



Protection Cluster Yemen

# YEMEN PROTECTION BRIEF

October 2020



# Operational Context

For more than five years, Yemen has been locked in an unrelenting, high-intensity conflict that has triggered what the UN describes as the worst humanitarian crisis in the world; with 24.3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection<sup>1</sup>. Since its escalation in 2015, an estimated 12,000 civilians have been killed<sup>2</sup> and more than 3.6 million are estimated to be forcibly displaced.<sup>3</sup> Active ground hostilities, coupled by shelling and air strikes, often in populated areas, continue to harm civilians and cause widespread damage to civilian homes and infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, IDP sites and water and sanitation facilities. Explosive remnants of war persist to impede freedom of movement as well as to kill and injure civilians.

Yemen is also a country prone to disasters, particularly hydrological hazards such as flash flooding, which are causing death, displacement and destruction of property. It is estimated that, since January 2020, more than half a million people have been affected by floods and heavy rains, including 300,000 in June, July and August, mostly in Marib, Taiz, Al Hudaydah, Hajjah, Aden, Lahj and Aden governorates<sup>4</sup>. Affected families have lost their homes, crops and personal belongings.<sup>5</sup> Outbreaks of diseases including dengue fever and cholera have also contributed to the ongoing humanitarian crisis, with a severe impact on vulnerable groups. The rapid spread of COVID-19 in Yemen, with one of the highest fatality rates in the region,<sup>6</sup> cannot be effectively contained due to an overstressed health system, already crippled by conflict, coupled with a lack of public health measures and awareness.

State institutions have largely collapsed due to the conflict and its resulting impacts including the inability of authorities to remunerate civil servants. This has weakened the overall capacity of the authorities in control to effectively exercise their primary responsibility to assist and protect the Yemeni population, prevent and effectively respond to prevalent violations of human rights and promote durable solutions.

Lack of humanitarian access due to ongoing fighting, logistical issues and bureaucratic procedures, remains a critical challenge hindering the delivery of life-saving protection services and other assistance. An estimated 5.1 million people are spread across 75 districts classified as hard-to-reach.<sup>7</sup> In 2019, 2,750 access-related incidents of various nature were reported as obstructing or delaying humanitarian assistance for an estimated 8.3 million people, including over 2.1 million children.<sup>8</sup>



Map 1: YEMEN - Administrative Divisions  
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations



<sup>1</sup> Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan Extension, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-humanitarian-response-plan-extension-june-december-2020-enar>

<sup>2</sup> Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). (31 October 2019). PRESS RELEASE: Over 100,000 Reported Killed in Yemen War. Retrieved May 24, 2020, from <https://www.acleddata.com/2019/10/31/press-release-over-100000-reported-killed-in-yemen-war>

<sup>3</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), Yemen available at <https://dtm.iom.int/yemen>

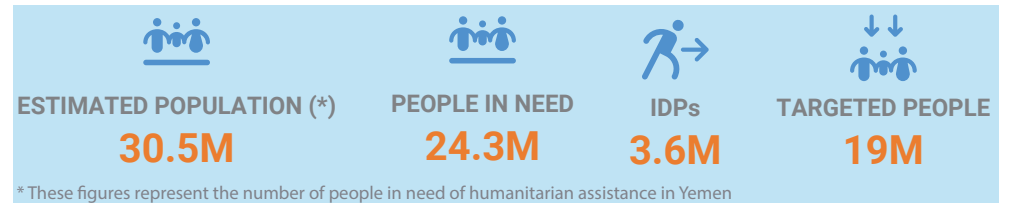
<sup>4</sup> Shelter Cluster Second Flash Update

<sup>5</sup> 300,000 people lose homes, incomes, food supplies and belongings due to catastrophic flooding in Yemen. Retrieved August 25, 2020, from <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2020/8/5f3e7faf4/300000-people-lose-homes-incomes-food-supplies-belongings-due-catastrophic.html>

<sup>6</sup> UN OCHA. (2020). Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan, Extension, page 3

<sup>7</sup> OCHA. Yemen- hard to reach districts (as of 29 April 2019). Retrieved August 25, 2020, from <https://reliefweb.int/map/yemen/yemen-hard-reach-districts-29-april-2019>

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Security Council. (2020). Report of the Secretary General, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, page 5



# Protection Environment



Yemen's five-year conflict has provoked a dire humanitarian and protection crisis, with civilians facing serious protection risks to their safety, wellbeing, and realization of their basic rights. Civilians suffer from the effects of indiscriminate attacks by parties to the conflict, and critical civilian infrastructure continues to be damaged. The conflict continues to force people to flee, often seeking safety and shelter in makeshift sites, largely in proximity to areas of active hostilities where living conditions are precarious and access to services severely limited. The conflict has heightened risks faced by women and girls, including gender-based violence. The Covid-19 pandemic has added suffering and deprivation, compounding existing protection risks and creating new ones. The following four issues, which are the focus of this protection brief, require urgent and joint action.

