

QUARTERLY MIGRATION OVERVIEW

JANUARY TO MARCH 2023



Stranded migrants prepare to embark on IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Return flight to Ethiopia from Aden. © IOM 2023/ Majed Mohammed

HORN OF AFRICA-YEMEN MIGRATION TRENDS

The Eastern Route between the Horn of Africa and Yemen continues to be one of the most complex and dangerous maritime routes globally, where migrants from the Horn of Africa cross the Gulf of Aden in hopes to reach Gulf countries. For years migrants, mainly young Ethiopian men and boys, have taken dangerous boat journeys controlled by smugglers from Somalia and Djibouti to reach the shores of Yemen due to economic and conflict-related reasons in their home country. However, once in Yemen, migrants face heightened protection risks and limited to no access to critical services.

During the first quarter of 2023, migrant arrivals continued to show a steady increase as compared to 2022 - indicating arrivals similar to pre-pandemic trends. By the end of March, according to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) teams, 41,453 migrants arrived in Yemen in 2023- representing 56 per cent of all migrant arrivals in 2022 (73,233 arrivals). Migrants continued to utilize the southeastern route towards Hadramout and Shabwah governorates in addition to the northeastern route towards Lahj and Ta'iz governorates. It is estimated that should these trends continue, more than 164,000 migrants will arrive to Yemen by the end of 2023; exacerbating existing gaps in services for some of the most vulnerable in Yemen.

Upon arrival, migrants often become powerless against relentless smuggling networks operating throughout the country who utilize harsh tactics such as abduction, demand for ransom, violence, abuse and exploitation to control every step of the journey. IOM and partners have reported migrants being taken immediately upon arrival to "smuggling dens" throughout the country, notably in Ma'rib, Shabwah, Al Mahrah and Sa'dah governorates. The situation remains dire for women and girls who are routinely abused and exploited, leading to a rising number of cases of gender-based violence (GBV) requiring urgent assistance. IOM's health and protection teams often identify these cases through evidence of pregnancy and other sexual and reproductive health complications (including amongst children). However, a lack of specialized protection services and referral pathways for survivors of GBV, such as safe shelters, continues to strain the capacity for response.

