

MONTHLY MIGRATION OVERVIEW

NOVEMBER 2019



Women migrants detained in 22nd of May Sports Complex in Aden city in April 2019, when approximately 5,000 migrants were held in inhumane conditions. © IOM/Headon

HORN OF AFRICA-YEMEN MIGRATION FLOWS

Despite the ongoing conflict and resulting crisis, people continue to migrate to and through Yemen in the hope of finding a better life. The number of people arriving in Yemen increased significantly in 2019 when compared with arrivals in 2018¹.

A combination of factors, including lack of employment opportunities, changes in the environment adversely affecting living conditions, and human rights abuses have driven hundreds of thousands of people from the Horn of Africa to migrate over the past decade. Many travel by boat over the Red Sea and then by land through Yemen, most of them headed to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

Migratory flows from the Horn of Africa are mixed in nature, comprised mostly of migrant workers but also of refugees and asylum-seekers². Although the conflict in Yemen has not had a deterrent effect on flows, it has had an impact on the routes through the country that migrants use to get to KSA. Before 2015, migrants often arrived at the western coast around Al Hudaydah but due to the increased level of active conflict in that area, the route was pushed to Yemen's southern coastline³.

Prior to reaching Yemen, migrants are exposed to many challenges including exploitation and abuse, extreme thirst and hunger, as well as lack of shelter and medical assistance. In most cases,

migrants also have to seek out smugglers and criminal groups to facilitate their journey and very few people travelling on this route are in possession of valid travel documents⁴. Throughout their journey to Yemen, migrants find themselves in dangerous situations, including during the crossing from Djibouti or Somalia to Yemen in inadequate boats. Upon arrival and during their travel within Yemen, migrants pass through and often get trapped in areas of active conflict where they are at severe risk of being seriously injured or killed. Over 50 people were reported to have lost their lives during two incidents in Sa'ada governorate on 20 and 27 November respectively⁵. Ethiopian nationals were reported to be among the casualties and those injured, as the location hit in both incidents was a market close the KSA border which is frequented by migrants waiting to cross. These were the first such incidents near a border crossing point where migrants were reportedly killed since July 2019.

Apart from the dangers linked to active fighting, while making their way towards KSA, many migrants are subject to violence and torture, sexual abuse, abductions for ransom, arrest and detention in inhumane conditions. To be able to continue their journey, migrants often resort to working in farming and other sectors where they may also be at risk of exploitation and forced labour.

¹ 93,091 migrant arrivals recorded in Yemen in 2018 was 93,091, and from January to November 2019, the number of migrant arrivals was 127,275, [IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix \(DTM\)](#)

² [The Regional Migrant Response Plan for the Horn of Africa and Yemen 2018-2020](#)

³ Ethiopia to Bab al Mandab and Ras al Ara in Lahj governorate or Somalia to Hadramaut and Shabwah governorates

⁴ [IOM World Migration Report, 2018 \(page 53\)](#)

⁵ United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen Statement on [20 November incident](#) and [27 November incident](#)

NOVEMBER MIGRATION TRENDS

In southern Yemen, the security situation on the western coast of Lahj remained mostly stable in November. Migrant arrivals were recorded by IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) flow monitoring teams at five entry points in Lahj, Hadramaut and Shabwah governorates. There was a change recorded in the most common entry point for migrants arriving from Somalia, which in October was Tajamo Sharj Al-Falahein (31% down to 7% of arrivals from Somalia), and in November, became Al-Khabyah (29% up to 78% of arrivals from Somalia).

Several of the migrants encountered along the Lahj coast and around Sana’a in November reported that they had been subject to abduction and arbitrary deprivation of their liberty upon arrival. While most of them were detained for a period of one to four days, some had been detained for a period over six months and almost all of them had to pay a ransom (between 530 to 800 USD) to be freed. Many migrants interviewed also reported that they had been forced into labour, including cleaning, cooking and even collecting firewood for traffickers.