## Civilians Caught In The Crossfire

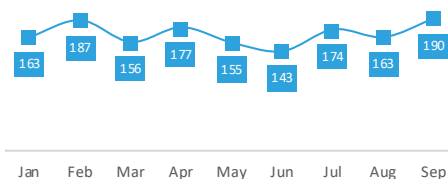
The ongoing conflict continues to have a serious impact on the lives of civilians in Yemen. Civilians continue to be affected by indiscriminate attacks resulting in loss of life, injury, destruction of property and mass displacement. The killing of civilians is attributed to the violations of the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, as well as the widespread use of explosive weapons in populated areas, in breach of international humanitarian law. From January to September 2020 alone, 1,508 civilian casualties were reported, mostly caused by shelling, small arms fire and airstrikes, of whom 42 per cent were women and children.<sup>9</sup> Unmarked landmines and other explosive hazards also contribute to kill, maim and injure civilians across the country, to impede freedom of movement and farming activities. In the first nine months of 2020, landmines, unexploded ordnance, sea mines and improvised explosive devices collectively caused 246 civilian casualties including 105 deaths (CIMP).

The conflict has also caused significant damage to private property and civilian infrastructure. Only half of health facilities are operational, partly as a result of damage triggered by the conflict,<sup>10</sup> including some being directly hit by airstrikes or shelling. Over 2,500 schools are not functioning, with two thirds damaged by conflict-related attacks, depriving millions of children access to education.<sup>11</sup> Despite the UN Secretary General's call for a ceasefire and ramping up of efforts to counter the outbreak of COVID-19, residential areas have also been under increased attacks. Since January 2020 alone, more than 3,500 civilian houses and over 900 farms have been damaged due to the hostilities (CIMP), leading not only to civilian casualties but also to displacement and loss of civilians' assets and livelihood.

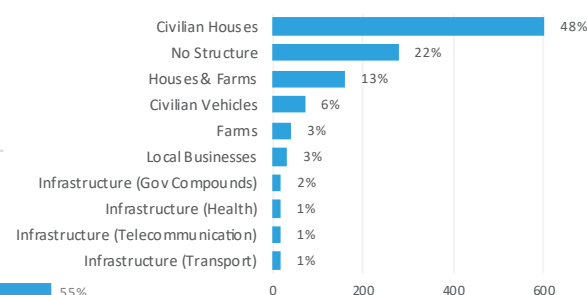
The Protection Cluster, through its [Civilian Impact Monitoring Project \(CIMP\)](#), systematically tracks and documents the impact of armed violence on civilians, allowing an initial reliable estimation of civilian casualties and of the severity of the impact on civilian infrastructure. It provides an evidence-base for advocacy with parties to the conflict and further assessment.

The Cluster's victim assistance project provides direct support to civilians injured as a result of the conflict, helping 619 individuals between January to August 2020, with critical support such as covering medical expenses and referring them for specialized protection services. In 2019, the Cluster's Mine Action AoR cleared landmines and other explosive ordnances from 3 million square meters of land, and more than 1.5 million square meters in the first half of 2020, thereby helping to reduce civilian casualties and facilitate freedom movement of people and goods. In the first six months of 2020, over 240,258 people were also provided with mine risk education, to increase awareness of the dangers of explosive ordnances and promote safe behavior.

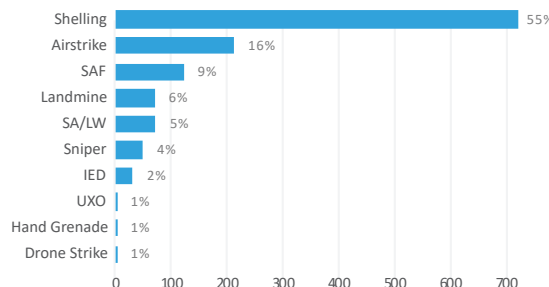
Number Of Civilian Casualties By Month (\*)



