



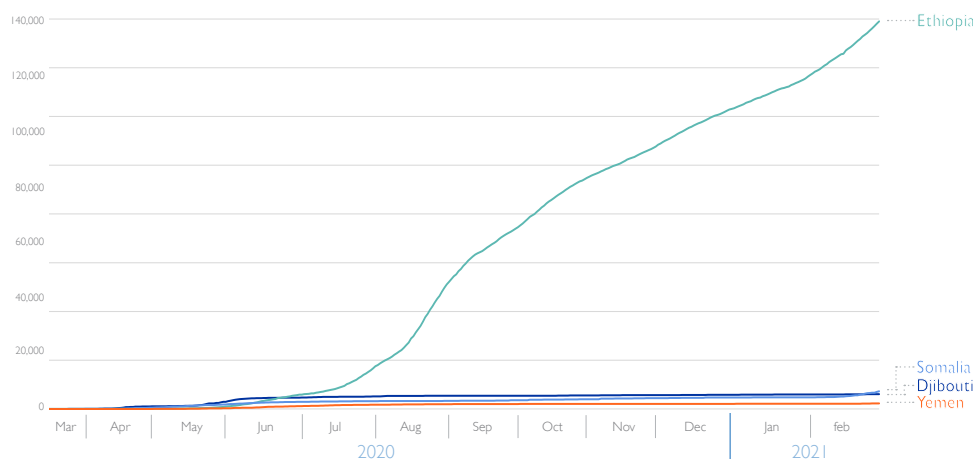
Migrants stranded in the desert are taken to the MRC in Obock, Djibouti © IOM 2020/Alexander Bee

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),¹ 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 28 February 2021



	Djibouti	Ethiopia	Somalia	Yemen
Confirmed cases	6,066	159,072	7,257	2,289
Deaths	63	2,365	239	635
Recoveries	5,897	134,858	3,808	-
Active cases	106	21,849	3,210	-

Source: Ministry of Health, Ethiopia; IOM; World Health Organization (WHO)

¹ 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. Seven MRCs are currently operational in the Horn of Africa: Obock (Djibouti), Hargeisa, Bossaso (Somalia), Semera, Metema, Dire Dawa and Togochole (Ethiopia).

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COVID-19 Epidemiological Situation

As of 28 February 2020, the number of COVID-19 cases along the Eastern Corridor stood at 174,684. Ethiopia continued recording the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases at 159,072 (91% of total cases). Following Ethiopia is Djibouti with 6,066 confirmed cases (4% of total cases) and Somalia with 7,257 cases (4% of total cases), while Yemen cases amounted to 2,289 (1% of total cases). As of 28 February 2020, the number of COVID-19 related deaths along the Eastern Corridor stood at 3,302, the majority of which were recorded in Ethiopia (72% of total deaths). Yemen holds the highest case fatality rate (CFR) at approximately 27.7%, compared to Djibouti (CFR 1.0%), Ethiopia (CFR 1.5%) and Somalia (CFR 3.3%). This is much higher than the global average CFR of 2.2% and is largely attributable to the challenges of accessing a health care system which has been decimated by years of war. The extent of the impact of COVID-19 in Yemen is largely unknown given the limited testing capacities, reduced health-seeking behavior, and growing public skepticism around COVID-19. With the surge in COVID-19 cases in mid-February, Yemen's Ministry of Health took preventative measures to prepare for the possibility of a second wave and control the spread of infection. These measures include enforcing strict health protocols within hospitals and medical departments, activating the role of epidemiological research, reporting confirmed cases, isolating suspected cases, and evaluating the situation of isolation centres, central laboratories and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) units. The Ministry of Health expects Yemen to receive 12 million doses of the vaccine, through the COVAX initiative, in batches during 2021, starting from the second quarter. It is expected to be sufficient for approximately 6 million people.

