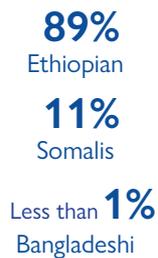
NOVEMBER



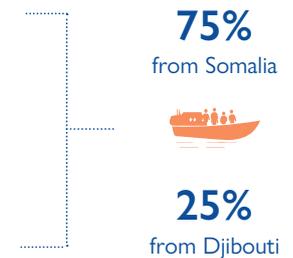
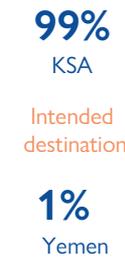
4% Unaccompanied Children



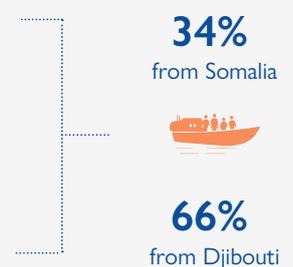
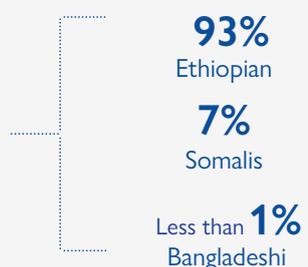
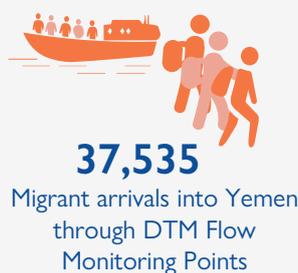
DECEMBER



9% Unaccompanied Children
Less than 1% Children less than 5 years old



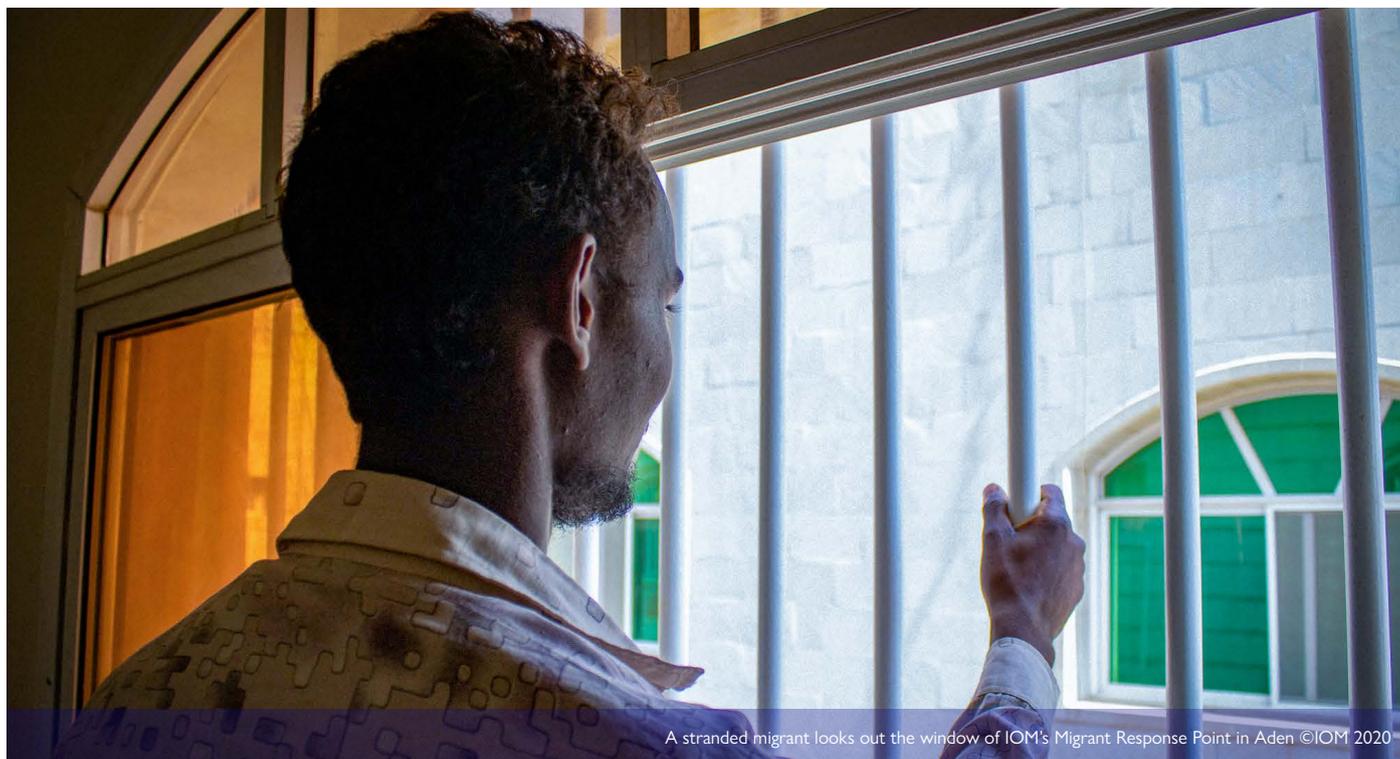
ARRIVALS JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2020