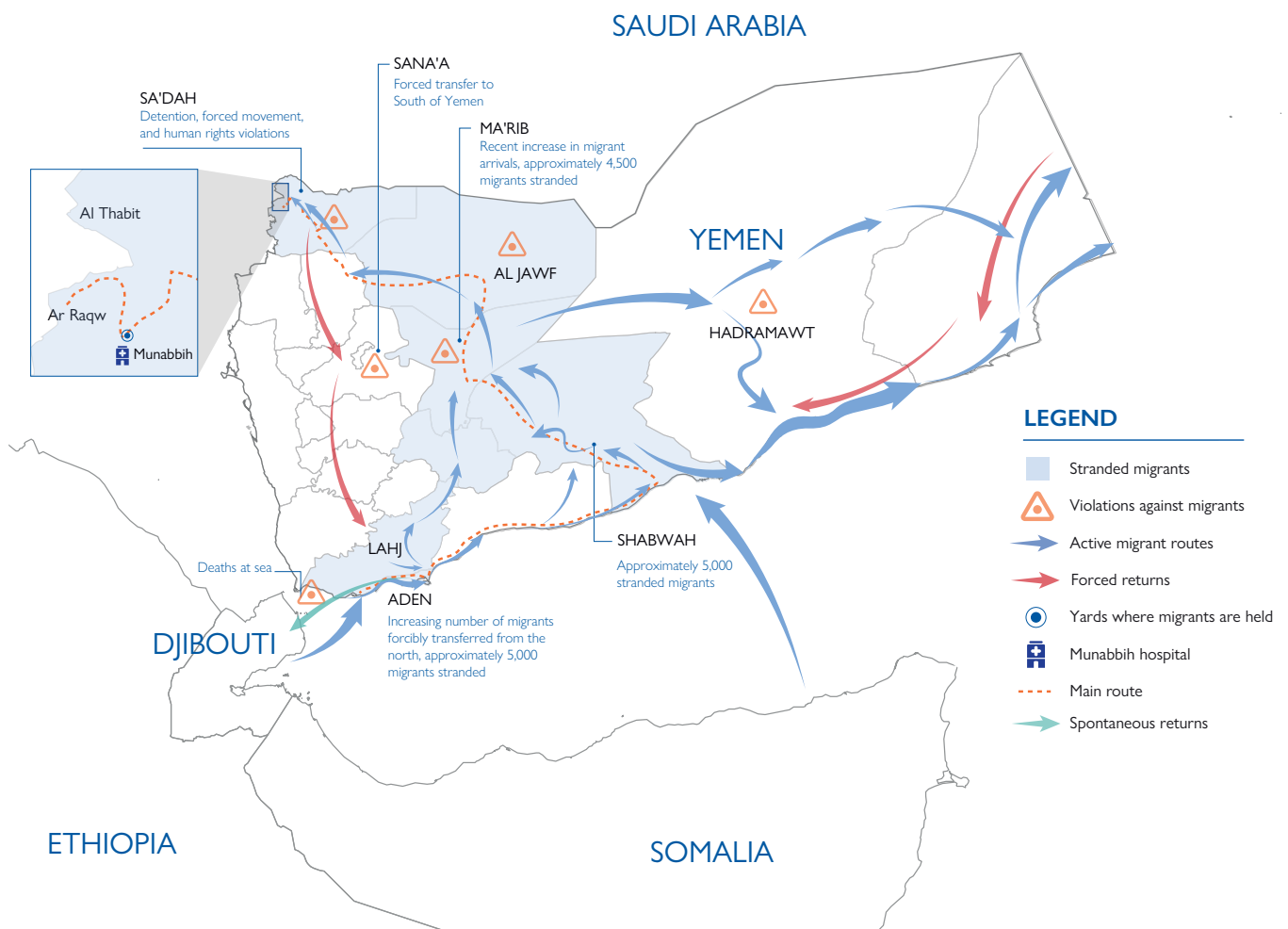
Migrants are at risk of being held by smuggling groups throughout their journey and often experience restricted freedom of movement and inhumane treatment. Areas near the northern border remain of particular concern, where migrants arrive to IOM-supported Munabbih hospital in Sa'dah in dire need of health services. On the other hand, in Ma'rib, IOM protection teams observed an increase in migrants coming from Shabwah in the first quarter, among whom were survivors of extreme torture. Yet, many more are thought to be held in smuggling dens in Shabwah, where a lack of access has resulted in absence of response partners- leaving migrants in the hard-to-reach area trapped in the hands of smugglers.

In addition to the aforementioned routes, IOM teams observed an increasing trend of movements towards areas near the border of Oman such as Shahin in Al Maharah governorate, a route reportedly perceived to be less perilous than the journey through Sa'dah governorate. However, border officials have reported continued deportations on a weekly basis of foreign nationals (mainly Ethiopians) from Oman to Yemen, resulting in a growing population of migrants in Al Maharah where IOM estimates over 5,000 migrants are currently stranded with limited to no access to health and social services.

In light of the continued growing needs, IOM scaled up its migrant assistance through the establishment of a new Migrant Response Point (MRP) in Sana'a. Similar to the MRPs operating in Aden and Ma'rib, this facility in Sana'a provides access to safe, dignified and free protection and health services. IOM also continued to support the delivery of humanitarian access via mobile protection and health teams, providing critical medical care, water and essential non-food items to migrants in areas such as Lahj. Due to security challenges, the mobile teams have not been able to access governorates such as Abyan and Shabwah which continue to host a significant number of stranded and transiting migrants.

The Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) programme remains one of the only durable solutions for stranded migrants in Yemen. IOM continued these critical operations, with 1,881 migrants supported with return between January and March 2023. IOM will continue to work closely with relevant actors to facilitate these safe returns by organizing registration, nationality verification and onwards transportation to areas of origin for migrants who want to go home.

HORN OF AFRICA TO YEMEN MIGRATION ROUTES



MIGRANT PROFILES & TRENDS

IOM's DTM teams recorded a total of 41,453 migrant arrivals mainly through Lahj and Shabwah, via Flow Monitoring Points strategically located along the southern coastal border of Yemen. The majority (76%) of new arrivals departed from Obock (Djibouti), while the remaining 24 per cent indicated departing from Bari (Somalia). Over 99 per cent of all migrants intended to reach neighboring KSA, likely in search of better economic opportunities. Among all migrant arrivals, 73 per cent were men, 18 per cent boys, 5 per cent women and 4 per cent girls.