MIGRANT PROFILES⁶

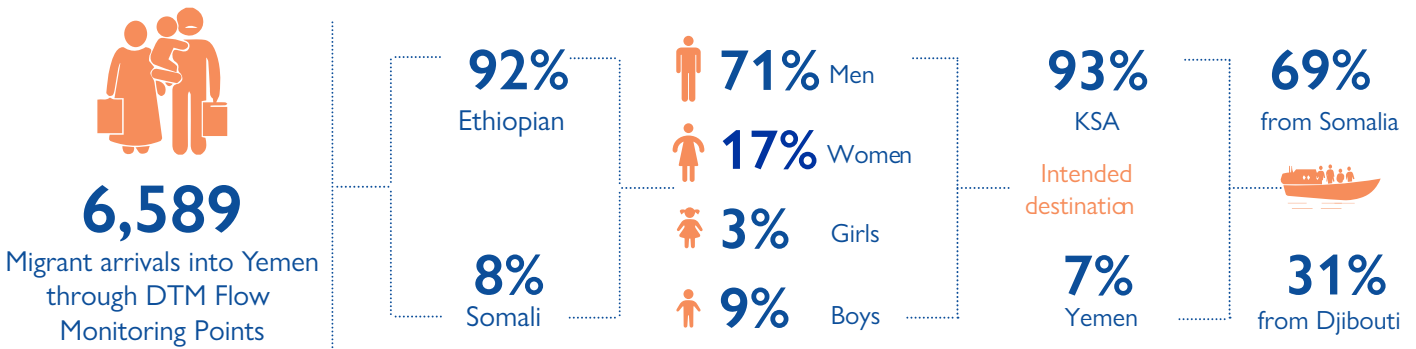
Ethiopian nationals continue to represent the largest group among the migrants who arrived in November (92%), followed by Somali nationals (8%). Most of the migrants are still young adult men, nevertheless in November, the data collected from IOM DTM Flow Monitoring Points reported a slight decrease in the percentage of adult men arriving in Yemen compared to October (75% of overall arrivals down to 71%), with an increase of adult women arriving (15% of overall arrivals up to 17%).

With respect to protection risks, around 8 per cent of the migrants recorded at IOM’s DTM Flow Monitoring Points during November were unaccompanied children. Other protection concerns frequently recorded among a smaller group of interviewed migrants include victims of torture, gender-based violence survivors (GBV) survivors, victims of trafficking and forced labour, as well as migrants with health issues. For many migrants, the journey starts

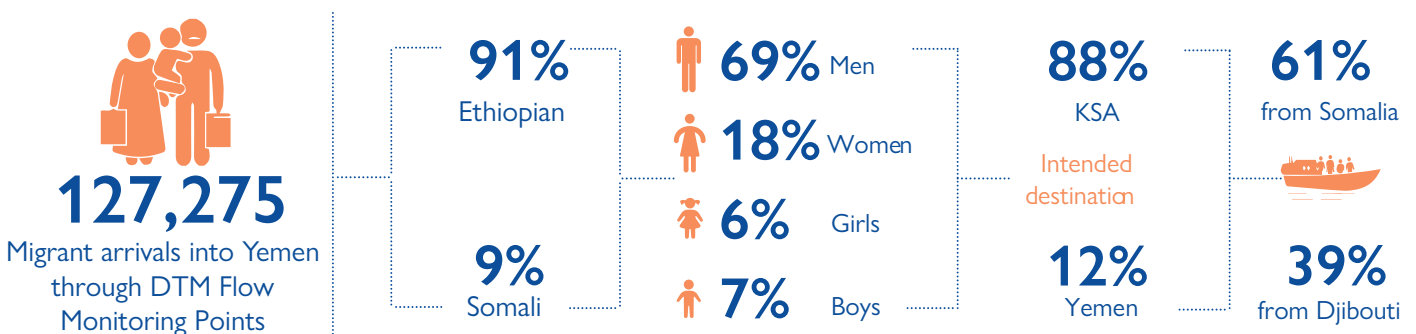
out as smuggling but upon arrival in Yemen it quickly turns into trafficking when they end up being exploited by the same criminal network that organized their travel.

