



## General overview

**6.6** Million internally displaced persons (IDPs)<sup>(1)</sup> and eight million refugees<sup>(2)</sup> hosted by countries in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia (MENACA) region. Population were uprooted as a result of political instability and violence. Although some returns have been recorded over the past year, these were either limited or unsustainable, owing to the still fragile security context in the areas of origin. According to UNHCR Iraq October 2009 Monthly Statistical Update, some 180,000 Iraqis have returned home from either internal displacement or refuge abroad during 2009; this is from an overall estimate of 2.8 million IDPs in Iraq and well over 1.5 million refugees. In Pakistan, during the past four months, at least 500,000 persons were newly displaced due to fighting in Khyber and Orakzay Agencies, at a time when relief organizations have been striving to assist some 1.66 million returnees. In Yemen, fighting between the Government and the Houthi group forced over 176,000 persons from their homes, many of whom have been displaced several times. Political and security trends within the region suggest that the situation is unlikely to stabilize anytime soon. Political and social unrest increase at a spinning speed in Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

On another note, the MENACA region is highly vulnerable to climate change related events. The region risks further water scarcity, drought and desertification, putting more pressure on already depleted ground water resources. Water shortage compounded with food insecurity increases urban migration and may fuel social instability. Countries in the region are

The Humanitarian Update is a monthly publication from UN OCHA's Regional Office in Cairo, reporting on the main humanitarian events in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia. For more information on Iraq or OPT, please visit [www.ochairaq.org](http://www.ochairaq.org) and [www.ochaopt.org](http://www.ochaopt.org)

also vulnerable to other climate change-induced events such as flash floods, rise in sea levels, sandstorms, etc. Response capacity to such events varies from one country to another; and most of the countries in the region tend to have a reactive rather than proactive approach to climate change events or disasters. The increasing intensity and frequency of climate related events turns more unpredictable planning scenarios for future disasters. On that note, it is worth noting that the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen ended on 19 December 2009 with an agreement to limit the global temperature rise. Participating countries recognized the scientific view that an increase in global temperature below two degrees is required to reduce the worst effects of climate change. They have also agreed to raise financial support to start action in the developing world to deal with climate change, such as mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology, reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries and capacity building. The outcome has not satisfied the expectations of many nations and is seen more as a declaration of intent rather than a concrete plan of action, the results of which will only be gauged in the future. For more information please visit <http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/climatechange/gateway>.



The once fertile land with all types of flora and fauna has painfully turned into a hostile terrain. Photo/IRIN.

(1) Number of displaced persons residing within the MENACA countries, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/>, as per 1 January 2010.

(2) Number of refugees residing within the MENACA countries, UNHCR at [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org) and UNRWA at [www.unrwa.org](http://www.unrwa.org), as per 1 January 2010.

(3) Pakistan Humanitarian Update No.5, 11 December 2009, UNOCHA.