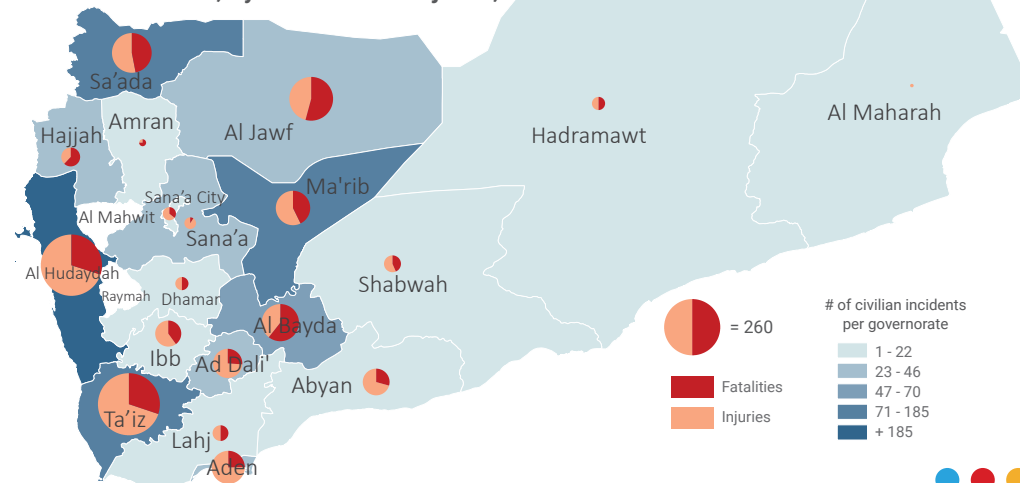
Top 10 Civilian Structures Damaged



Top 10 Types Of Armed Violence



Number Of Casualties, By Fatalities and Injuries, Per Governorate



<sup>9</sup> Civilian casualties and damage to houses and farms are reported by the Civilian Impact Monitoring Project, the Yemen Protection Cluster's project

<sup>10</sup> Supra note 8, page 6

<sup>11</sup> UNICEF Yemen. (2018). In Yemen, children's education devastated after three years of escalating conflict. Retrieved May 10, 2020, from <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/yemen-children-education-devastated-three-years-conflict>

\* Civilian Impact Monitoring Project (CIMP), <https://civilianimpactmonitoring.org/>



## Internal Displacement

Internal displacement has been one of the defining features of the Yemen conflict, ranking as the fourth largest IDP crisis due to conflict in the world.<sup>12</sup> As of November 2018, an estimated 3.6 million people had been forcibly displaced, with some 400,000 in 2019 and over 143,000 in the first nine months of 2020.<sup>13</sup> Although conflict remains the primary cause of displacement, disasters, especially floods, continue to displace hundreds of thousands of civilians. It is estimated that the summer rainy season of 2020 may have displaced more than 74,000 households<sup>14</sup>.

So far in 2020, most of the new displacement has been reported in Marib Governorate followed by Al Hudaydah and Al Dhale'e governorates, primarily as a consequence of increased fighting in and around these areas. Among the 56,424 displaced persons in Marib during the first six months of 2020, 55,380 were displaced as a result of intensified conflict which continues to be a constant trigger. In this connection, in mid-August 2020, an estimated 1,500 families fled, largely from Al Jawf Governorate and Madghal and Majzar districts in Marib Governorate due to increased hostilities.<sup>15</sup> Most of them were forced to undertake long and arduous journeys, carrying livestock and personal belongings, while some were stranded on the road towards Marib City and in the desert around Al Rayan sub-district owing to lack of transportation. New waves of displacement have been witnessed during the first weeks of September, particularly from conflict areas in the South West of Marib Governorate.<sup>16</sup> It is estimated that more than 10,600 household have been displaced within Marib during the first nine months of 2020.<sup>17</sup> As a result of past and recent displacement, the population of Marib Governorate has increased from 300,000 individuals to more than one million since the conflict began, including some 800,000 IDPs.

Most of the IDPs live in areas under the control of the de facto authorities in the North (some 63 percent), the remaining live in areas under the control of the Internationally Recognized Government (IRG). An estimated 43 percent of Yemen's IDPs reside in rented accommodation, 22 percent are hosted by communities,<sup>18</sup> while more than 912,746 IDPs are dispersed across 1,551 makeshift sites, some of which are in proximity to areas of active hostilities. Governorates such as Al Hudaydah (some 77,000 IDPs), Aden (some 30,800 IDPs) and Marib (18,500 IDPs) are hosting the highest concentration of IDPs in sites and camp like settings.<sup>19</sup>

Makeshift sites are believed to be hosting among the country's poorest and marginalized IDPs, including socially discriminated groups such as the Muhamasheen. In the sites, populations with specific needs, particularly women, children and persons with disabilities, may face a heightened risk of exploitation, harassment and gender-based violence. In addition, most of the IDP sites are settled on private land, with no formal land agreement established between authorities and landowners. In these conditions, security of tenure is precarious, and threats of evictions are a constant challenge. Out of 658 sites monitored by the CCCM cluster, 19,734 IDP families in 181 sites identified eviction as a threat. As of September 2020, humanitarian partners of the CCCM cluster were actively engaged in tracking some 59 evictions affecting more than 3,800 families (27,000 individuals).<sup>20</sup> The proximity of IDP sites to areas of active hostilities also threatens the safety of IDPs. As of August, out of 906,492 IDPs in hosting sites, 48 per cent live only 5km away from areas of active hostilities. In the first nine months of 2020, seven IDP sites have been attacked in Sana'a, Sa'ada, and Al Jawf governorates resulting in casualties (CIMP), and exposing the most vulnerable IDPs to further displacement.