COVID-19 Mobility Restrictions

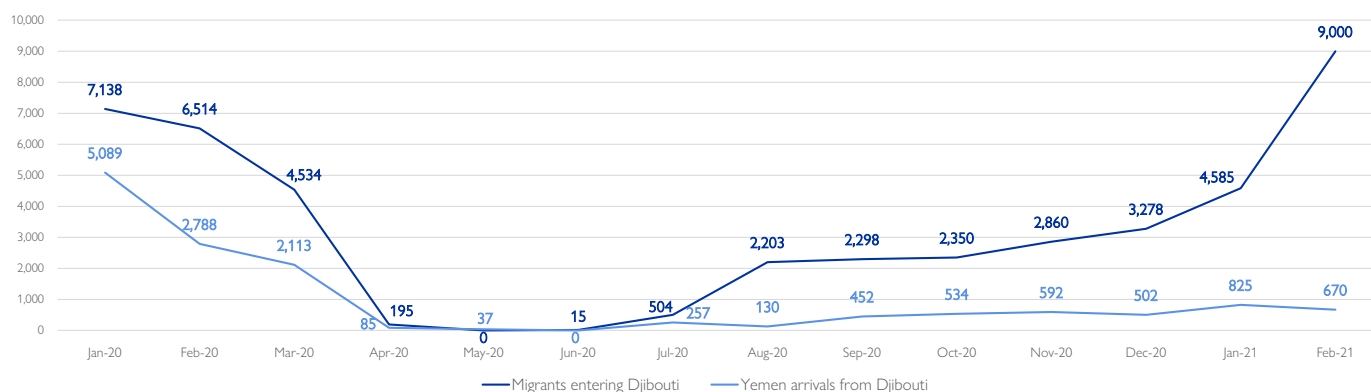
Between the reopening of the country's air, land and sea borders on 17 July 2020 and the end of February 2021, the Djiboutian health authorities recorded a 4.48% COVID-19 positivity rate and a 99.66% recovery rate among all incoming passengers screened at the various Points of Entry (PoEs). Due to a spike in COVID-19 cases in recent weeks, Somalia reintroduced some COVID-19 restrictions on 17 February, closing schools, banning public gatherings and limiting movements between regions. Yemen is still operating under a state of health emergency, but mobility restrictions have partially eased. Transit points along land borders are partially open for the entry and exit of passengers. Al Wadeah land border point has reopened, allowing Yemenis holding a negative PCR test and following health regulations to enter Saudi Arabia. Sana'a International Airport continues to be open for humanitarian flights only and a curfew is in effect in Marib Governorate from 9pm to 6am.

DJIBOUTI SITUATION

Migrant Flows Observed Through Djibouti and at Yemen Points of Entry

- Migrants' movements into the country have seen a sharp increase. In February 2021, 9,000 migrant movements were tracked entering Djibouti (20% females and 80% males), which is an increase of 96% compared to the previous month.
- 670 migrant arrivals from Djibouti were tracked in Yemen near Al-Aarah FMP in Lahj Governorate, all of whom were Ethiopian nationals. A large majority of the migrants tracked were adult men (90%), 6% were boys, 4% were girls, while no adult women were tracked.

