

Regional Migrant Response Plan for the Horn of Africa and Yemen

Quarterly Update | October to December 2019 and Annual Review



A migrant overlooks a congregation point where migrants gather near Obock, prior to their departure from Djibouti to Yemen © IOM 2020

138,213

Migrant arrivals from the Horn of Africa into Yemen from January to December 2019

170,890

Migrants returning to Ethiopia and Yemen from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from January to December 2019

113,000

Vulnerable migrants in need of life-saving humanitarian and protection assistance from RMRP partners in 2019

82,928

Migrants reached through the support provided by RMRP partners in 2019

Situation overview

During 2019, the Eastern Route from the Horn of Africa to Yemen continued to be characterized by large, bi-directional mixed migratory flows between the Horn of Africa and Yemen, accompanied by substantial protection risks for migrants in vulnerable situations. For the second year in a row, the Eastern Corridor was the maritime route with the highest number of irregular migrant crossings recorded in the world. Between January and December 2019, 138,213 migrant arrivals into Yemen from the Horn of Africa were recorded through IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) flow monitoring point network. [Migration trends during 2019](#) along this route between the Horn of Africa and Yemen remained largely comparable to those of 2018, when [approximately 160,000 migrants entered Yemen](#). The bi-directional nature of large-scale migratory movements continues to be a salient feature of the Eastern Route. During 2019, 170,890 migrants returned to Ethiopia and Yemen from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). IOM registered 120,825 migrants returning to Ethiopia from KSA, while an additional 50,065 migrants returned from KSA to Yemen.

This migratory corridor continues to be characterized by a significant number of "children on the move", a notable number of whom are unaccompanied or separated. Approximately six percent (8,100) of the total number of migrant arrivals to Yemen were unaccompanied migrant children (UMC), while approximately twelve percent (1,323) of those assisted through Migration Response Centers (MRCs), while in transit on the Horn of Africa side of the Eastern Route, were UMC. Partnerships strengthened in 2019 between RMRP partners, such as [IOM and UNICEF](#) and [IOM and Save the Children](#), will continue to be key to meeting these significant needs.

Irregular migrants continue to face extreme risks and protection concerns while making the journey from the Horn of Africa to Yemen. In January, it was estimated that [more than 100 migrants drowned](#) off the coast of Djibouti. Whilst this resulted in a decrease of migration attempts for a few weeks, and may have contributed to the overall reduction of recorded movements in 2019, migrants soon continued to make the dangerous journey. In Yemen, [at](#)

[least 15 migrants died](#) of hunger and thirst in July while among a group of 90 migrants stranded in the Gulf of Aden. Tragic events involving migrant fatalities during the fourth quarter continued to underscore the extreme risks and situations of vulnerability that migrants face while making the journey along the Eastern Route. During October 2019, a [vehicle accident](#) involving 27 migrants on a road outside Berbera, Somalia, in a vehicle that was en route to Bossaso, Somalia, resulted in 11 deaths. In November 2019, 200 migrants off the coast of Al Rowaik, Yemen were rescued after their vessel capsized, which resulted in one migrant death. Also in November, Ethiopian migrants were among 20 civilians killed in two [attacks on a market](#) in northern Yemen known as a place where migrants congregate during their journey onward to Gulf countries in search of a better life. Migrants reaching Yemen, who face transiting through areas of active conflict and encounter immense protection concerns, including the risk of detention, continue to be the group most in need of assistance from RMRP partners. Reports toward the end of 2019 indicated that the humanitarian crisis in Yemen was worsening, with access to populations in need of humanitarian and protection assistance remaining a significant challenge. RMRP partners responding to the needs of vulnerable migrants in Yemen do so in increasingly complex and difficult operational contexts.

In coordination and consultation with RMRP partners, the estimated number of vulnerable migrants in need of life-saving humanitarian and protection assistance from RMRP partners along the Eastern Route was revised upward from 100,000 to 113,000, in October 2019, requiring a budget of USD 54 million. In 2020, it is foreseen that the need for assistance to vulnerable migrants involved in bi-directional movements between the Horn of Africa and Yemen will remain high and critical, especially in the wake of COVID-19, underscoring the need for the coordinated effort arising from the RMRP to meet humanitarian assistance and protection needs, increase advocacy efforts, and create new partnerships, including for health challenges, as well as for collaboration and research around the impacts on the migratory dynamics of the Eastern Route.

Objective 1: To ensure humanitarian and protection responses for vulnerable migrants



Migrants stranded in Yemen continue to be the population most in need of urgent life-saving and protection assistance through the RMRP's interventions. During 2019, RMRP partners scaled up emergency humanitarian assistance to migrants in Yemen to increase their access to essential services – food, water, shelter and health.

