



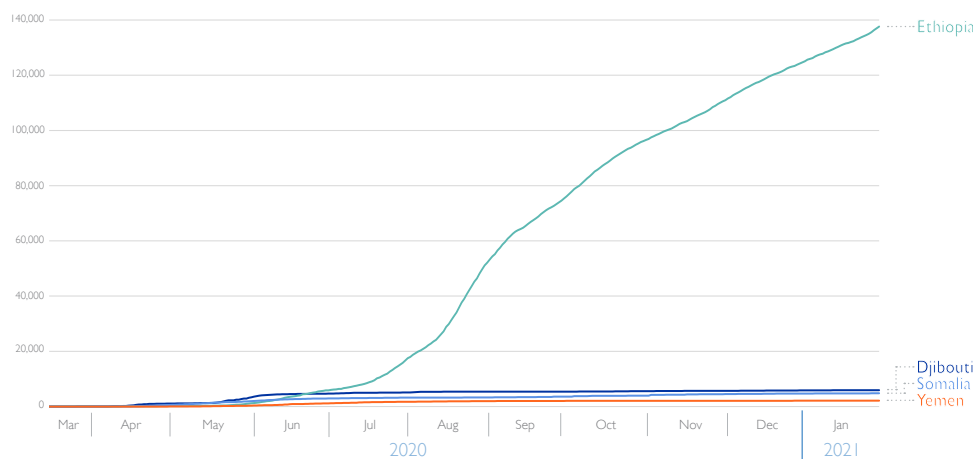
Ethiopian migrants line up for NFI distribution at the Massagara site near Obock, Djibouti. Photo: © IOM / Alexander Bee

## 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),<sup>1</sup> 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 31 January 2021



	Djibouti	Ethiopia	Somalia	Yemen
Confirmed cases	5,932	137,650	4,784	2,126
Deaths	63	2,093	130	616
Recoveries	5,845	122,862	3,700	-
Active cases	24	12,695	954	-

Source: IOM's Library of Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs)

<sup>1</sup> 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 31 January 2020, the number of COVID-19 cases along the Eastern Corridor stood at 150,492. Ethiopia continued recording the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases at 137,650 (91.5% of total cases). Following Ethiopia is Djibouti with 5,932 confirmed cases (3.9% of total cases) and Somalia with 4,784 cases (3.2% of total cases), while Yemen cases amounted to 2,126 (1.4% of total cases). As of 31 January 2020, the number of COVID-19 related deaths along the Eastern Corridor stood at 2,902, the majority of which were recorded in Ethiopia (72% of total deaths). Yemen holds the highest case fatality rate (CFR) at approximately 29.0%, compared to Djibouti (CFR 1.1%), Ethiopia (CFR 1.5%) and Somalia (CFR 2.7%). 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 limited testing capacities, reduced health seeking behavior, and growing public skepticism around COVID-19.

## COVID-19 Mobility Restrictions

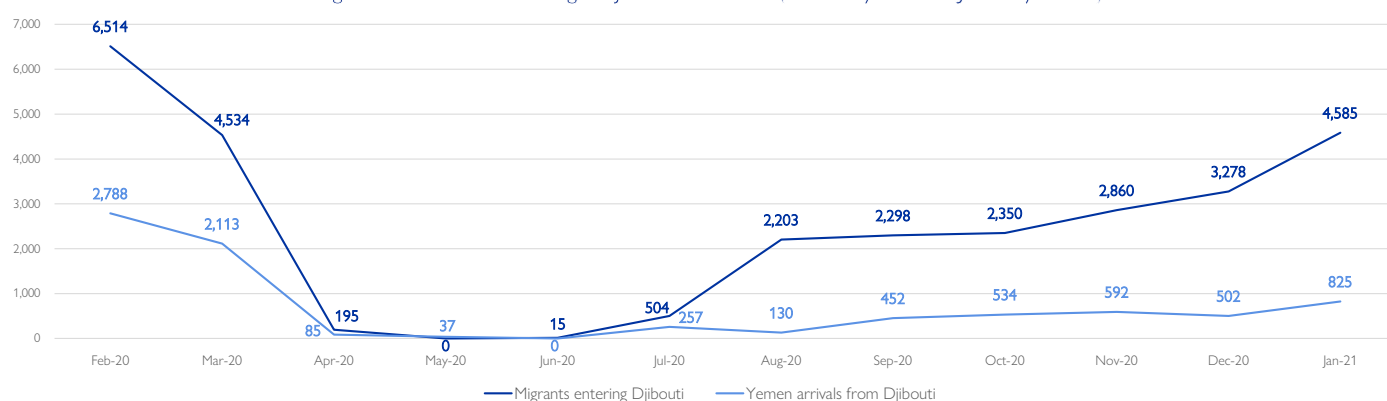
Between the reopening of the country's air, land and sea borders on 17 July 2020 and the end of January 2021, the Djiboutian health authorities recorded a 4.19% COVID-19 positivity rate and a 99.78% recovery rate among all incoming passengers screened at the various Points of Entry (PoEs). In Somalia, all airports and seaports remained operational. The phased lifting of the lockdown of the Mogadishu Aden Adde International Airport continues, however, the airport remains fully operational and with no impact on partners' activities. Inter-governorate public movement tracking continued at 10 internal transit points in Yemen, especially in Taizz and Al-Bayda, although the movement restrictions have been eased and the health screenings have been removed from the transit points. The transit points along the land borders are partially open for the entry and exit of passengers, while 15 sea border points and three land border points are reopened for movement.

