Highlights

- On 29 April, the Government launched military operations against elements of Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Abyan, Shabwah and Al Bayda Governorates in south-central Yemen.

- Estimates indicate that up to 24,500 people have been displaced in Abyan and Shabwah. This includes 21,000 IDPs who have been verified, the vast majority of whom (18,760) are in Shabwah. An additional 3,500 people are reportedly displaced in Abyan, but insecurity is hindering efforts to verify this information.

- The scale of the humanitarian consequences of the offensive remains unclear, but appears limited. Immediate needs are in food, access to health care, support with non-food items and access to safe water. Clearer estimates of the level of needs are expected to become available as access improves and humanitarian assessments are completed.

Situation Overview

On 29 April, the Government began major military operations against strongholds of Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Abyan, Shabwah and Al Bayda Governorates. Approximately 980,000 people live in the most conflict-affected districts. Military operations continue in Abyan Governorate (Al Mahfad District) and Shabwah Governorate (Mayfa’a District south of Jol Ar Raida village). Most markets, roads and schools reportedly remain closed in conflict areas, but health facilities are mostly open. Reports also indicate that some residential buildings have been damaged.

Preliminary estimates indicate that up to 24,500 people (3,500 households) have been displaced by the recent fighting, including 21,000 verified IDPs. The humanitarian impact on the wider civilian population appears limited – especially compared to the 2012 offensive in Abyan against Al Qaida. Partners are working to verify the extent of needs, and clearer estimates are expected as access improves and initial assessments are finalized. In Abyan, major fighting occurred in Mahfad District (Al Ahmar and Al Ma’ajala villages and Al Matheeq valley), displacing people to surrounding areas in Mahfad, Mudiya and Awarf Districts. In Shabwah, the heaviest fighting was in Ataq, Rudum, Ar Rawdah, Mayfa’a and Habban Districts. All displacement figures come from the Government’s Executive Unit and are verified by UNHCR. Local authorities in Shabwah and Abyan expect IDPs to return home once conflict has subsided.

The main immediate needs for affected people are reported to be assistance in health, food, non-food items, and access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation facilities. Current response efforts focus on providing quick emergency relief to IDPs in displacement areas, and activities will be adjusted in line with assessment findings. Partners are mostly confident of their ability to meet these needs with existing resources, although concerns over potential shortages in the non-food items (NFI) and shelter pipeline may require additional support. Beyond unconfirmed media reports, no information is currently available on the situation in Al Bayda Governorate.
Funding

Any additional funding requirements will be addressed through the Emergency Response Fund (ERF) as needed. A request for immediate ERF funding for the Shelter/CCC/MNFIs cluster is expected shortly, as the in-country pipeline is reportedly unable to meet identified needs.

All humanitarian partners, including donors and recipient agencies, are encouraged to inform OCHA’s Financial Tracking Service (FTS - http://fts.unocha.org) of cash and in-kind contributions by e-mailing: fts@un.org

Humanitarian Response

Food Security

Needs:

- IDPs displaced within Shabwah and Abyan are in need of food support.

Response:

- On 13 May, humanitarian partners delivered one-month food rations to some 2,275 IDPs (325 households) in Mudiyah district, Abyan Governorate, and CSSW provided food assistance to 616 IDPs (88 households) displaced to Mukalla, Hadramaut Governorate.
- Pending verification of the full IDP caseload (including current 3,500 unverified IDPs), WFP will provide one-off food support to displaced people in Shabwah and Abyan.

Health

Response:

- The Ministry of Health, The World Health Organization (WHO) and partners are distributing essential drugs to district hospitals in Mudiyah and Lawdar Districts, Abyan Governorate. The district hospital in Lawdar is also supported with medical staff.
- Essential drugs have also been distributed to the district hospitals in Ataq and Azzan in Shabwa Governorate, including one Trauma Kit A (drugs) and B (medical supplies) which can support about 100 people. One Inter-agency Emergency Health Kit has also been delivered and can potentially support 10,000 people for three months period.
- UNFPA has provided reproductive health kits to health facilities in Ataq District.