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

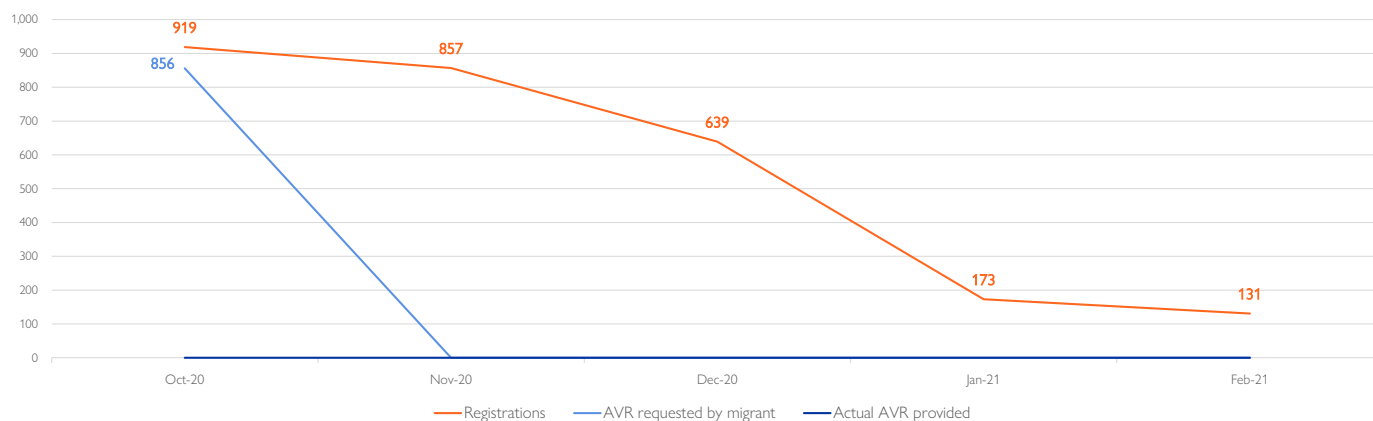


- Spontaneous return movements from Yemen to Djibouti in the month of February 2021 continued with a total of 1,227 Ethiopian migrants, the majority of whom were men (98%), returning from Yemen to the coast of Obock; this represents a decrease of 21% compared to January 2021. Since May 2020, IOM tracked a total of 8,879 spontaneous returns of Ethiopian migrants which are believed to have paid roughly the equivalent of 290 USD each for this return journey.

Migrant Protection and Assistance

- As of 26 February 2021, 841 migrants on their way to the Arabian Peninsula were stranded in Djibouti and had gathered in 12 spontaneous sites located along the migration route, majority of them were stranded in the Dikhil region. All the stranded migrants were Ethiopian nationals and most of them were men (86%). Immediate needs included water, food, hygiene kits and non-food items (NFIs).
- A total of 131 new migrants were registered at the Obock MRC in February 2021, which is a 24% decrease from the previous month.
- Only the most vulnerable migrants are now admitted to the MRC to benefit from AVR services. On 19 February, a group of 34 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 - February 2021)