For IDPs outside of hosting sites, affording increasing rental prices is extremely challenging, especially in the current climate of economic downturn and loss of income opportunities. IDP households increasingly experience threats (physical, verbal, intimidation, harassment) and actual evictions. In some governorates, the rental cost has increased by 200 percent, mostly triggered by shortage of houses as a result of conflict-related damage or protracted displacement. Living conditions for IDPs tend to be substandard due to limited access to services, congested living arrangements, unaffordability and inadequacy of available accommodation. Lack of identification documents also creates major obstacles for IDPs, severely limiting their ability to move freely, rent houses, access public services and life-saving humanitarian assistance etc. Meanwhile, in the context of the ongoing conflict, for most IDPs, the possibility of safe return to places of origin remains elusive due to ongoing insecurity and violence, widespread destruction of property, explosive hazard contamination and lack of basic services

Several Protection Cluster partners countrywide run community centers and community outreach teams to support both IDPs and host communities with critical protection services. As of September, 19 Community Centers are active across the country. Community Centers represent a "one stop shop" for the provision of protection services such as psychological first aid and psychosocial support; specialized services for children; case management for SGBV survivors; legal services to raise awareness and support access to personal documentation; legal counseling on various civil and family issues and outreach and community-mobilization activities. In addition, emergency cash is disbursed for specific categories of IDPs and host communities at heightened risks such as those with critical health conditions, women with specific risks (pregnant, lactating, single new mothers) and homeless families or those at imminent risk of eviction. During the first nine months of 2020, approximately 2.3 million people have been assisted with critical protection services.

<sup>12</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, end 2019 figures, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data>

<sup>13</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), Yemen available at <https://dtm.iom.int/yemen>

<sup>14</sup> UNHCR-led Yemen Shelter Cluster, September 2020

<sup>15</sup> IOM Yemen (16-29 August), Marib Response

<sup>16</sup> OCHA: YEMEN, Snapshot: Marib Governorate Response to Newly Displaced Families

<sup>17</sup> IOM Rapid Displacement Tracking, Yemen, 13-19 September 2020

<sup>18</sup> 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview, page 15

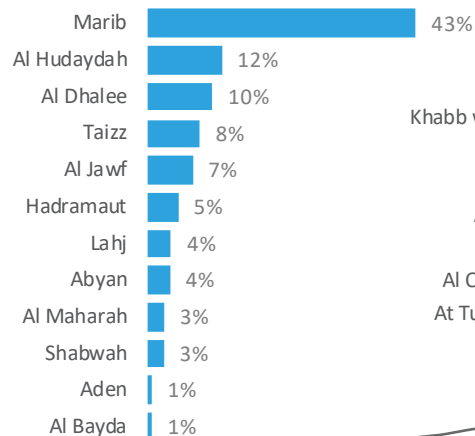
<sup>19</sup> CCCM Cluster Yemen (September 2020), IDP Housing Sites Overview

<sup>20</sup> CCCM Cluster Yemen, Note on Eviction, September 2020

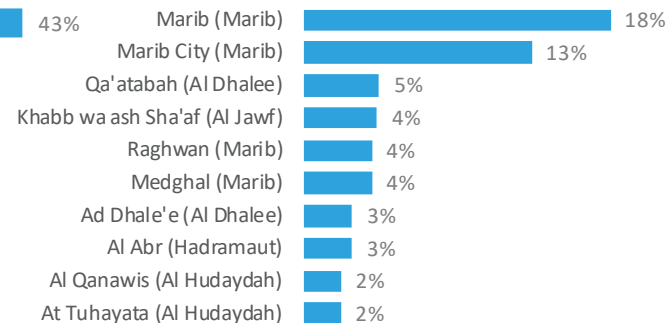


Nevertheless, compared to the estimated 14.4 million people in need of protection assistance, protection services remain insufficient, particularly in areas with huge influxes of IDPs. The critical underfunding of protection activities has compelled partners to temporarily or permanently close some of the community centers. Compared to 37 community centers in 2019, only 19 are currently operational, significantly reducing affected people's access to critical protection services.