The majority of the migrants have left their home communities in the hope of reaching KSA but in some cases their wish is to remain and work in Yemen. Depending on the country of departure, the journey to KSA can take up to five months and the drivers are complex and over-lapping. Most commonly, migrants leave in search of employment but other underlying factors encouraging people to move include discrimination, ethnic tensions, political instability and insecurity, as well as environmental factors such as drought, making it difficult to secure a livelihood⁷. These factors, coupled with the opportunities for employment and the proximity of KSA and the Gulf states, are the main reasons for why migrants are willing to accept huge risks in pursuit of a better life.

BREAKDOWN OF NOVEMBER ARRIVALS



ARRIVALS JANUARY TO NOVEMBER 2019



⁶ The information provided in this section comes from interviews with a small sample size of migrants by IOM and partners field teams

⁷ IOM World Migration Report, 2018 (page 53).

MIGRANT VOICES

"I had no idea about the conflict before I left and if I was to go back now, I would never have left."

The eldest son of an Ethiopian farming family, 20-year-old Galate, left his home in East Welega, Oromia Region, in August of this year to travel to the Gulf. With what he has witnessed along the way, he regrets ever listening to the smuggler that sold him the dream of opportunity in KSA.

"I had a better life in Ethiopia. I was studying in college," said Galate. "A smuggler persuaded me to leave by telling me that I could make 25,000 Saudi Riyal a month," he explained. Without knowing anyone already in KSA, Galate had no idea what type of work he would do when he got there.



A Somali migrant sits under a tree in Obock, Djibouti. He will wait for days before the smugglers arrange his boat to Yemen © IOM/Headon

Expecting an easy journey and travelling with a group of friends, Galate was shocked by the realities of the route. He explained their journey so far to get to Aden, Yemen:

"I sneaked out of my country. When we arrived in Djibouti, we walked for five days in the desert. Then, we were packed inhumanely onto a boat. Once we arrived on the Yemeni coast, we were kidnapped by people who threatened to kill us. We were tortured and humiliated for nearly four months; only allowed to sleep for four hours a night and eat one meal a day. Because of the torture, my health deteriorated but my family was initially unable to pay the 900 USD ransom. Eventually, they had to sell whatever they could to be able to send me money to save my life."

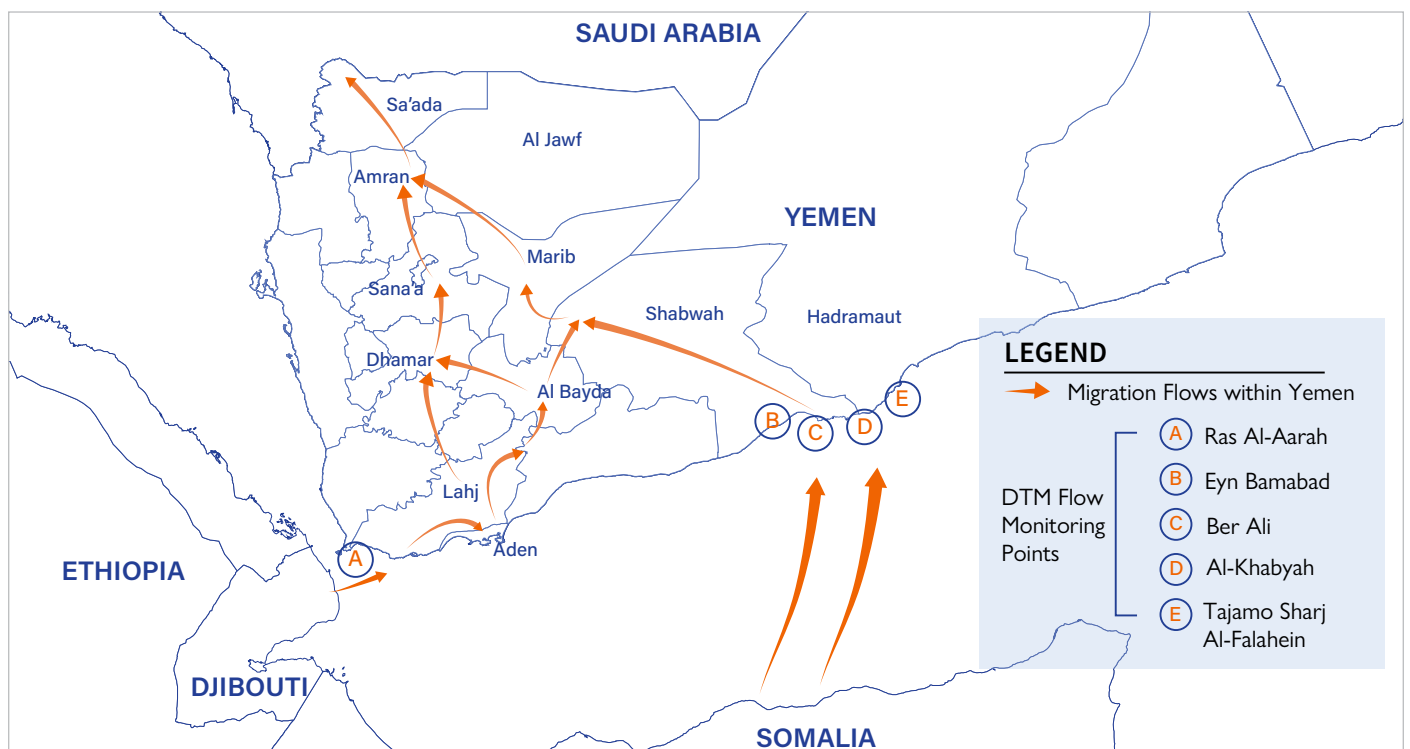
Having initially paid 300 USD, Galate's journey has so far cost him 1,200 USD and adversely affected his physical and mental health.