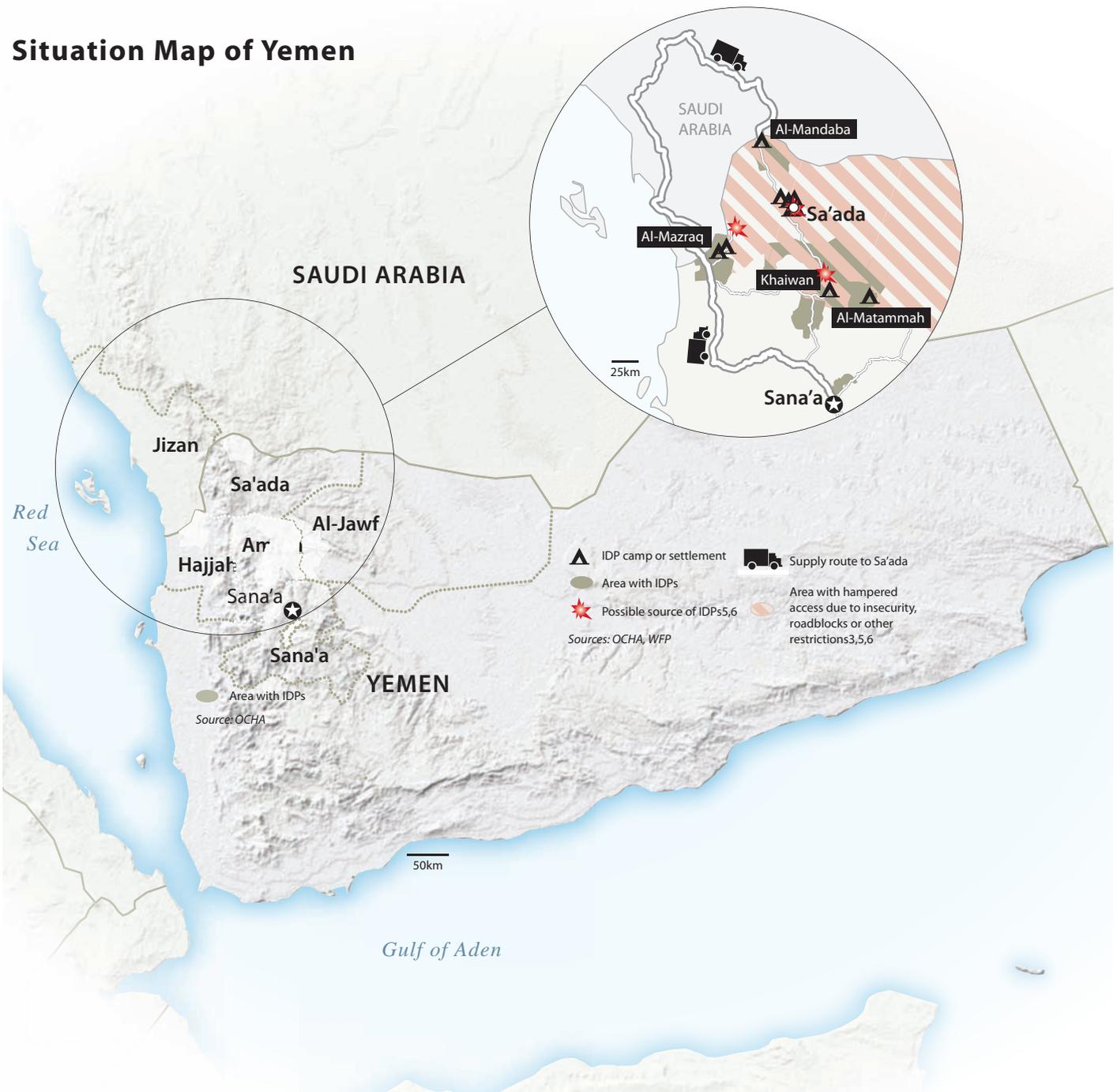


**Yemen humanitarian update**

**176,472** IDPs were registered for assistance in Yemen since the eruption of the sixth round of fighting in August 2009 between the Government of Yemen troops and the Houthi group. The security situation in Sa'ada Governorate and its surroundings remains unstable, with reports of large numbers of civilians being caught or killed in middle of the fighting. Registration and verification is ongoing in all Governorates, although figures are subject to regular change. The overall provision of humanitarian assistance to

IDPs continues to improve in all conflict-affected governorates, the supply route to Sa'ada city and surrounding areas remains open and improved access has been obtained in Al-Jawf Governorate, although a number of areas with a high IDP concentration remain inaccessible. Humanitarian actors spare no efforts to provide the much needed basic humanitarian assistance to the displaced population, such as food, health care, infrastructure and shelter, protection, and water, sanitation and hygiene, to ensure that IDPs live with dignity including in situations of armed conflict. For more information please visit [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)

**Situation Map of Yemen**





### UNRWA Appeal and funding

# \$323

Million is the requirement of the 2010 Emergency Appeal launched by UNRWA on 14 December 2009 at a League of Arab States meeting in Cairo. The appeal calls for more than \$323 million to implement a wide range of humanitarian and poverty-alleviating programmes including job creation, education, protection and health. These programmes target vulnerable refugees in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) living under conditions of protracted crisis due, in part, to the system of closures and access restrictions imposed on the Gaza Strip and communities in the West Bank.