IOM provided voluntary humanitarian return (VHR) assistance to 3,785 migrants stranded in Yemen who freely express a desire to return home. VHR is primarily accessed by Ethiopian migrants but is also available to other nationalities.

A total of 63,919 migrants received life-saving food, shelter, or accommodation support from RMRP partners from January to December: 52,260 migrants in crisis-affected Yemen through Migration Response Points, and 11,659 migrants in Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Somalia, largely through IOM's regional Migrant Response Center network in the Horn of Africa. During 2019, a 31 percent increase was observed in migrants seeking assistance at Migration Response Centers (MRCs) along the Horn of Africa's Eastern Route, as compared to 2018. As a result the capacity of the MRC in Obock was overwhelmed in the month of January and AVR had to be stepped up to ease the pressure and prevent overcrowding of the MRC.

The most frequent vulnerabilities observed among migrants registered at MRCs included health concerns, as well as accompanied and unaccompanied migrant children. A total of 77,127 migrants received health support from partners since the start of the year, with assistance delivered at key migrant response points in each of the four RMRP target countries and via mobile patrols along key migratory routes. Approximately 22% of migrant registrations at MRCs along the Eastern Route were female migrants, while nearly 12% of those assisted in the MRC network were unaccompanied migrant children (UMC). In Ethiopia, RMRP partners assisted 1,381 UMCs returning from KSA, or other Horn of Africa countries, with family tracing and reunification assistance.

During 2019, temporary MRCs were established at Dire Dawa and Togochale locations in Ethiopia in order to meet an increasing demand for emergency humanitarian and protection assistance to vulnerable migrants along the Eastern Route. In December 2019, IOM provided direct assistance to 457 individuals who were stranded at the Ethiopia-Djibouti border and referred to these temporary sites. A total of 13 migrants were registered in Dire Dawa and 444 were registered in Togochale. Of the registered migrants, 38% were male and 62% were female. About 9% of those registered were children and 32% of children were unaccompanied.



Medical staff assess migrants' health needs at a field location in Yemen. © IOM 2019

Objective 2: To support durable and development-oriented approaches to return, sustainable reintegration and community stabilization



Assisted voluntary return (AVR), which allows stranded migrants to return to their countries of origin in a safe, dignified, and orderly way, continues to be a key form of assistance to migrants in vulnerable situations within the Horn of Africa through the RMRP. In total, 4,911 migrants opted to voluntarily return to Ethiopia from Somalia and Djibouti during 2019. Request for AVR surged in early 2019, due to a capsizing event in January off the coast of Djibouti in which nearly 100 migrants drowned, and then spiked again during June 2019. Post-arrival return assistance (PARA) and onward transportation assistance (OTA) was provided to 6,918 migrants following their return to their home countries during the same time period. Reintegration assistance was completed for 1,619 cases in Ethiopia.

RMRP partners have initiated several community reintegration and development projects in communities of high return, known as “migration hotspots”. These interventions, which go beyond individualized reintegration support, focus on area-based solutions to reintegration of migrants, and seek to address the root causes of irregular migration for both returning and would-be migrants in these migration-prone communities. Ten such community-based projects were initiated in Ethiopia since the beginning of 2019.



A group of Ethiopian returnees who opened a retail business in Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples Region (SNNPR) in Ethiopia.

Photo: © IOM 2019

Objective 3: To strengthen protection of migrants in the Horn of Africa and Yemen by building the capacities of Governments

319



frontline health officials trained

451



frontline immigration officers trained

196



law enforcement officials trained

A key component of the RMRP is providing support to governments in the region, including through the provision of equipment and improving their access to technology, as well as building existing migration management capacities and strengthening their ability to protect vulnerable migrants.

During the fourth quarter of 2019, the RMRP provided support for the installation of the Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS), inclusive of equipment and improved technology for building capacity of migration management efforts in Somalia. Equipment and expertise extended to authorities included the installation of 3M passport readers and Guardian Crossmatch “4-4-2” fingerprint readers at several key migration corridors, including Berbera Seaport, Hargeisa Airport, as well as at Loyado and Wajale land posts.

The RMRP also supported two sets of three-day trainings related to the use of MIDAS technology. The first training took place in Mogadishu in October 2019 and included 12 officials (10 male and 2 female) from the Immigration and Naturalization Directorate (IND). The second training was held in Hargeisa in December 2019 and included 12 Immigration Officials (11 male and 1 female). The training focused on equipping frontline immigration officers with knowledge regarding the use, installation, and troubleshooting of Guardian Crossmatch fingerprint readers and 3M passport scanners. The workshop was organized by IOM Somalia and focused on learning how to use the ten-digit capture to enhance the recording of migrant biodata. These fingerprint readers will replace the current single-digit devices and will increase the accuracy of the traveller identification through expanded data collection. The Guardian Crossmatch readers are connected to MIDAS, with the capability to collect, process, store, and analyze

traveller information in real-time and across an entire border network.