"I was so scared."

Twenty-two-year-old Molgeta also grew up in a farming family in East Welega. He decided to attempt the journey to KSA "because there is a good chance of work there".

"I walked for five days in a desert. Even though I paid them USD 350, the smugglers detained me for three and a half months when I arrived on the coast of Yemen. I was beaten, threatened and tortured every day to force me to pay a ransom. They wanted 1,100 USD. Despite their already harsh living conditions, my family sold their property for the sake of my life. When they paid, the smugglers released me. Then I walked for days to reach Aden."

HORN OF AFRICA TO YEMEN MIGRATION ROUTES



IOM MIGRATION RESPONSE IN YEMEN

Since IOM began operations in Yemen, its migrant assistance programme has aimed to ensure that migrants in Yemen, at all stages of their passage to the Gulf Countries, have access to life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection of their rights, safety and dignity.

PILLARS OF INTERVENTION

1. Life-saving humanitarian services through fixed centres, for example, health clinics, migrant response points and mobile teams provide access to immediate medical care, relief items, food, information on safe migration, case management, psychosocial support, 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 Returns mechanism. Somali refugees are offered return solutions through the Assisted Spontaneous Return (ASR) programme, in coordination with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Assistance includes the provision of 'fit-to-travel' medical screenings and medical escorts before and during travel.
3. Analyses of mixed migration flows, risks and mitigation measures, continue to be strengthened; including protection dynamics related to migrants in Yemen, and push and pull factors.
4. Development and implementation of a regional approach to safe, humane migration to promote dialogue and engagement within the region on a coordinated rights-based response at the governance and policy levels, including migration-aware health care policies. A component of this also involves strengthening the capacities of relevant actors in counter-trafficking and assistance to victims.
5. Enhancing coordination with partners on multi-sectoral migration responses, strengthening advocacy and ensuring clear referral mechanisms at both regional and Yemen country level.

Notes

- Health assistance includes: emergency primary health care, access to mental health and psychosocial assistance, referrals to secondary/tertiary health facilities for specialized support, hygiene awareness and information provision.
- Protection assistance includes: case management, immediate needs assistance, VHR and ASR support.

NOVEMBER 2019

131 Somali refugees helped return through ASR with UNHCR
3,261 Migrants provided with health assistance
2,782 Migrants supported with protection assistance

JANUARY-NOVEMBER 2019

1,536 Somali refugees helped return through ASR with UNHCR
3,751 Ethiopian migrants and 32 stranded migrants of other nationalities assisted through VHR
68,161 Migrants provided with health assistance
47,728 Migrants supported with protection assistance

IOM MIGRANT ASSISTANCE ACTIVITY LOCATIONS

