

YEMEN Food Security Alert

July 21, 2011

Civil unrest has led to displaced households and fuel shortages, threatening household food security

Since January 2011, the so-called “Arab Spring” demonstrations in Yemen have led to increased civil unrest and clashes between the government and opposition groups. Consequently, there have been severe disruptions in households’ ability to access vital commodities, such as fuel, food, and water, which have led to livelihood protection and survival deficits and have limited labor opportunities. In addition, recent violence in urban areas has displaced more than 60,000 persons in Aden, Lahj and Abyan. As a result, there is a risk of a food security Crisis (IPC Phase 3) in governorates with IDPs or prolonged shortages in fuel and food (Figure 1). Food, water, and health and hygiene support are urgently needed, particularly in Abyan, Aden, Lahj, Hajja, Sa’ada, Amran, Hodaidah, Al-Jawf, Rayma, and Ibb.

Pipelines carrying crude oil from Maarib to export terminals and oil refineries in southern Yemen were attacked by opposition groups in March, creating high fuel prices or fuel shortages throughout western Yemen. Without a reliable supply of fuel, essential services that ensure adequate food and water have been disrupted. Fuel shortages coupled with unpredictable disruptions in market networks throughout the country have led to a 100-percent increase in food prices in the capital city Sana’a compared to this time last year. Yemen imports roughly 93 percent of its cereals, primarily from the southern port of Aden, making cereal supplies in most of Yemen particularly vulnerable to any market disruptions. In addition, the fuel shortages have prevented water pumping stations from operating normally, leading to water shortages throughout the country. An increasing number of households and IDPs are forced to depend on unsanitary water or have no access to water at all, thereby increasing the risk of diseases. In April, there were reports of a cholera outbreak in southern Yemen with up to 1,056 cases of diarrhea reported.

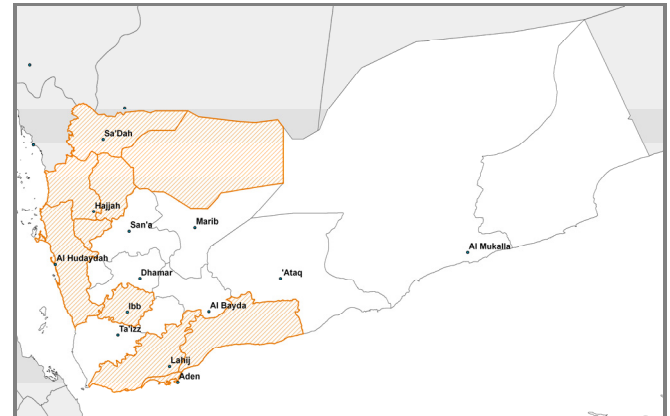
Increasing civil insecurity coupled with the fuel shortages has led to disruptions in normal commercial activity, limiting labor opportunities and threatening agricultural and pastoral-based livelihood activities for poor households. This is likely to further deteriorate food security conditions for poor and middle income households who are already coping with high cereals prices. There are reports that some households are attempting to cope by traveling to Saudi Arabia through the northern Yemen border to find work. However the border is closed and it has become more heavily guarded by both Yemen and Saudi Arabia since the unrest has begun. Rapid WFP assessments also indicate that households in southern Yemen are prioritizing food expenditures while beginning to engage negative coping strategies.

Sixty-thousand people living in southern Yemen have suddenly been displaced and are now scattered across villages surrounding Aden, Abyan, and Lahj following government and opposition fighting, making monitoring, assessments, and delivering assistance difficult. Fuel shortages further complicate the delivery of humanitarian assistance in southern and northern Yemen. Although humanitarian organizations’ access to vulnerable households in Sa’ada, an area that is still recovering from prolonged conflict, has increased in recent months, approximately 14,000 households still require food assistance but cannot be assisted by humanitarian organizations due to the fuel shortages.

With the crisis still unfolding, systematic information gathering and sharing from FEWS NET partners has been difficult. Ongoing clashes between the opposition and the Government, in combination with limited food, fuel, and water, will likely continue to threaten household food security throughout Yemen. The situation is unlikely to improve in the coming months, and households will likely require emergency humanitarian assistance to prevent large-scale consumption deficits and the risk of deteriorating health and nutrition outcomes.

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) issues alerts to prompt decision-maker action to prevent or mitigate potential or actual food insecurity. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the view of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

Figure 1: Yemen: Governorates with households most at risk of food insecurity due to displacement or fuel and food shortages



Source: FEWS NET