## DJIBOUTI SITUATION

### Migrant Flows Observed Through Djibouti and at Yemen Points of Entry

- In January 2021, 4,585 (31% females and 69% males) migrant movements were tracked entering Djibouti, which is an increase of 40% as compared to the previous month. A total of 18,213 entries from Ethiopia were tracked between May 2020 and January 2021 into Djibouti.
- 825 migrant arrivals from Djibouti were tracked in Yemen near Al-Aarah FMP in Lahj governorate, all of whom were Ethiopian nationals. A majority of the migrants tracked were adult men (83%), only 10% were women, and 7% were boys.

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



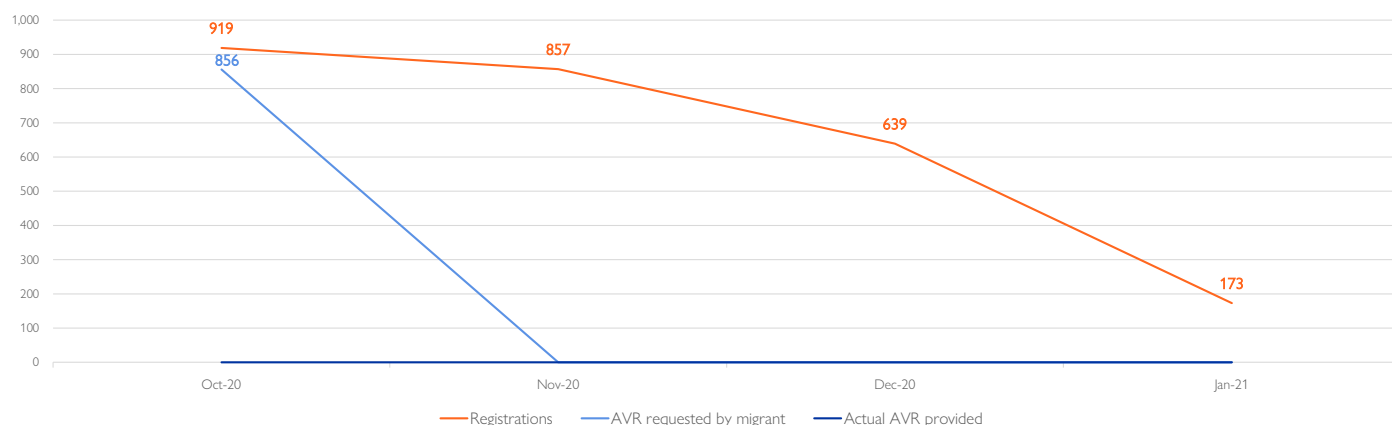
- Spontaneous return movements from Yemen to Djibouti in the month of January 2021 were the highest ever recorded since the start of the pandemic. A total of 1,558 Ethiopian migrants, the majority of whom were men (97%), returned from Yemen to the coast of Obock; this represents an increase of 104% compared to December 2020. Since May 2020, IOM tracked a total of 7,562 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 28 January 2021, 409 migrants on their way to the Arabian Peninsula were stranded in Djibouti and had gathered in 13 spontaneous sites located along the migration route, majority of them were stranded in the Obock and Tadjourah regions. All the stranded migrants were Ethiopian nationals and most of them were men (81%). Immediate needs included water, food, hygiene kits and non-food items (NFIs).