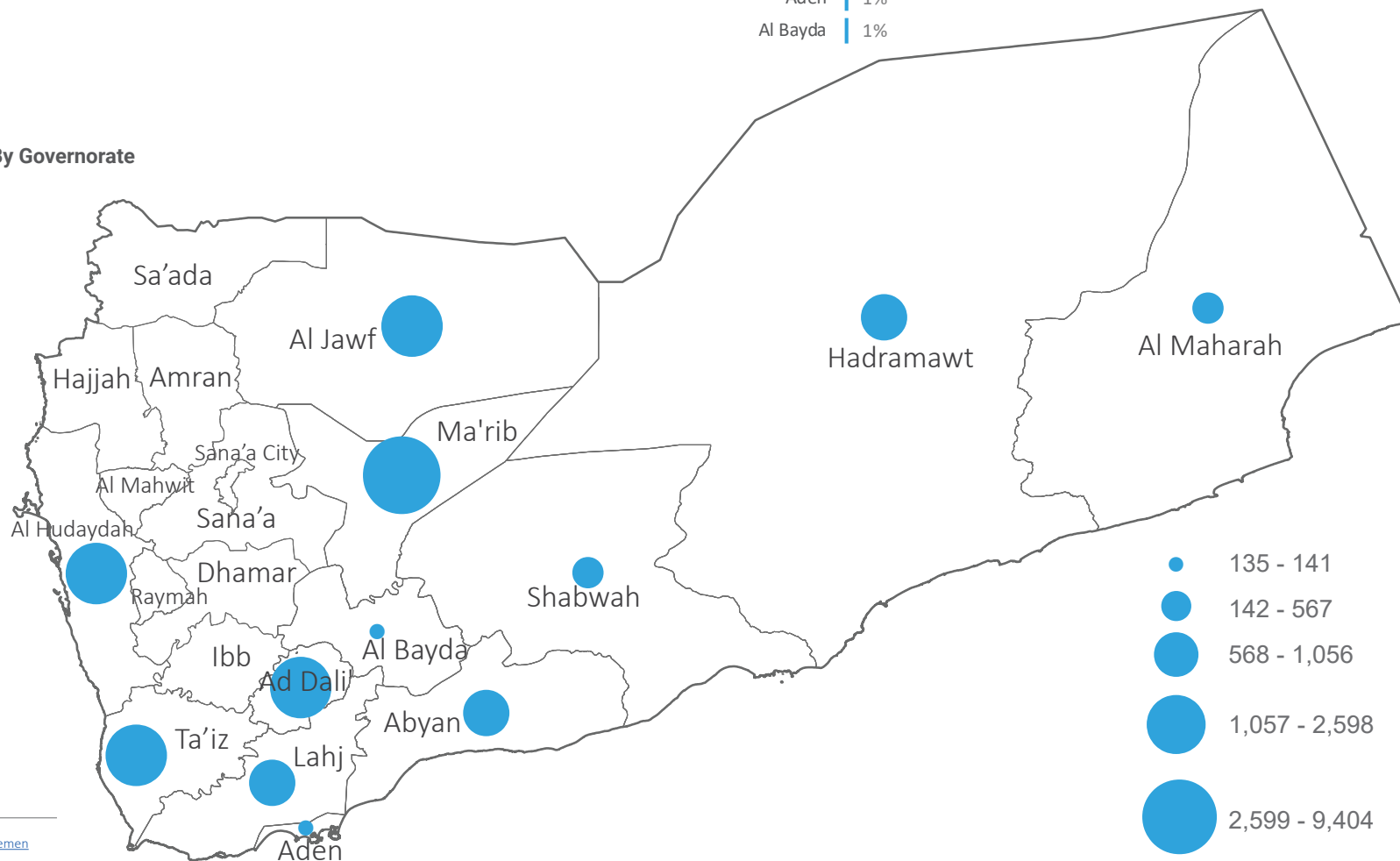
**% of IDPs By Governorate**



**Top 10 Districts With IDPs**



**Number Of IDPs By Governorate**



\* DTM Yemen, <https://dtm.iom.int/yemen>

## Specific Risks Facing Women And Girls

While the conflict has a serious impact on all civilians, women and girls are often disproportionately affected. Prior to, and during the conflict, Yemeni women and girls have experienced deeply entrenched gender inequality, rooted in a society with rigid gender roles and conservative customary norms. Compared to 73 percent of men being educated, 35 per cent of Yemeni women are literate<sup>21</sup> and only 6.3 percent participate in the labour force market.<sup>22</sup> Since 2006, Yemen has consistently ranked last in the annual [Global Gender Gap Index](#).

Against this backdrop, the conflict has had a varying impact on women, girls, men and boys. Women and children constitute 75 percent of the total number of displaced population in Yemen.<sup>23</sup> The absence of men as primary breadwinners, including due to deployment to front lines and loss of jobs due to economic downturn has resulted in an increased prevalence of female heads of households.<sup>24</sup> A UNHCR assessment covering the period from January to July 2020 found that, out of 55,098 households consulted in northern and southern Yemen, 16 percent were headed by women.<sup>25</sup> This sudden change of role has put women under economic pressure, as they struggle to provide for their families, sometimes without, or limited, prior experience in income generating activities.

