

YEMEN

UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE

April 2016

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

Yemen is a historic transit hub for mixed migratory movements of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants from the Horn of Africa to the Arabian Peninsula and beyond. Although Yemen is the poorest of the Gulf countries, it stands out in the region for its generosity towards refugees. It is the only country in the Arabian Peninsula that is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.



More than a year into the conflict, the already precarious humanitarian situation has substantially deteriorated as a result of damage to civilian infrastructure and the disruption of what were already threadbare basic services. Some 21.2 million people (82% of the population) require some form of humanitarian or protection assistance. There have been over 6,000 deaths and close to 30,000 injuries (civilian and military) as a result of the hostilities. Over 2.7 million Yemenis are now internally displaced while over 170,000 people have fled from Yemen to countries in the region. With ongoing conflict, loss of livelihoods and displacement has come a range of concerns for protection and basic needs for the displaced and the hosting communities across the country. More than half the population or 14.1 million people need protection and assistance, including 7.4 million children.

Basic services across the country are on the verge of collapse. Chronic drug shortages, unpaid salaries, and conflict related destruction means that around 14 million Yemenis do not have sufficient access to healthcare services. At least 7.6 million people are severely food insecure. More than 1.8 million children have been out of school since the escalation of conflict in mid-March 2015, bringing the total number of children out of school to more than 3.4 million when combined with pre-crisis figures. Over 1,600 schools remain closed due to insecurity, infrastructural damages or use as shelters by displaced people.

KEY FIGURES

2,755,916

Internally displaced persons

267,874

Registered refugees as of 31 March

11,628

Registered asylum seekers as of 31 March

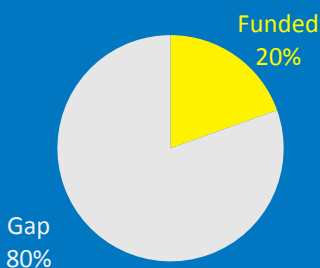
28,717

New arrivals to Yemen since the beginning of 2016

FUNDING

USD 128.6 M

requested for the operation



REFUGEE PROGRAMME

Overview

The current number of refugees of various nationalities stands at some 260,000 individuals; 253,632 Somalis, 5,734 Ethiopian, 3,406 Iraqis, 3,064 Syrian, 1,358 Eritreans and 680 other nationalities. Most of them live in urban centres such as Sana'a and Aden, while some 18,000 refugees live in Kharaz refugee camp in Lahj governorate, 150km west of Aden. The majority of refugees live in precarious conditions often lacking the basic necessities. The main protection concerns of refugees are insecurity, (arbitrary) detention, Gender Based Violence (GBV), limited freedom of movement, issues related to unaccompanied and separated children, as well as the nationalities of certain refugees and imputed political opinions.

The escalation of the conflict since March 2015 has further exacerbated protection challenges, including increasing lawlessness, arbitrary arrest and detention of refugees and asylum seekers, trafficking and smuggling, as well as underage military recruitment and participation in hostilities. Many refugees have been struggling with depleted financial means and reduced coping mechanism at their disposal. A number of urban refugees have been compelled to relocate to rural areas for security reasons. UNHCR and partners are facing challenges to reach out to these groups due to security concerns and lack of presence outside larger urban centres.

Response

UNHCR has maintained a collaborative relationship with authorities to safeguard the protection space and improve access to basic services for people of concern across the country. Regular interaction is maintained with authorities at national and local level, with implementing and operational partners, and with refugee community leaders, while the refugee protection and assistance hotline remains operational.

The government has mainstreamed access for refugees into public health services, the judiciary system, and access to education – including vocational and technical skills training. Health clinics remain functional and provide primary health care, including treatment of conflict related injuries, chronic medical conditions and emergency cases. Prevention and response to GBV and psychosocial counselling are provided through UNHCR's partner-run refugee community centres. Refugee children have access to public education facilities at primary and secondary level. Also, children are provided with specific protection services by UNHCR and its partners. This includes appropriate legal support for children who are victims of violence and also physical protection for children at risk of violations of their basic rights.

The General Bureau of Refugee Affairs (BRA) of the Yemeni government registers Somalis and grants prima facie refugee status. Non-Somalis are registered and benefit from Refugee Status Determination (RSD) through UNHCR offices in Sana'a and Aden. UNHCR provides those seeking asylum with asylum seeker certificates, valid for one year, and conducts individual RSD. Female-headed households, women with specific needs, SGBV cases, unaccompanied minors, as well as refugees with disabilities and medical conditions are fast-tracked with a view to providing them with early assistance commensurate to their needs.