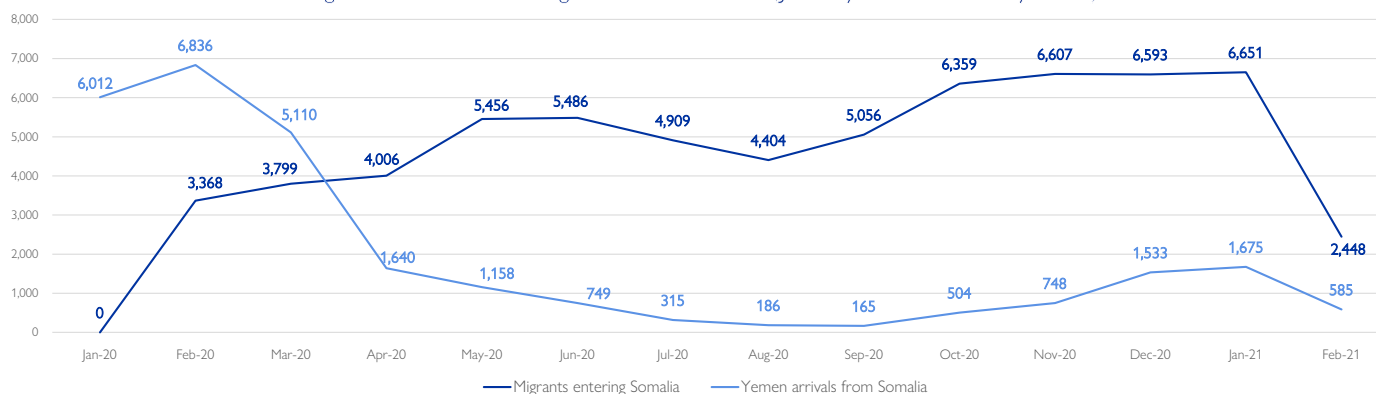


SOMALIA SITUATION

Migrant Flows Observed Through Somalia and at Yemen Points of Entry

- Migrant arrivals to Yemen from Somalia stood at 585 in February 2021, which is a significant 65% decrease from the 1,675 arrivals recorded in the previous month, following a return of movement restrictions along the borders in Somalia as COVID-19 cases surged. The movements consisted of Ethiopian (72%) and Somali (28%) nationals, with the majority of arrivals being adult males (65%), while 22% were adult females, and 13% were children (increase from 11% last month), of which 78% (60) were unaccompanied migrant children (UMCs), down from 65 in January.
- Unverified reports received by IOM stated that 2,872 migrants departed by boat to Yemen from Mareero, a small town 15 km east of Bossaso.
- Migrant entries into Somalia also decreased significantly (63%) compared to January (2,448) with almost 96% being Ethiopian nationals, while 83 Yemeni nationals were also tracked, intending to return to Yemen from Somalia.
- A significant number of Ethiopians travelled through Djibouti to Somalia (598); these movements made up 8% of all the migrants tracked entering Somalia.
- Similar to what observed in Djibouti, spontaneous movements from Yemen to Somalia are occurring, and an overall 309 movements were tracked upon arrival in February (224 to Bossaso, and 65 to Berbera), consisting of 80% males and 20% females. 180 were returning Somalis, 125 were Yemeni nationals and 4 were Ethiopian nationals.

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

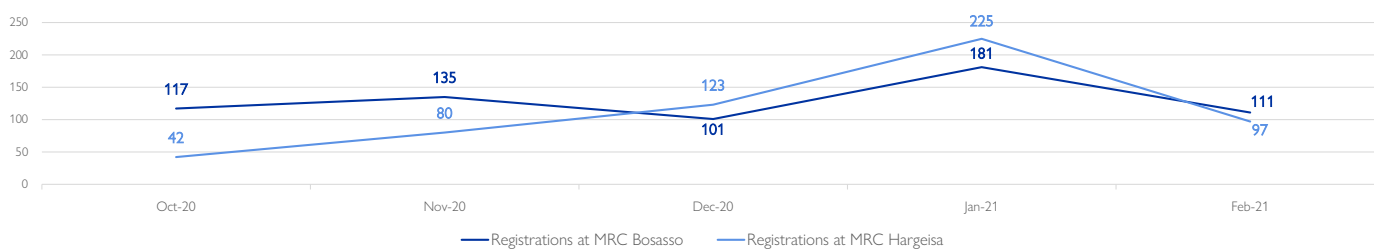


Note: Figure for migrant entries into Somalia for January 2020 was '0' because of the temporary closure of Bosaso Maritime Point in Somalia.

Migrant Protection and Assistance

- IOM estimates that 1,200 migrants continue to be stranded in and around Bossaso, with few options available to continue their journey or to return home.
- A total of 208 migrants were registered at the Bossaso (111) and Hargeisa (97) MRCs.
- A total of 86 AVR requests were received at the Bossaso (28) and Hargeisa (58) MRCs, which is an almost 60% decrease from the previous month, and also a departure from historic trends where the majority of requests are registered at the MRC in Bossaso. Nonetheless, the actual provision of AVR services still remains limited.
- Figures on returns from Saudi Arabia are no longer available to IOM since funding constraints do not allow the organization to continue supporting these returnees which are now handled directly by the government and figures are not disclosed.
- No detentions or migrant crackdowns involving the Puntland authority were reported in February.