The displacement, with the consequent disaggregation of communal structures, the breakdown of community networks, the loss of safety nets and the depletion of assets and resources has exacerbated pre-existing gender discrimination resulting in increased risk of sexual violence and recourse to negative coping mechanisms.<sup>26</sup> Child marriage remains a concern. It is estimated that more than two thirds of Yemeni girls are married off while under 18 years of age, compared to 50 percent before the conflict.<sup>27</sup> Under Yemen's Personal Status Law 1999, there is no minimum legal age of marriage and efforts to set a minimum age of marriage to 15 or 18 have been unsuccessful.<sup>28</sup> Child marriage is increasingly seen as a source of income and/or a cost reduction for the family, as a transfer of the cost of feeding the child onto the new husband. It is also seen as a security mechanism, particularly in IDP sites, where parents view child marriage as a way to protect girls from sexual harassment and abuse, including by marrying them to prominent community figures. Gender-based violence has risen significantly, increasing by 63 percent during the conflict.<sup>29</sup> This is partly triggered by tension within families, due to frustrations from lack of income and loss of livelihoods.

The Protection Cluster's Women Protection AoR, continues to provide vital protection services to women and girls, through the provision of psychosocial social support and legal aid; access to safe houses; community awareness on various forms of violence against women and girls and relevant services and livelihood opportunities for GBV survivors. Those services are provided through some 55 women and girls safe spaces, 8 women and girls safe shelters countrywide and Community Centers. In the eight months of 2020, the Women Protection AoR delivered 5,363 dignity kits; supported over 220,929 individuals with life-saving multi-sectoral services; 4,767 with cash assistance and almost 574,622 individuals with awareness and sensitization. Regrettably, critical funding gaps prevent protection actors from adequately addressing women's protection needs, including support with livelihood initiatives, which plays a significant role in increasing women's participation in the economy.



<sup>21</sup> World Economic Forum. (2020). Global Gender Gap Report, page 24

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> D. Moyer, J., Bohl, D., Hanna, T., R. Mapes, B., & Rafa, M. (2019). ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF WAR on Development in Yemen. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), page 26

<sup>24</sup> Dr. Fawziah Al-Ammar, H. P. (2019). A GENDERED CRISIS : UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF YEMEN'S WAR. Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, page 23

<sup>25</sup> UNHCR Yemen: IDP Protection Monitoring Update, 30 June 2020

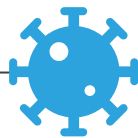
<sup>26</sup> Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/countries/yemen/>

<sup>27</sup> Sarah, F. (2017). After Years of Civil War, Child Marriage Is on the Rise in Yemen. UNICEF USA. Retrieved May 10, 2020, from <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/after-years-civil-war-child-marriage-rise-yemen/33762>

<sup>28</sup> Child Marriage in Yemen, Girls Not Brides. Retrieved July 22, 2020 from <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/where-does-it-happen/atlas/yemen/>

<sup>29</sup> Yemen, E. O. (2016). <https://www.unocha.org/es/story/yemen-child-under-age-five-dies-every-10-minutes-preventable-causes-un-humanitarian-chief>. Retrieved May 12, 2020, from <https://www.unocha.org/es/story/yemen-child-under-age-five-dies-every-10-minutes-preventable-causes-un-humanitarian-chief>

# The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic



In Yemen, the Covid-19 pandemic has worsened the already dire protection situation, impact on services and deteriorating economic situation. Moreover, it's estimated that thousands of families have lost their only source of income, owing to Covid-19 related restrictions, reducing their ability to meet their basic needs. This situation disproportionately affects people who are reliant on jobs in the informal sector, such as marginalized groups as well as IDPs. It also affects women and girls working as housemaids to support their families and who are losing their jobs as a result of the outbreak. The loss of self-reliance further increases the risks of adopting negative coping strategies.

Furthermore, Covid-19 presents a grave threat to millions of people that lack access to basic health care and WASH facilities. According to the WASH Cluster, an estimated 11.2 million Yemenis are in acute need of water, sanitation and hygiene assistance. Amidst the breakdown of public services, only 30-40 per cent of Yemenis have access to safe water. Access to water has been further diminished by the impact of over five years of conflict. The lack of water contributes to a high prevalence of preventable disease, and now the rapid spread of COVID-19.<sup>30</sup> Due to direct or indirect consequences of the conflict, it is estimated that only half of health facilities are functional. The capacity of the remaining health facilities is often overstretched to treat all patients, while some private hospitals have already closed, partly due to lack of adequate COVID 19 protective equipment. In addition, many displaced families indicated not having the financial and other means, such as transport, to seek medical care for family members showing symptoms and a fear of stigmatization in their communities if they were perceived to be carrying the virus.