Despite the on-going conflict, UNHCR and its implementing partners continue to provide reception and protection services in Sana'a and the Basateen neighbourhood in Aden – the two urban areas where the largest numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers reside. Also, UNHCR continues to manage Kharaz refugee camp, Refugees in the camp receive WFP food rations, supplementary food items and meals for special cases. Partners provide health care, education, and community services programmes. UNHCR carries out detention monitoring for potential asylum seekers arrested for irregular entry into the country, as well as for refugees. UNHCR is in the process of establishing outreach activities for relocated refugees to ensure equal access to protection and assistance services among the urban and rural refugee communities.

The number of persons of concern in need of financial assistance has drastically increased because of the conflict. In response UNHCR has expanded its financial assistance programme to include additional eligibility criteria for refugees and exceptionally some categories of asylum seekers such as single-parent headed households and pregnant women. In addition, the individual amounts of financial assistance have been increased in light of risen basic living expenses.

Resettlement has been particularly difficult due to insecurity across the country and the impossibility of organizing resettlement selection missions in Yemen. Nevertheless, the operation has continued to identify and resettle a modest number of refugees

with specific needs, such as women at risk, unaccompanied minors and separated children, and refugees with medical conditions.

MIXED MIGRATION PROGRAMME

Overview

In 2015, Yemen received the third highest number of arrivals (92,446) since UNHCR started the systematic recording of arrivals on Yemen's Arabian and Red Sea coasts in 2006, following 2011 (103,154) and 2012 (107,532). The number of Ethiopians that made the crossing (82,268) is the second highest on record after 2012 (84,376). Over two thirds of the new arrivals in 2015 came after the conflict in the country escalated in March. Most of the new arrivals have entered Yemen along the Arabian Sea coast, as some of the most intense conflict has been centred in Taizz governorate. New arrivals make the perilous journey often on rickety, overcrowded smugglers' boats risking their lives at sea. They land dehydrated, in shock and in need of basic assistance, and further face the risk of abduction, exploitation and insecurity within Yemen or of being transported onward through smuggling and human trafficking networks.

Due to the ongoing conflict, new arrivals face movement restrictions in Yemen, and risk being injured or killed in the conflict. Also, various parties including armed forces, security officials and local armed groups have taken to arbitrarily detaining new arrivals on suspicion that they may join the conflict. There have also been reports of armed groups forcibly recruiting some new arrivals. Above all, as new arrivals make their onward movements, they risk being caught in severe ground fighting, airstrikes and heavily mined areas, reportedly resulting in the death or maiming of refugees and migrants. Unaccompanied or separated children arriving to Yemen, with or without the consent of their families, in search of work and/or education, face increased risk of exploitation.

Response

UNHCR and its partners patrol coastal governorates in areas where new arrivals frequently make land. Society for Humanitarian Solidarity (SHS) patrols along the Arabian coast to identify new arrivals and transport them to UNHCR's Mayfa'a Hajar transit centre and then on to Mayfa'a reception centre where they can rest and recover and where new arrivals receive food, water, medical care, and referrals for serious medical cases to the hospital in Al Mukalla. In the Mayfa'a reception centre the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) conducts registration and collects basic protection information, and refers persons with specific protection needs such as unaccompanied and separated children to UNHCR in Aden. The patrolling and reception along the Red Sea coast was temporarily suspended due to the ongoing conflict for a few months, but partner Yemen Red Crescent (YRC) has slowly restarted activities in the Bab-al-Mandab area. The Bab-al-Mandab transit centre was hit by airstrikes in September 2015 and subsequently looted, which hampered the ability of UNHCR and partners to provide reception or life-saving medical assistance to new arrivals at the Red Sea coast.

UNHCR provides Somali refugees and non-Somalis who intend to seek asylum with an attestation letter that allows them to transit: UNHCR directs Somalis, who are considered by the Government of Yemen as prima facie refugees, to the Government registration centres in Al Mukalla, in Basateen in Aden, in Sana'a or Kharaz camp; UNHCR directs non-Somali asylum seekers to its offices in Sana'a or Aden for registration and the refugee status determination (RSD) process. SHS provides persons of concern with specific needs transportation from Mayfa'a reception centre to Aden. UNHCR and partner InterSos also screen for persons of concern in detention facilities.