A significant increase was observed in March, where 20,020 arrivals were recorded as compared to 10,726 in February and 10,707 in January. The increase is likely attributed to stable weather conditions at sea, and smugglers using more boats (up to five according to key informants) per trip. Further, during Ramadan, migrants likely perceived an ease in patrols along the migrant route. DTM teams also recorded a slight increase in the number of people arriving from Somalia (1,108 as compared to 874 during Q4 2022). Similar to the previous quarter, conflict continued to be the main driver for arrivals from Somalia to Shabwah.

According to flow monitoring surveys conducted during the reporting period in Lahj, Shabwah, Ma'rib and Aden, 91 per cent of respondents were in search of economic opportunities. Among those who reported migrating for economic reasons, 44 per cent reported being informed of opportunities by friends, family and community members currently in the intended country of destination. It is important to note, 89 per cent reported looking for jobs prior to migrating but were unable to secure employment.

RETURNS TO HORN OF AFRICA

The brutal reality migrants survive in Yemen has resulted in some returning from Yemen to the Horn of Africa on their own via the same risky journey used to arrive. IOM's DTM teams in Djibouti reported a total of 1,601 migrants returning from Yemen by sea between January and March 2023. Although a slight decrease from the previous quarter (1,725 returns observed), the continued returns from Yemen to the Horn of Africa highlight the grave and desperate situation migrants in Yemen face and the need for a route-based approach to ensure assistance in country of return.

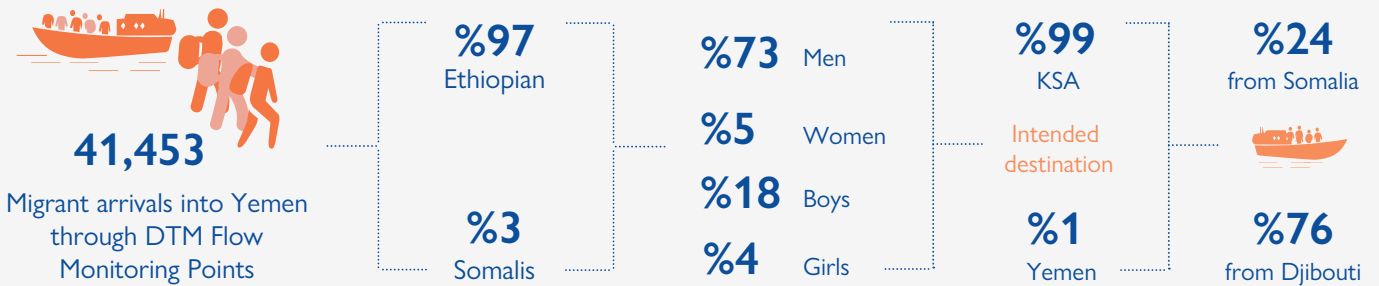
For further information on flow monitoring activities, please see <https://migration.iom.int/reports>



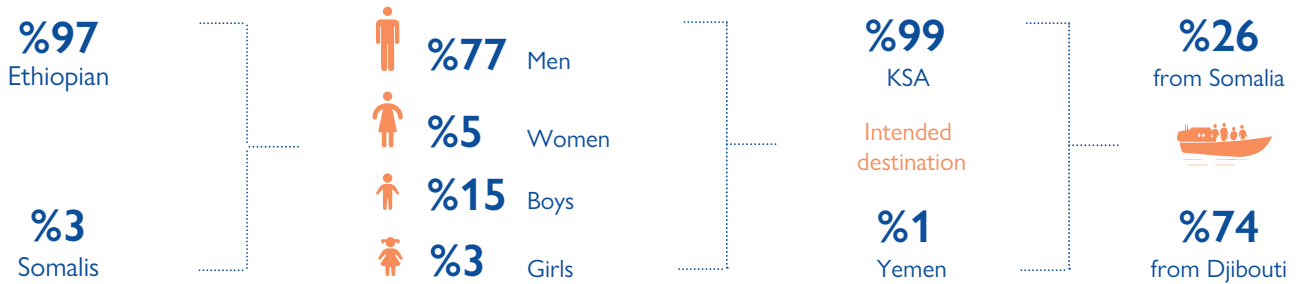
IOM staff help migrants and prepare them to board the bus from Ma'rib to Seiyun airport, from where they will take a Voluntary Humanitarian Return flight to Ethiopia. © IOM 2023/ Haithm Abdulbaqi