Limited access to health care, challenges in adopting social distancing in sub-standard living conditions (shelter, water etc.) and lack of income have also resulted in increased psychological stress. Protection actors have reported several incidents, where people have attempted to commit suicide. Domestic abuse incidents against women are increasingly reported, largely due to stressful situations arising from loss of livelihood opportunities and confinement in small spaces. 90 per cent of the cases reported are among newly married couples, with one incident resulting in death. Compared to the pre-lock down period, reports suggest a significant rise in the number of GBV cases, as well as children facing heightened risks of abuse and neglect due to the closure of schools, the deteriorated family environment, and the loss of caregivers as a result of isolation/death.

To continue providing protection services to IDPs and host communities, the Protection Cluster had to adapt its modality of delivery, by adhering to Covid-19 preventive measures. Some of the activities delivered in community centers, including PSS support, legal counselling and some aspects of case management shifted to remote modalities, using phones, or other virtual platforms. Activities requiring large gatherings, such as awareness sessions, community meetings and recreational activities have been suspended. As of end of September, partners are gradually resuming, including a more direct follow up of protection cases, and protection monitoring/ vulnerability assessment of IDPs in hosting sites and those with host communities, with due attention to COVID 19 protocols.

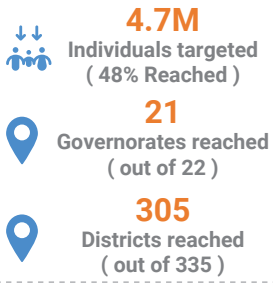


<sup>30</sup> Advocacy Brief: A Water Crisis in the Times of COVID 19, Wash Cluster Yemen, June 2020