IDP PROGRAMME

Overview

According to the recent report of Task Force on Population Movement (TFPM), led by UNHCR and IOM, there are 2.76 million internally displaced persons in Yemen. The five governorates most affected by the conflict - Taizz, Hajjah, Amran, Sana'a and Sa'ada - account for 66 % of all IDPs in Yemen. Most IDPs have lost their livelihoods and have sought shelter with relatives and friends, in schools, public and abandoned buildings, makeshift shelters or in the open with little to no protection.

Conversely, IOM has identified that 300,912 individuals have returned to their homes in Aden over the last few months. However, the needs of returnees in Aden remain high, with many of them requiring assistance to rebuild their homes and restart their lives. 12,600 individuals remain displaced due to the cyclones Chapala and Megh that struck the southern coast of Yemen in November 2015. Those displaced due to this natural disaster still have significant needs in order to rebuild their lives, although they may have greater prospects for return over those that are displaced owing to the conflict.

Response

UNHCR in coordination with other UN agencies is working to re-establish and expand its presence in Yemen at five strategic operational hubs to cover Sana'a, Sa'ada, Al Hudaydah, Taizz/Ibb, and Aden in order to facilitate the provision of life-saving protection, material assistance and services to people of concern. As lead of the Protection cluster, UNHCR and its partners are expanding outreach to communities of large concentrations of IDPs and their host communities, by providing psychosocial, legal and cash assistance. Target populations will be identified through protection monitoring and information collected through community-based protection networks, which will also work on awareness raising and sensitisation. Identified cases will be immediately referred to adequate service providers through established referral pathways to ensure timely assistance.

UNHCR has also played an instrumental role in developing a comprehensive IDP strategy for the Humanitarian Country Team to ensure a coordinated, joined-up and multi-sector response for IDPs in Yemen, taking into consideration the specific needs and vulnerabilities of children and adults at all phases of internal displacement. The strategy, which is to be rolled out in specific locations of large-scale displacement and which is to be tailored to specific needs and locally available response capacity, needs to be entrenched in humanitarian principles and to maintain protection and human rights principles at its core.

As lead of the Camp Coordination Camp Management (CCCM), Non-Food Item (NFI), and Shelter Cluster, UNHCR has distributed NFIs to over 420,000 IDPs since the escalation of the conflict in 20 of the 21 governorates. UNHCR has also distributed emergency shelter kits to more than 14,000 IDPs whose houses have been heavily damaged and destroyed. Despite extremely challenging circumstances, UNHCR and partners are doing their utmost to deliver essential life-saving supplies and services in an impartial and neutral manner. UNHCR is also continuing its efforts to rehabilitate collective centres throughout the country to provide suitable shelter along with installation of water and sanitation facilities.

UNHCR has launched the Tawasul ('dialogue' in Arabic) call centre in Sana'a, which promotes community engagement and accountability through a two-way channel of communication with persons of concern to receive information concerning their needs, to inform them about how, when and where to access services, and to provide them with other pertinent information. Operators also collect reactions and complaints for follow-up and to assess access and quality of assistance.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

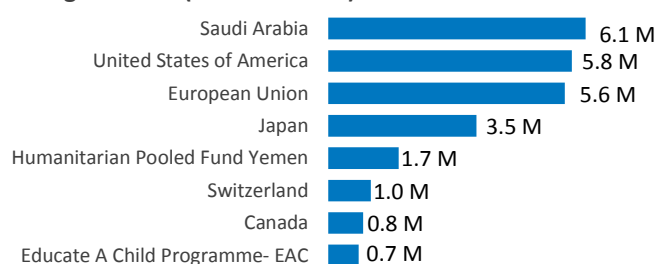
Total recorded contributions as at 12 April 2016 for the operation amount to some **US\$ 25.1 million**.

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds.

Major donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2016:

Sweden (78 M) | United States of America (78 M) | Netherlands (46 M) | Norway (40 M) | Australia (31 M) | Denmark (24 M) | Canada (16 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | Germany (13 M) | Priv Donors Spain (12 M)

Funding received (in million USD)



Contact: Soo Jin Hyung, External Relations Officer, hyung@unhcr.org

For more information on the work of UNHCR and our partners in Yemen, please follow us on Twitter at @UNHCRYemen and on Facebook at UNHCRYemen