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

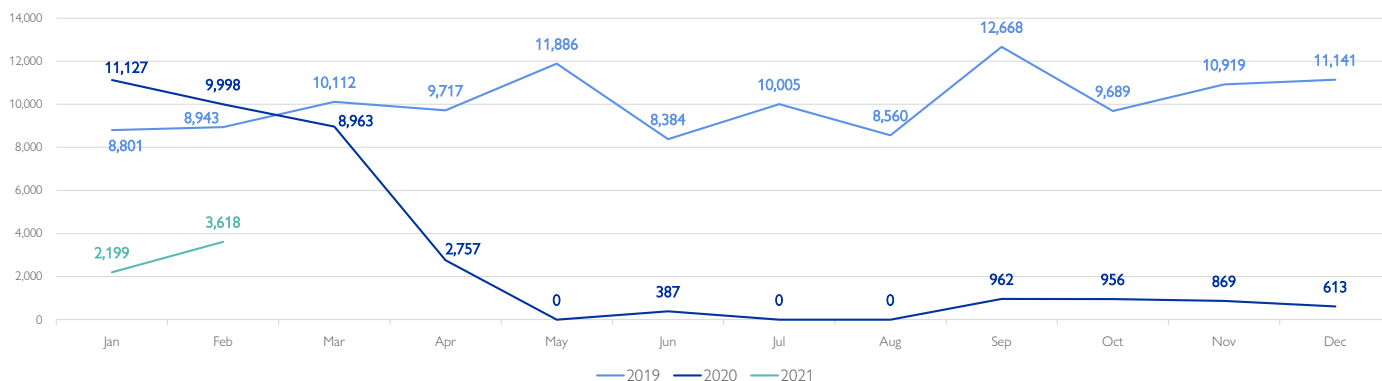


ETHIOPIA SITUATION

Migrant Flows, and Protection and Detention Concerns

- The returns of Ethiopian nationals from Saudi Arabia to Addis Ababa increased by 65% from February (3,618 Ethiopian returns) to January (2,199). However, when compared to last year, this represents a 64% decrease from the 9,998 returns recorded in February 2020, before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Other 3,250 returns of Ethiopian nationals took place in the month of February from different countries. These include 2,143 returns from Sudan, 833 from Djibouti, 170 from Somalia, 74 from Kenya, and 30 from Yemen.
- Tigrayan returnees continue to arrive in significant numbers from Saudi Arabia. Many areas of the Tigray Regional State remain inaccessible due to ongoing hostilities, and other areas are suffering from disruptions of basic services and food insecurity. Many returnees who are unable or unwilling to return to Tigray are choosing to reunify with family or relatives outside of Tigray. The Federal Government is organizing bus transportation to the Southern part of the Tigray Region.
- IOM Ethiopia is the designated lead agency supporting the Government of Ethiopia in the management of migrant returnees. In February, IOM continued to support seven temporary places of shelter in Addis Ababa and at PoEs, where returnees receive direct assistance and transportation home to their communities of origin.

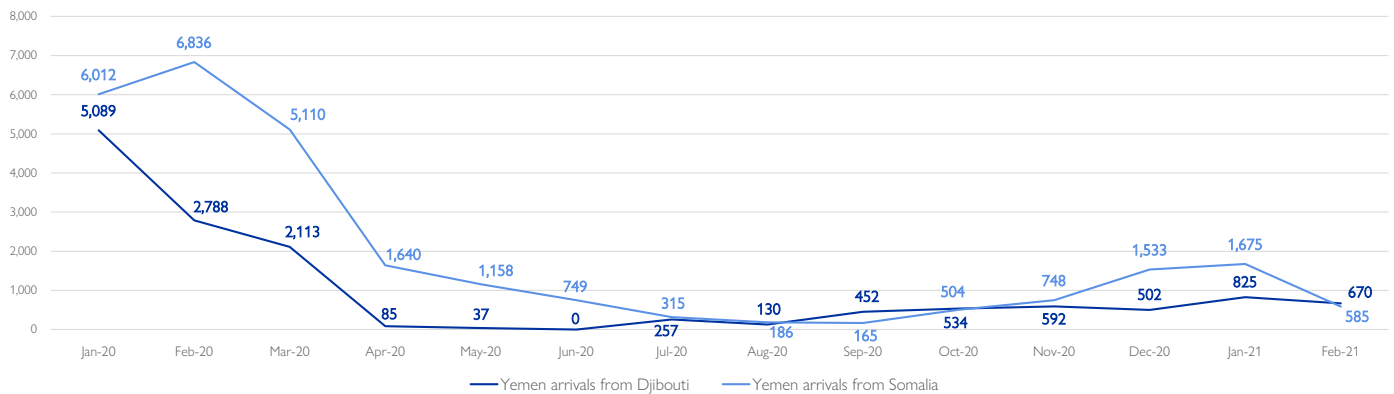
Returns of Ethiopian Nationals from Saudi Arabia Electronically Registered by IOM