# \$3.9

Million is worth the Saudi Committee donation for UNRWA operations in the oPt. In a signing ceremony held in Riyadh on 19 December 2009, UNRWA Commissioner-General, the President of the Saudi Campaign of the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques and the President of the Saudi Committee for the Support of the Lebanese and Palestinian People, Signed three donation agreements worth \$3,874,841 for UNRWA operations in oPt. The three agreements cover in-kind donations of flour worth \$2 million for refugees in the Gaza Strip, a \$1.5 million pledge towards purchasing medical items for Gaza, and \$374,841 to purchase medicines for health centres in both Gaza and the West Bank. UNRWA Commissioner-General presented the Supervisor-General of the Saudi Committee, HRH Prince Nayef, the UNRWA Distinguished Donor Award for his remarkable support to the Agency. Prince Nayef is also the Director of the Campaign of the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques for Gaza.

# \$2.5

Million pledge to UNRWA was announced early December 2009 by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Government, bringing the Emirates' contribution to UNRWA regular budget in 2009 to \$3.5 million. The agency also received Kuwait's annual contribution of \$1.5 million for 2009 in a ceremony with the Kuwaiti Ambassador and the Representative of the Commissioner-General on 22 December 2009 in Amman. UNRWA also received pledges of support from the governments of Mauritania, Egypt and Qatar, for \$20,000, \$25,000 and \$50,000 respectively. The Arab Governments' pledges to UNRWA have come amid concerns over the agency's exhausted reserves and projected shortfall of \$140 million for 2010.

# \$2.7

Million (QAR 10 million) is the Qatar Charity donation to Gaza, consisting of books and stationary sent in an 18-truck convoy that reached the Gaza Strip early December 2009. The contribution arrived in Gaza as part of an international convoy of 30 trucks dispatched from Jordan, carrying 390 tonnes of stationery, food items, medical supplies and other non-food items (NFIs). The Qatar Charity donation aims to support the neediest students at public, private and UNRWA schools in Gaza.

# \$14

Million (€10 million) is the European Union donation to UNRWA in support to its education programme. UNRWA Commissioner-General and the European Union (EU) Representative to UNRWA signed an agreement on 18 December 2009 providing \$14 million (€10 million) in support of UNRWA education programme. The new funds will enable the agency maintain the current high level of its educational activities throughout this school year, and boost the quality of its education services. The UNRWA education programme provides basic education for refugee children in line with the educational systems of host countries, as well as vocational and semi-professional skills training. EU is the largest multilateral provider of international assistance to Palestine refugees and its total contribution to UNRWA in 2009 amounted to more than €170 million, its largest contribution ever. EU and its Member States provided 62 percent of support to the General Fund in 2009.



*Palestinians receive food aid at a United Nations center in the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah. (Hatem Omar, Maan Images)*

# 18

Ambulances were donated by United Arab Emirates (UAE) Red Crescent to Gaza. On behalf of the UAE Red Crescent Authority, the UAE Embassy in Cairo dispatched the ambulances to Gaza in an effort to support the Strip's health sector. On 27 December 2009, the vehicles arrived in the city of El Arish in the Gaza Strip after passing through the Rafah Crossing on the border shared with Egypt. Ten of these ambulances are designated for UNRWA operations in the Gaza and the remaining eight will be handed over to the Palestinian Red Crescent.