MIGRANT VOICES

Edris

“When I left my home county, Ethiopia, I was full of hope that I would get a good job in Saudi Arabia. My journey was not easy, it took us four days to reach Djibouti by car and then we spent seven hours at sea without food or water. During the sea journey, the smugglers were very aggressive with us. In Yemen, I walked for several days and when I arrived in Sana’a, I was arrested and locked underground for three months; then I was sent to Aden. I came to Yemen a year ago, and it was the worst year of my life. I have no job, family or friends here. I sleep on the streets, in abandoned buildings or under trees. I do not have money for food, so I go to the restaurants to eat any leftovers. Now, my only hope is to get back to my home in Ethiopia.”



A stranded migrant looks out the window of IOM's Migrant Response Point in Aden ©IOM 2020

Ibsa

“I am 20 years old and I have a large family in Ethiopia. Due to difficult living conditions in my country, as well as business closures as a result of the Corona Virus, I decided to travel to Saudi Arabia for work. A smuggler had told me how to get there and that I could get a good job with a good income. From when I left my home in Ethiopia, it took three days to reach Djibouti and then eight hours at sea to reach Yemen. The journey was very difficult, as it was sunny and exhausting. In Yemen, on the beach we got into another smuggler’s car who told us that road is safe and open to Sada’a. When I reached Sada’a after three days traveling, I was arrested and held there for more than a month. Then, they took us in cattle trucks back down the country; they brought us near Aden. Now, I am stuck here in Aden with no place to stay, no work or even money. It has been five months since I traveled to Yemen. I realize now that the smuggler was lying to us. I need to go back to my country to find a job and work.”

Ahmed

“I was tired of life in Ethiopia. I tried to work in more than one profession, for example, as a farmer, a carpenter and a porter but the salaries were not enough for me to help my family or afford to get married. I decided to travel with my friend to work—or food. It was too windy for such a journey. Some people had to stand; others were sitting, as the boat was very crowded. When we reached Yemen, we had no money left to pay the smugglers with cars who could drive us. We walked for a long time to reach Sada’a. In Sada’a, we were arrested. They held us there for more than a month and then they took us to Sana’a in trucks. They locked us in a very small underground communal cell and asked for money. After three months, we paid 1,500 SR [Saudi Rial] to be released. Then, they took us away from Sana’a towards the south. Now, I am stuck here in Aden with many other Ethiopian people with no work or home. I sleep on the street on top of cardboard and I eat any food leftovers we find in restaurants or the street. I am tired and I hope that the organization can help me to get back to Ethiopia.”

IOM MIGRATION RESPONSE IN YEMEN IN 2020

INTEGRATED COVID RESPONSE

IOM's aim is 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:

-  Hygiene and health prevention awareness among the migrant population and local communities
-  Protection monitoring to continue identify, mitigate and respond to protection risks and violations of human rights, exacerbated by conditions created by COVID-19.
-  Support to Ministry of Health through provision of equipment and trainings to laboratory staff.
-  Ensuring staff safety providing field staff with PPEs and COVID-19 awareness



IOM and partners continue providing 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. As the operational space in the north remains restricted, most of the activities remain stalled.

Over 10,000 migrants are estimated to be stranded between Aden and Marib governorates for over 7-8 months since the beginning of the pandemic, living on the streets or in makeshift shelter, at risk of eviction from local communities. Since the onset of the pandemic, IOM and partners have stepped up support to this population, focusing on provision of life-saving humanitarian assistance (NFI, shelter, WASH, food, health care) and protection support through a migrant centre in Aden and mobile health and protection teams across the main transit points along the migratory routes. Assistance included new initiatives, such as the introduction of food vouchers among the services provided, and the set-up of cash for work opportunities, through a cleaning campaign organized in coordination with a local governmental organization.

Moreover, in this quarter IOM was able to assist 42 migrants of various nationalities, including from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Jordan, India and Egypt, to return safely home. In coordination with UNHCR and the Government of Somalia, preparations are ongoing to resume Assisted Spontaneous Return of Somali refugees from Aden to Berbera, Somalia.

The operational coverage of humanitarian actors supporting migrants is limited in Yemen. As a result, there is a real need for more humanitarian actors to support efforts to respond to urgent needs migrants face in areas where access and support is already being provided.

IOM RESPONSE OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2020

- 16,696** Migrants provided with health consultations
- 22,413** Migrants supported with protection assistance
- 3** Internal protection monitoring monthly reports released, in coordination with partners
- 3** Regional Migration Response Plan (RMRP) meetings between IOM and partners working on migration responses in Yemen

OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	
6,122	5,226	5,348	Migrants provided with health consultations
7,882	8,280	8,280	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