- A total of 173 new migrants were registered at the Obock MRC in January 2021, which is a 73% decrease from the previous month.

Registrations at the MRC in Obock and AVR Services Requested and Provided (October 2020 - January 2021)

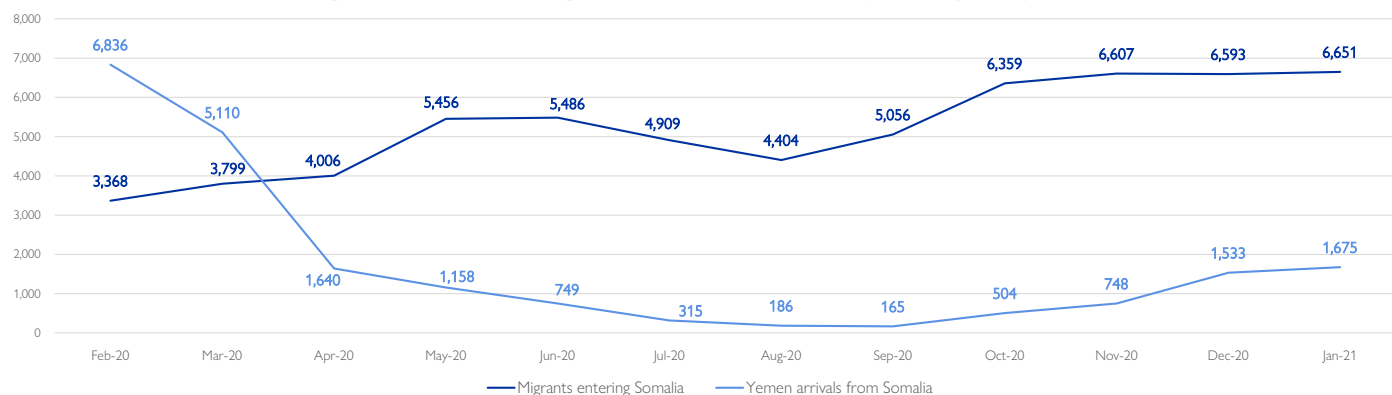


## SOMALIA SITUATION

### Migrant Flows Observed Through Somalia and at Yemen Points of Entry

- Migrant arrivals to Yemen from Somalia stood at 1,675 in January 2021, a 9% increase from the 1,533 arrivals recorded in the previous month, following the progressive relaxation of movement restrictions. The movements consisted of Ethiopian (84%) and Somali (16%) nationals, with the majority of arrivals being adult males (64%), while 25% were adult females, and 11% were children (decrease from 19% last month), of which 36% (65) were unaccompanied migrant children (UMCs), down from 178 in December.
- Unverified reports received by IOM stated that 893 migrants departed by boat to Yemen from Mareero, a small town 15 km east of Bossaso.
- Migrant entries into Somalia increased slightly (9%) as compared to December (6,651) with over 99% being Ethiopian nationals, while 34 Yemeni nationals were also tracked, intending to return to Yemen from Somalia.
- Despite the border closure between Somalia and Ethiopia on the Ethiopian side, migrant movements both coming into Somalia and leaving Somalia with the intention to transit through Ethiopia and onwards to Libya through Sudan have increased. According to the Immigration Office in Wajaale, young Somalis believe that, due to the conflict in Northern Ethiopia, border crossing has become easier.
- A significant number of Ethiopians travelled through Djibouti to Somalia (1,003); these movements made up 15% of all the migrants tracked entering Somalia.
- Similar to what observed in Djibouti, spontaneous return movements from Yemen are occurring, and an overall 202 migrants were tracked upon arrival in January (154 to Bossaso, and 48 to Berbera), consisting of 66% males and 34% females.