UNRWA provides assistance and protection to some 4.7 million Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the occupied Palestinian territory by offering a range of human development and humanitarian services in primary and vocational education, primary health care, social safety-net, community support, infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance and emergency response, including in situations of armed conflict. The role of UNRWA also encompasses advocacy and actions to address the human rights and protection needs of Palestine refugees. For more information on the appeal, pledges and contributions to UNRWA please visit [www.unrwa.org](http://www.unrwa.org)

### Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan

**\$177** Million is the amount requested by relief agencies to meet the acute and chronic humanitarian needs of some 1.6 million vulnerable people in Yemen. The 2010 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan (YHRP), launched in Sana'a on 14 December 2009, will allow UN agencies, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide life- and livelihood-saving humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable populations. YHRP will address protracted humanitarian and recovery needs while contributing to the stability of the country throughout 2010. Yemen suffers from chronic underdevelopment and is both a low income and food-deficit country. It is one of the world's least developed countries, suffering from weak infrastructure, widespread poverty and unemployment, rapid population growth, low educational levels, and high gender disparities. Families with limited coping mechanisms have seen them further stretched by a series of crises - including high food prices, economic downturn, conflict and climate change - leaving them increasingly vulnerable. Current requirements of those affected by the situation include food, health and nutrition, protection, shelter and NFIs in addition to water, sanitation and hygiene. YHRP will enable some 1.3 million food-insecure people, including an estimated 200,000 displaced from the Sa'ada conflict in the north and over 162,000 Somali refugees to meet their critical needs. For more information please visit [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int).

### Syria Drought Response Plan

**13.9** Percent is the current funding level of the revised Syria Drought Response Plan (SRDP) as of 1 January 2010, with the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) as its major donor. Most of the contributions were received in the course of December 2009, however the funding level is still deemed low. The rainy season started with promising rainfall, yet the allocated funds within SDRP for agriculture are insufficient covering only

19.5 percent of the total requirement. Owing to the current funding levels, UN agencies agreed early December 2009 to concentrate their activities in the areas most affected by the drought to achieve a maximal impact from their projects. FAO completed the distribution of seeds in priority rain fed zones and UNICEF prepared 10 primary health centers to carry malnutrition surveillance. UNICEF is also planning to establish a therapeutic feeding programme jointly with WFP. UNDP finalized the rehabilitation of 10 roman wells funded by the Spanish Agency for Development. Another 20 wells will be rehabilitated with CERF funds. WFP will provide food to the drought-affected population.

### Japan provides \$4.42 million to protect Pakistani Children against polio

**\$4.42** Million (JPY 403 million) is worth the grant of the Government of Japan (GoJ) in support to the Polio Eradication Initiative in Pakistan. This grant will allow for procurement of 25.7 million doses of oral polio vaccine. The official Exchange of Notes were signed and exchanged between the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, the UNICEF Representative for Pakistan, and the Health Director General of the Government of Pakistan on 9 December 2009. GoJ support for the year 2010 constitutes 10 percent of the total polio vaccine requirement for Pakistan and its target is to bring the transmission of the debilitating poliovirus to an end. The Japanese Ambassador noted that this is achievable through continuous effort of thousands of health workers, volunteers and community workers. The Ambassador also expressed his hope that the Japanese grant aid would be used effectively to alleviate the suffering of all children, especially those children who live in earthquake affected areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, mountainous regions of North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Federal Administered Tribal Authorities (FATA). For more information please visit [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int).



A child gets a dose of polio vaccine in the city of Migora in Swat district Pakistan, Photo/IPS.