The RMRP also supported the regional coordination meeting of Somalia's IND, held in July 2019 in Garowe. The IND HQ is based in Mogadishu with several field offices, each managed by a director, in the federal states. The meeting was attended by 20 IND Officials (18 male and 2 female). In 2018, IOM started to facilitate coordination meetings for the IND to establish improved coordination between the regional units and HQ. These regional coordination meetings contribute to strengthening IND's management framework. During these meetings, all branches provide regional updates, inform about best practices, share and discuss work related challenges, and promote the synchronization of IND processes.

Among topics addressed during the coordination meeting were the following:

- Defining national coordination structures, cooperation and communication mechanisms to manage migration at points of entry (POE);
- Border operations challenges and related human rights issues; and
- Identifying best practices for screening and protection of irregular migrants at PoE.



An IOM enumerator collects data related to irregular migration experiences in the Horn of Africa along the Eastern Route.

Photo: © IOM 2019/BURNETT Naomi

Objective 4: To strengthen partnership and collaboration around evidence-based analysis of root causes, needs and trends of migration

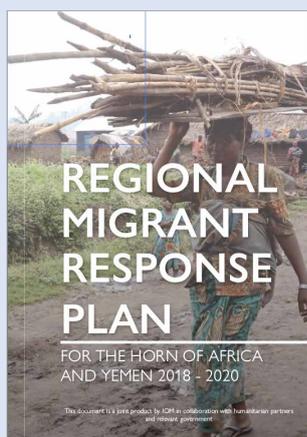
In 2019, the IOM Regional Data Hub (RDH) launched a multi-stage research project aimed at better understanding the experiences, decision-making, perceptions and expectations of young Ethiopians along the Eastern Route regarding their migration projects. By interviewing migrants leaving the Horn of Africa toward the Arabian Peninsula, the initiative aims to investigate the nexus between decision-making and migrant expectations of what awaits during and at the end of the journey, compared to the realities on the ground. A more nuanced understanding of the decision to migrate will help inform strategy and programmatic planning for IOM and the wider humanitarian and development sector in the region. Obock and Bossaso were selected as the main study sites, as both receive a large number of Ethiopian migrants travelling on the Eastern Route, due to their location as one of the Horn's gateways to Yemen. Between September and October 2019, 2,153 surveys were conducted by ten IOM-trained enumerators at four congregation points in the Obock area. In addition, the research methodology will be further expanded to the communities of high emigration within Ethiopia.

Based on 2019 consultations with RMRP partners, the planning population was revised to 113,000 vulnerable migrants in need of life-saving assistance in the four target countries with a budgetary requirement of USD 54 million. Country level consultations for the RMRP will be launched in the Horn of Africa target countries during the second quarter of 2020, and will be followed by regional level consultations and validation of country level inputs from partners, also scheduled for the second quarter of 2020.

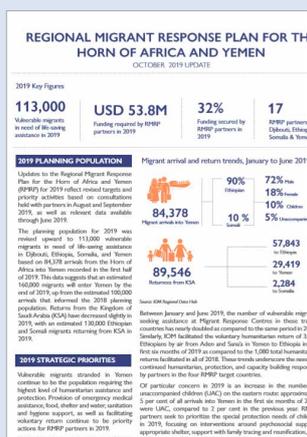
About the RMRP

The Regional Migrant Response Plan for the Horn of Africa and Yemen 2018-2020 is a three-year, migrant-focused humanitarian and development strategy targeting vulnerable migrants moving to and from the Horn of Africa and Yemen. The RMRP aims to provide a framework for coordination, protection, capacity building, analysis and resource mobilization, recognizing the regional dimensions of the migration linking the Horn of Africa and Yemen.

The RMRP is led by IOM's Regional Office for the East and Horn of Africa based in Nairobi. RMRP partners include intergovernmental, nongovernmental, and UN actors working in close collaboration at the regional and country levels to set strategic objectives, determine yearly operational priorities and budgets, and identify challenges and trends that inform partners' responses.



Download the three-year Regional Migrant Response Plan for the Horn of Africa and Yemen 2018-2020 here



Download the three-year Regional Migrant Response Plan for the Horn of Africa and Yemen 2018-2020 here



Download the previous RMRP Quarterly Update here

RMRP partners

Caritas Djibouti • Comprehensive Community-Based Rehabilitation • Danish Refugee Council • Good Samaritan Association of Ethiopia • IGAD • International Committee of the Red Cross • International Rescue Committee • INTERSOS • IOM • Norwegian Refugee Council • Mixed Migration Centre • MSF • Save the Children • TASS • UNFPA • UNICEF • UNHCR • UNOCHA

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