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

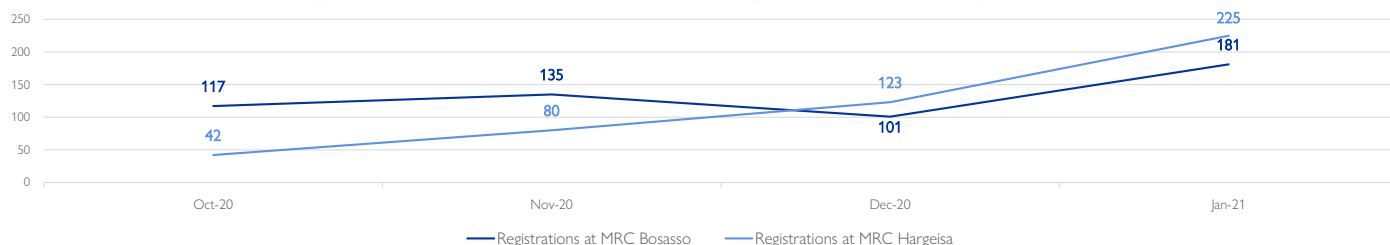


### Migrant Protection and Assistance

- IOM estimates that between 400 and 500 migrants continue to be stranded in and around Bossaso, with few options available to continue their journey or to return home.
- On 14 January, a vehicle carrying migrants overturned on the road between Bossaso and Elayo and 15 migrants were injured with one very serious case which was referred to the National Hospital.

- While the MRC in Mogadishu remains closed, a total of 406 migrants were registered at the Bossaso (181) and Hargeisa (225) MRCs. Registrations almost doubled in Hargeisa, following the crossing of more than 300 Ethiopian migrants at the Wajaale border on their way to Hargeisa, Berbera and Burao.<sup>2</sup>
- A total of 205 AVR requests were received at the Bossaso (59) and Hargeisa (146) MRCs, which is an increase from previous months, 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 the Kingdom of Said 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 January.

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

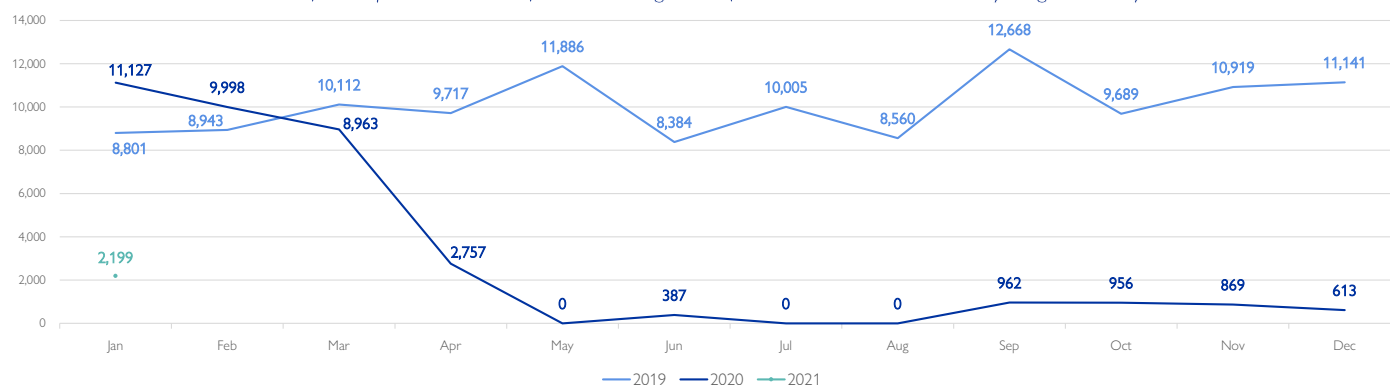


## ETHIOPIA SITUATION

### Migrant Flows, and Protection and Detention Concerns

- The returns of Ethiopian nationals from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Addis Ababa continued in January 2021 with 2,199 Ethiopians returning compared to 613 returns in December 2020, which represents an almost four-fold increase. However, when compared to last year, this represents a significant 80% decrease from the 11,127 returns recorded in January 2020, before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 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 special convoys to the capital of the Tigray State to ensure safe return for those who do wish to return.
- IOM Ethiopia is the designated lead agency supporting the Government of Ethiopia in the management of migrant returnees. In January, 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 the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Electronically Registered by IOM