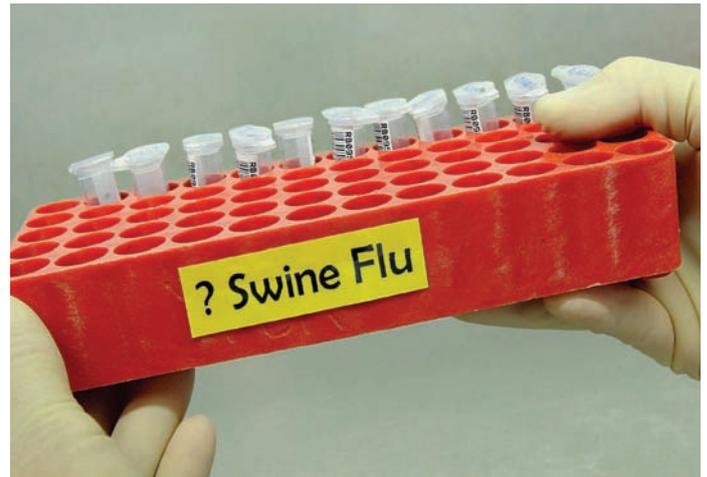
## Afghanistan first in the world to use new vaccine against polio

**2.8** Million children under 5 years of age in the southern, south-eastern and eastern regions of Afghanistan were targeted by a new vaccine against polio during a sub-national immunization campaign between 15 and 17 December 2009. The bivalent oral polio vaccine (bOPV), recommended by the Advisory Committee on Poliomyelitis Eradication--the global technical advisory body of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative as a critical tool to eradicate polio--can provide the optimal concurrent protection needed by young children against both surviving serotypes (types 1 and 3) of the paralyzing virus. This will vastly simplify the logistics of vaccination in the conflict-affected parts of the country. This achievement led to the development of monovalent vaccines, which provide protection against a single type with greater efficacy than the traditional trivalent vaccine. To determine whether a bivalent vaccine could effectively protect children living in areas where both types circulate, a clinical field trial completed in June 2009 compared bOPV with the existing vaccines. For both types 1 and 3 polio, bOPV was found to be at least 30 percent more effective than the trivalent vaccine and almost as good as the monovalent vaccines, yet in a package that could deliver both at once. For more information please visit <http://www.polioeradication.org/>

## H1N1 update in the region

**57,809** Laboratory-confirmed cases of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 were reported to WHO by all Member States of WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, with 693 related deaths reported from 19 Member States in the region, as of 26 December 2009. Syria, has the highest rate of deaths compared to the number of reported cases, with 25.46 percent of all the reported cases; it is followed by Pakistan with 9 percent and UAE by 7.59 percent of all of the reported cases. The vast majority of cases in all countries have been mild in nature and self-limiting, although some severe cases and deaths have occurred in young and previously healthy adults. The majority of severe cases (50 to 80 percent) had underlying chronic medical conditions. There are concerns that the severity of the pandemic may change if the virulence of the virus changes. Risks also exist that (H1N1) 2009 can become the dominant influenza strain when it co-circulates with seasonal influenza virus. In such cases, the health systems may be overstressed if not prepared for a surge in the number of patients.

A review of national pandemic preparedness plans from the Arab region suggests that preparedness levels vary significantly between countries and many plans do not address the non-health aspect of a pandemic. During an emergency summit held in Cairo, Egypt in July 2009 the Arab Health Ministers discussed necessary measures that Member States should take to fight the virus. This meeting adopted new guidelines banning various groups from participating in last year's Hajj. The age group includes children under 12, adults over 65 years and people with chronic diseases. This is besides the vaccinating persons attending the Hajj.



Tamiflu, Photo RNW

Oman launched its nation-wide vaccination campaign against pandemic influenza; eight other Member States in the Region (Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, Morocco and Jordan) have also launched vaccination campaigns during the last few weeks of 2009. All these countries have selected Hajj pilgrims, health-care workers, pregnant women and other high risk groups as the first priority groups to receive these vaccines. A massive public awareness campaign has also started in all these countries in connection with the vaccination campaign. For more information please visit <http://www.emro.who.int/index.asp>.

### Upcoming events:

- » 10-12 January 2010, Sphere training in Arabic in Abu Dhabi, UAE organized by the United Arab Emirates Foreign Aid Coordination Office (FACO).

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