Migrant Flows Observed in Yemen

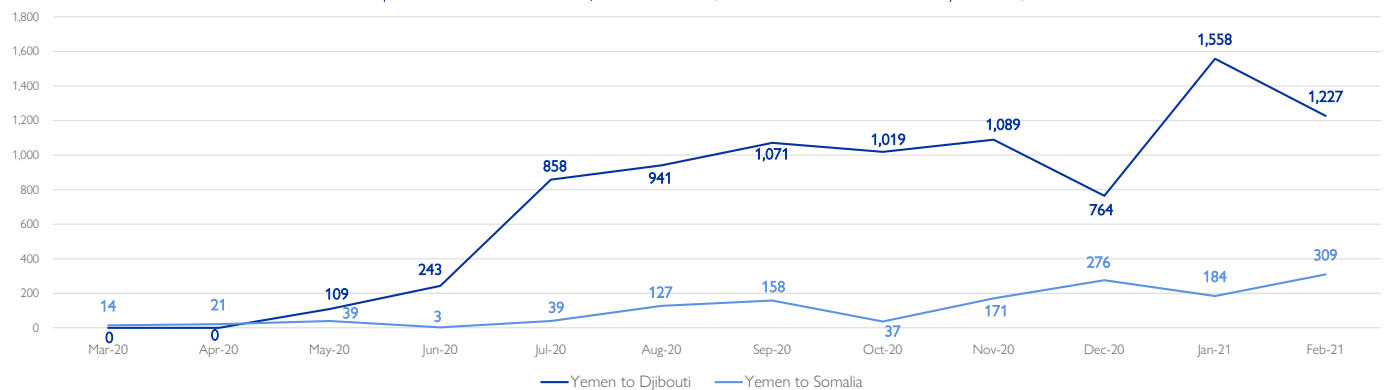
- Overall, 1,255 migrant arrivals to Yemen from the Horn of Africa were recorded in February 2021; a 50% decrease from January, and an even larger decrease of 87% compared to February 2020. Contrary to the trend observed in the past, the majority travelled from Djibouti (53%), with the remaining travelling from Somalia (47%), likely due to the border closures in Somalia. The arrivals from Somalia decreased by 65% while the arrivals from Djibouti decreased by 19%.
- Most migrant arrivals were Ethiopian nationals (87%), while the remainder were Somali nationals (13%).
- Overall, the majority of the migrants were adult males (78%), while 10% were adult females, and 11% were children (up from 10% in January), of which 42% (60) were UMCs.

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



- Due to the difficulties faced by migrants upon arrival in Yemen with their inability to move onwards towards Saudi Arabia, as well as the protection environment and living conditions in Yemen, many of them often opt to return back to the Horn of Africa. Since March 2020, almost 10,000 migrants have made this perilous return journey, using the same network of smugglers utilized on the journey towards the Arabian Peninsula.
- DTM Yemen could not track any returning migrants from Saudi Arabia in February 2021 due to the inaccessibility to the FMP at the Saudi Arabia-Yemen border.

Spontaneous Returns from Yemen (March 2020 - February 2021)