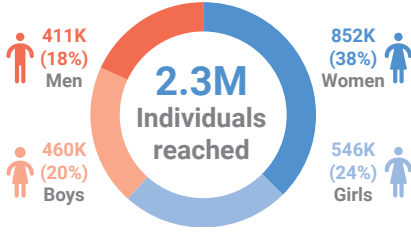




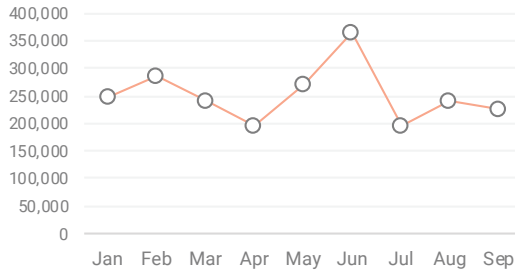
## RESPONSE



## AGE AND GENDER



## ASSISTANCE MONTHLY TREND



## PARTNERSHIPS



## INDIVIDUALS REACHED PER ACTIVITY

### General Protection



### Women Protection



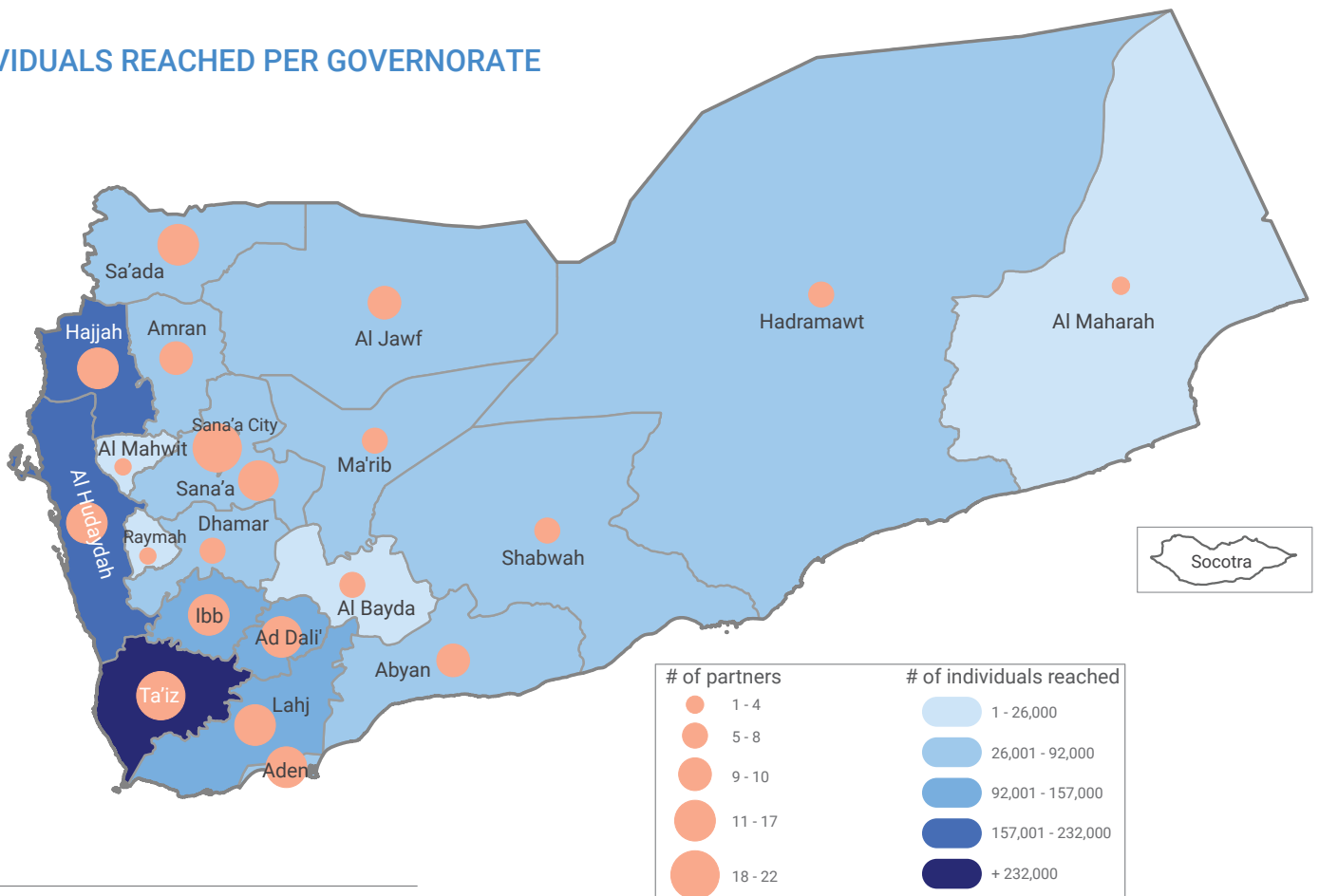
### Child Protection



### Mine Action(\*)



## INDIVIDUALS REACHED PER GOVERNORATE



\* The data for MA AoR is as of June 2020



# Key messages from the Protection Cluster

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## On the Protection of Civilians and internal displacement

- All parties to the conflict are urged to fully fulfill their obligations to respect International Humanitarian Law, in particular the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution and all provisions concerning the protection of civilians and the prevention of forced displacement.
- All parties to the conflict should cease indiscriminate attacks against residential areas, resulting in casualties and forcible displacement; against civilian infrastructure, including health and education structures, which are essential to the daily life of the civilian population.
- All parties to the conflict are urged to respond favorably to the UN Secretary General's call of 25 March 2020 for a nation-wide ceasefire.
- Authorities must uphold the rights of IDPs to freely move within the country. While authorities may take proportionate measures such as quarantine necessary to halt the spread of Covid-19, these measures must not arbitrarily infringe the rights of IDPs to freedom of movement.

## On the protection of women and girls

- Parties should commit to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence, and to facilitate safe access for humanitarian service providers to deliver assistance to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.
- The authorities as well as all international and local humanitarian and development actors are called upon to ensure the collection of sex and age disaggregated data and are encouraged to commit to strengthening women's overall social and economic empowerment through their respective interventions and programming, and to take special measures to ensure that women and girls are able to access humanitarian assistance.

## On humanitarian access

- In line with their obligations under IHL and other international standards, all parties to the conflict are called upon to facilitate safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian activities, including those of protection actors.
- All humanitarian actors as well as donors and members states are encouraged to continue advocating for unimpeded humanitarian access to populations for all sectors – including protection – to assess needs, respond and monitor the situation of all affected population, including the displaced and persons with specific needs.

## On support from donors and humanitarian actors

- Donors are encouraged to increase funding for protection activities, including data collection for protection analysis for the Protection Cluster and its AoRs (Child Protection, Women Protection and Mine Action) and to other sectors to ensure protection-informed responses that will mitigate and respond to identified protection risks.
- In line with global commitments regarding “centrality of protection”, all sectors and lead agencies in the humanitarian response should ensure that protection is effectively mainstreamed and integrated in their programmes, ensuring that activities are designed according to “do no harm” principles, prioritize safety, promote and facilitate safe access for all in need, develop or strengthen complaint mechanisms and accountability measures (including through the development of protocols, process, and concrete action plans for PSEA), and are developed and delivered through meaningful participation of the affected population.
- Humanitarian actors are urged to continue and to increase collection of information that will help assess the protection situation and inform protection analysis, ensuring the collection, analysis and use of sex and age disaggregated data, and that reporting captures gender, age and diversity dimensions.



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General Protection



Child Protection



Women Protection



Mine Action

## Protection Cluster - Yemen

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