BREAKDOWN OF ARRIVALS

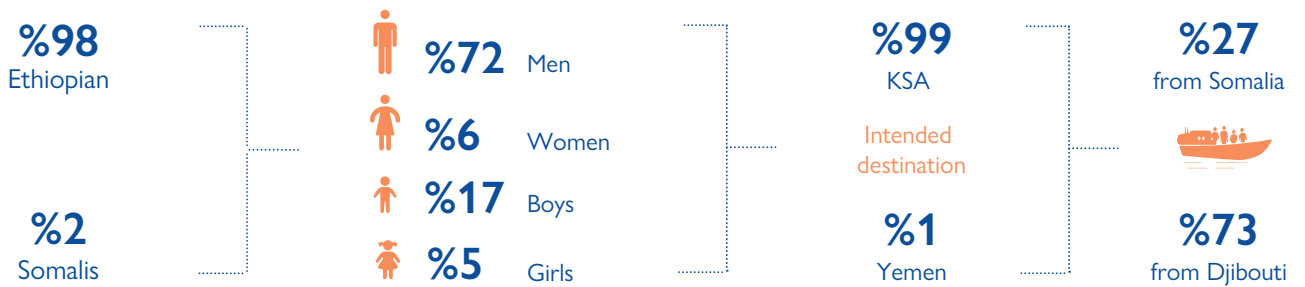
ARRIVALS JANUARY TO MARCH 2023



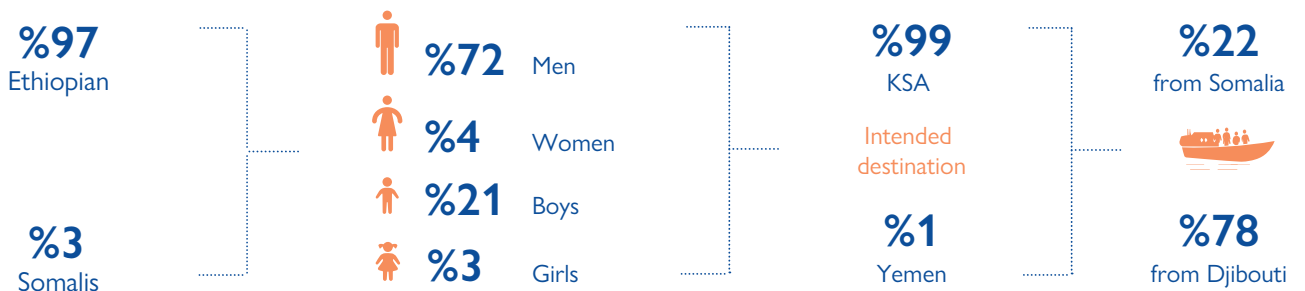
10,707 MIGRANT ARRIVALS IN JANUARY



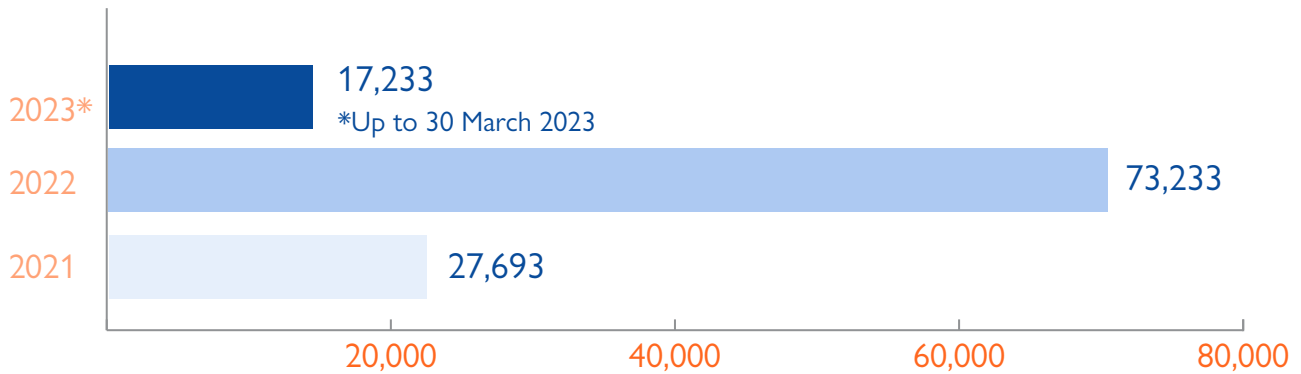
10,726 MIGRANT ARRIVALS IN FEBRUARY



20,020 MIGRANT ARRIVALS IN MARCH



MIGRANT RETURNEES



January to March 2023



17,233
Returnees



16,529
96% Men



192
1% Women



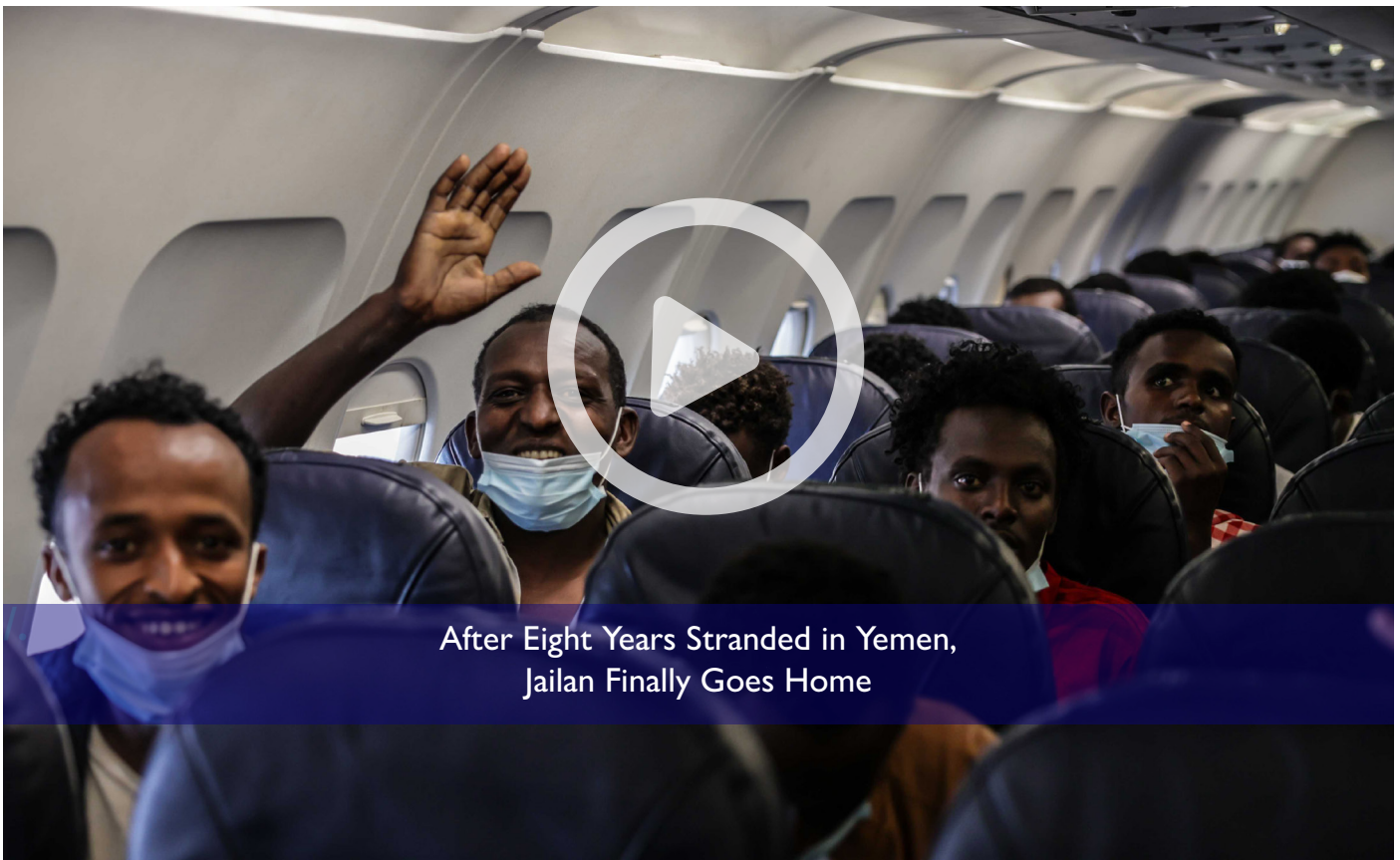
407
4% Boys



105
0.6%

As observed in 2022, the return of Yemeni migrants from KSA continued in the first quarter of 2023. IOM's DTM teams reported 17,233 Yemenis returning to Yemen, a slight increase from the last quarter of 2022, where 15,922 were observed returning via the Al-Wadeeah Flow Monitoring Point.

MIGRANT VOICES



IOM MIGRATION RESPONSE IN YEMEN IN 2023

PILLARS OF INTERVENTION

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

Throughout Yemen, IOM:

1. Delivers life-saving humanitarian protection and assistance through fixed centres (health clinics, migrant response points) and mobile teams that improves access to immediate medical care, relief items (clothes, shoes and hygiene items), food, information on safe migration, case management, psychosocial support, Cash for Work and options for Voluntary Humanitarian Return.
2. Provides opportunities for safe and voluntary return assistance for undocumented Ethiopian migrants and stranded migrants of other nationalities through IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Returns programme. Assistance includes the provision of 'fit-to-travel' medical screenings and medical escorts as needed before and during travel.