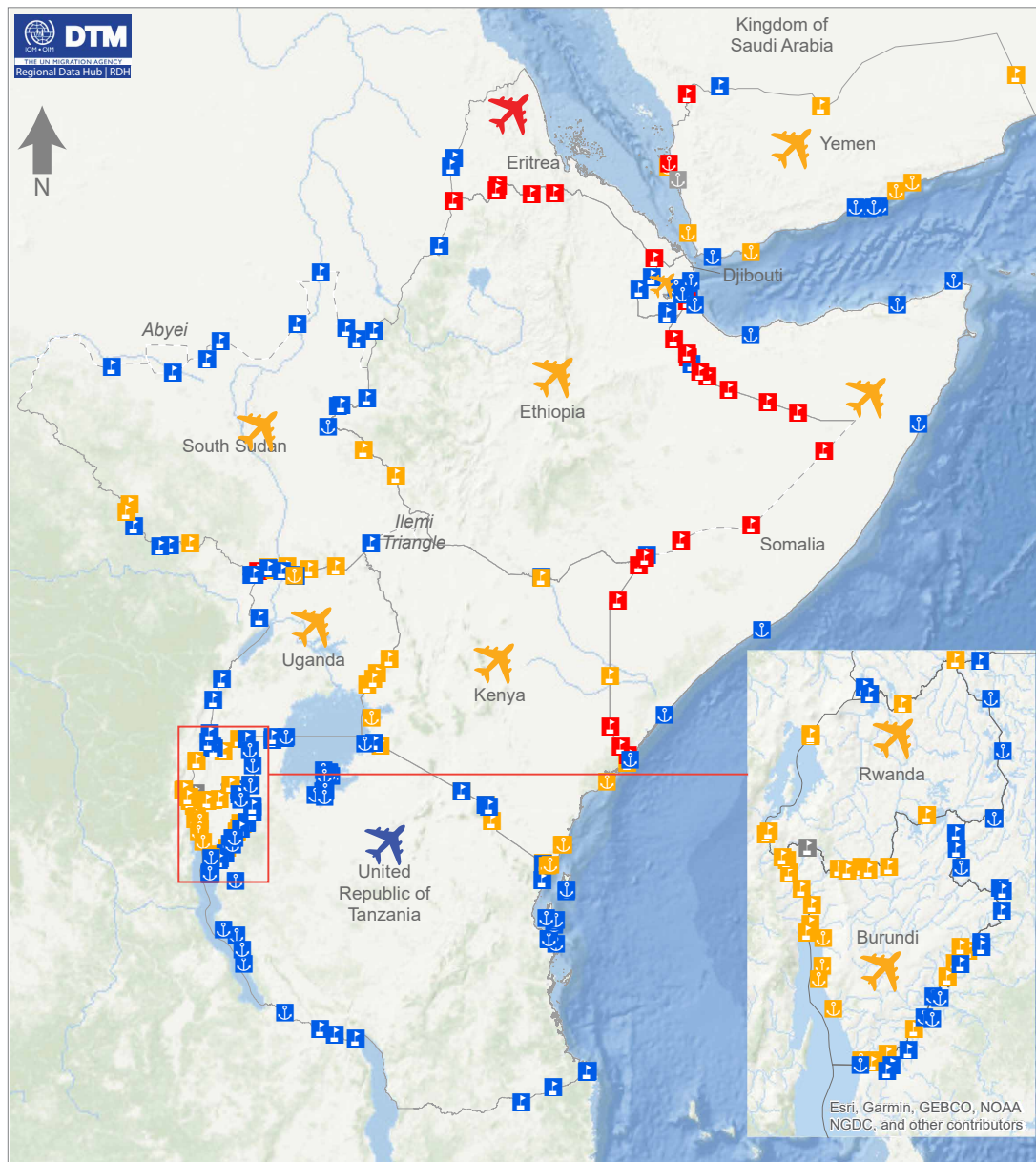
Migrant Protection and Assistance

- Migrants' living conditions across the country continue deteriorating due to a reduction in support from the local community since the beginning of the pandemic and widespread discrimination that prevents them from accessing essential services such as health care.
- Since October 2020, over 6,500 migrants have approached IOM's Aden MRC asking for return assistance to Ethiopia through Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) flights.
- Community tensions caused by migrants' presence in the streets of Aden city is increasing, highlighting the importance of resuming VHR flights for Ethiopian migrants as soon as possible, to provide an alternative to the life-threatening conditions they are facing in Yemen. VHRs are scheduled to commence in March.
- In the Marib Governorate, where conflict and COVID-19 border restrictions have forced migrants to remain in the area, over 4,500 migrants are reportedly stranded. Smugglers and traffickers' abuses against migrants with the aim of extortion and exploitation are increasing, especially among women and girls, as the main migratory routes within the country are inactive.
- Over 6,000 migrants are estimated to be held in detention across the country. This includes those entrapped within smugglers yards and dens across the country, the numbers of which are hard to ascertain due to access challenges.

ANNEX 1 | 2021 MRC REGISTRATION DATA

MRCs	Jan-21	Feb-21	MRC Total
Bossaso	181	111	292
Dire Dawa	0	0	0
Hargeisa	225	97	322
Metema	0	0	0
Obock	173	131	304
Semera	0	0	0
Togochale	31	126	157
Monthly Total	610	465	1,075

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: 28 February 2021

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