## YEMEN SITUATION

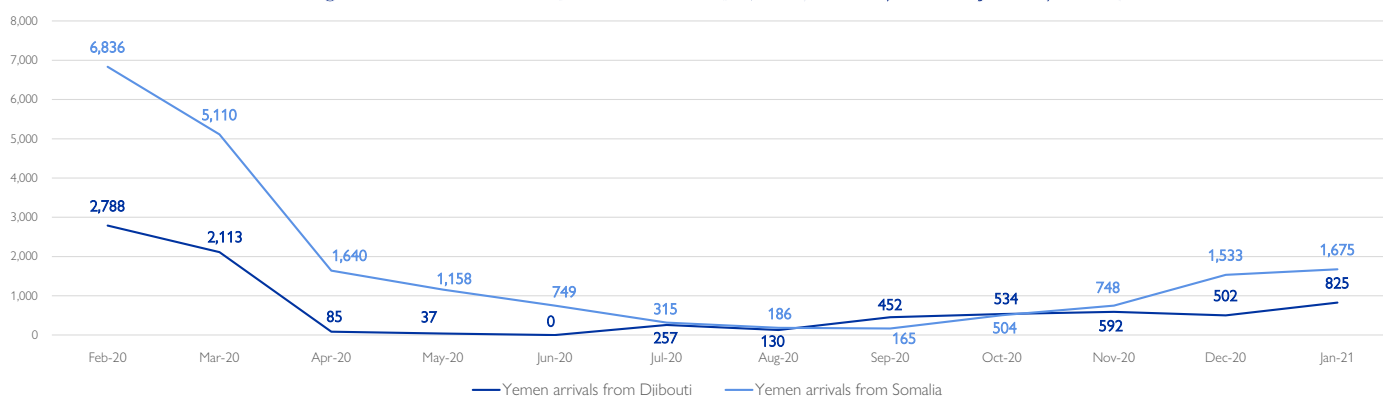
### Migrant Flows Observed in Yemen

- Overall, 2,500 migrant arrivals to Yemen from the Horn of Africa were recorded in January 2021; a 23% increase from December but a decrease of 82% as compared to January 2020. The majority travelled from Somalia (67%), with the remaining travelling from Djibouti (33%); the arrivals from Somalia increased by 95% while the arrivals from Djibouti increased by 64%.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Head of Immigration Office in Wajaale.

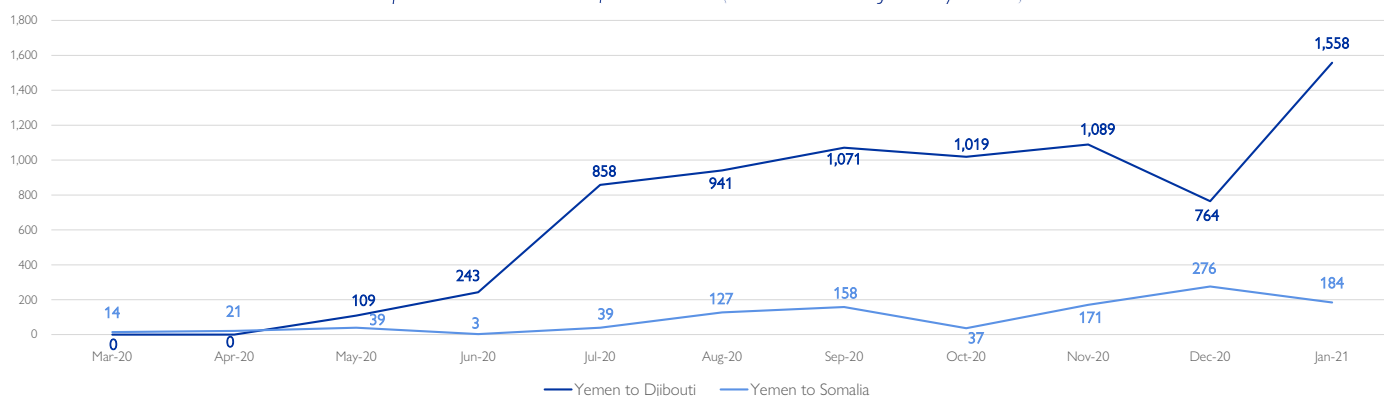
- Most migrant arrivals were Ethiopian nationals (90%), while the remainder were Somali nationals (10%).
- Overall, the majority of the migrants were adult males (70%), while 20% were adult females, and 10% were children (down from 19% in December), of which 77% (65) were UMCs.

*Migrant Arrivals to Yemen from the Horn of Africa (February 2020 - January 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 9,000 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 January 2021 due to the inaccessibility to the FMP at the Saudi Arabia-Yemen border.