3. Analyzes trends including inflows, push and pull factors, migration routes, protection dynamics, risks and mitigation measures. The gathering of this information is done through key informant interviews, focus group discussions and safety audits along migratory routes to inform a routes-based approach to programming.
4. Develops and implements of a regional approach to safe, dignified and orderly migration to promote engagement within the region on a coordinated rights-based response at the governance level, a component of which involves strengthening the capacities of relevant actors in counter-trafficking and assistance to victims.
5. Enhances coordination with partners on multi-sectorial migration responses through the Mixed Migration Working Group (Aden) and the UN Network on Migration (Sana'a), strengthening advocacy and ensuring clear referral mechanisms at both regional and country level.

Migrant Protection and Assistance Activities January to March 2023



Migrant Response Points/ Community Response Centres supported



Migrants supported with safe, voluntary return



Mobile Medical Teams operational along key migratory routes

IOM's migrant response in Yemen remains a key part of [the Regional Migrant Response Plan for the Horn of Africa and Yemen.](#)



Migrants wait to board a Voluntary Humanitarian Return flight at Aden International Airport. © IOM 2023/ Majed Mohammed

MIGRATION 2023 OUTLOOK

In 2023, an estimated 209,905 migrants require at least one form of assistance (according to the 2023 Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview) such as life-saving health services, case management, protection assistance among other forms of assistance. IOM remains dedicated to addressing the critical needs of people on the move through its multisectoral programming, while also advocating for the following:

- Safe and dignified return support is provided to those who wish to leave Yemen.
- Human rights of all migrants in Yemen are upheld at all points of the migrant journey.
- Detention only be used as a measure of last resort when humane conditions can be met. No children should be detained.
- Forced relocations under inhumane conditions must stop and migrants should be accorded due process of law including but not limited to fair trial.
- Humanitarian organizations are granted unconditional access to migrants across Yemen.
- Migrants are included in all humanitarian programming, based on needs not status and the migrant funding should be mainstreamed across the humanitarian response.

For more information on IOM in Yemen's migrant response activities, please see IOM Yemen's [2023 Appeal](#) and [Crisis Response Plan](#).



Stranded Ethiopian migrants prepare to board an IOM-facilitated flight from Aden, Yemen to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. © IOM 2023/ Majed Mohammed

IOM'S MIGRANT ASSISTANCE IN YEMEN IS SUPPORTED BY



Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs



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KING SALMAN
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