Protection

Needs:

- Some 21,000 people have been verified as displaced in Shabwah (18,760 people) and Abyan (2,198 people) Governorates. In Abyan, another 3,500 people have reportedly been displaced, but these IDPs have not been verified.
- According to the Mixed Migration Working Group (MMWG), the Governor of Abyan has indicated that 200 foreign migrants (mostly from the Horn of Africa) have been re-directed to safer areas. These migrants had been living in Abyan before the conflict, and their location has not yet been confirmed.
- UNICEF and DRC continue to use the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on grave violations against children (MRM) to order to monitor child protection needs.

Response:

- DRC and UNICEF are monitoring child protection violations among displaced and conflict-affected people and provide support as needed. This includes psychosocial support, referrals and follow-up in Abyan and Shabwah.
- UNFPA delivered 300 dignity kits to the Yemen Women’s Union in Shabwah to distribute to displaced families living in the kindergarten in Ataq District and neighbouring areas.
- IOM and UNHCR travelled to Ahwar District to discuss the situation of new arrivals of foreign migrants in the conflict zone. The mission urged security officials not to detain migrants and to re-direct them to non-conflict areas. IOM is providing medical assistance to migrants at Ahwar Reception Centre.
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Gaps and Constraints:
- The reception centre for migrants in Mayfa’a is currently not receiving new migrants. However, patrols continue in the area, and staff are directing new arrivals to the Ahwar reception centre, which is located in a comparatively safer area. In past years at this time, between 60 and 200 migrants would arrive at the Mayfa’a centre every day.

Shelter, Camp Coordination and Camp Management and Non-food Items

Needs:
- An IOM assessment indicates that shelter and non-food items (NFIs) are among the needs of displaced communities. Many displaced people are reported to have sought shelter in public buildings as schools and kindergartens.

Response:
- To date some 5,900 displaced and conflict-affected people (840 households) have received NFIs. Distributions have taken place in Abyan and Shabwa Governorates (Mahfad, Wadi Nashwan Al Habiq, Al Harak, Mudiyah, and Ar Rawdah Districts).

Gaps and Constraints:
- The NFI and shelter material pipeline in the south may not have sufficient stocks to cover the needs of affected people. The cluster is looking into how to address the challenge and may submit an ERF application soon.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Needs:
- Safe drinking water is the primary need for IDPs. Hygiene is another concern.

Response:
- UNICEF and the General Authority for Rural Water Supply Projects have provided hygiene kits to 2,340 people in Shabwah Governorate (334 households) – divided between Ar Rawdah District (2,200 people) and Ataq District (140 people). The 140 IDPs in Ataq has also received water via 20 water tanks (ten 1,000-litre and ten 2,000-litre tanks).
- IOM has provided hygiene kits to some 1,400 people in Abyan Governorate (700 people in Mahfad District, 350 in Wadi Nashwan and 350 in Al Habiq and Al Harak).
- UNICEF is pre-positioning additional water tanks, hygiene kits and chlorine tablets in Shabwah Governorate.

General Coordination

- Partners are re-activating coordination mechanisms that had been in place until the end of the last round of major conflict in Abyan in 2012. These efforts will focus particularly on IDP registration and verification. As a result, the IDP Task Force has been re-activated in the South. In Shabwah, local authorities have established an IDP committee chaired by the Deputy Governor.
- Access for international organizations is limited in Shabwah, but several national implementing partners are already on the ground, including: SHS (Mayfa’a, Rudum, Ar Rawda and Haban Districts); YRC; Enaiah National Foundation; Al Asalah Association; Manfe’a Association; and Al Khair Association. For assistance reaching these organizations, please contact OCHA-Aden.
- Partners are considering options for an inter-agency assessment in Shabwah; more details will be available shortly.

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