*Spontaneous Returns from Yemen (March 2020 - January 2021)*



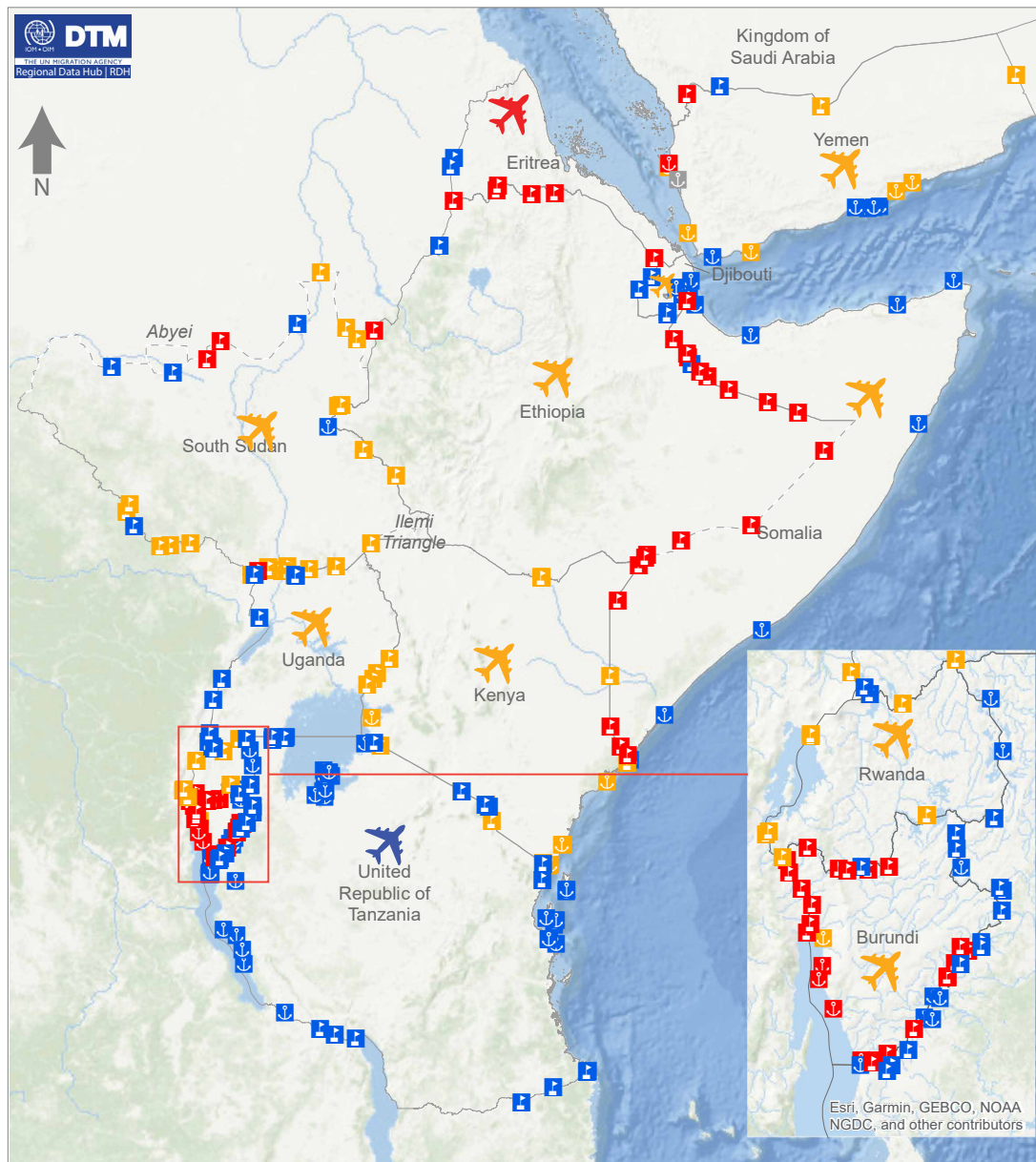
## Migrant Protection and Assistance

- 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, around 6,000 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.
- In the Marib governorate, where conflict and COVID-19 border restrictions have forced migrants to remain in the area, over 4,000 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 1,500 migrants are estimated to be held in detention in one key governorate of Saa'da. Upwards of 4,000 are believed to be held in other locations around the country. In addition, hundreds of migrants are entrapped within smugglers yards and dens across the country, numbers of which are hard to ascertain due to access challenges. Within the Sana'a Detention Facility where IOM is able to regularly monitor the situation, over 639 migrants are held in detention as of the end of December 2020.

ANNEX 1 | 2021 MRC REGISTRATION DATA

MRCs	Jan-21	MRC Total
Bossaso	181	181
Dire Dawa	0	0
Hargeisa	225	225
Metema	0	0
Obock	173	173
Semera	0	0
Togochale	31	31
<b>Monthly Total</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>610</b>

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: 31 January 2021

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