Key messages

- Tropical Cyclone Chapala made landfall on mainland Yemen on 3 November and early reports point to substantial flooding, including in the country’s fifth largest city, Mukalla.

- Based on current projections the estimated number of people that may be affected by Cyclone Chapala is 1.1 million or more – mainly in the two governorates of Shabwah and Hadramaut.

- Initial reports suggest more than 40,000 people displaced or temporarily evacuated from coastal areas and at least 450 homes damaged or destroyed.

- Early reports of three deaths and 34 injuries.

- Humanitarians have pre-positioned stocks and have launched a response.

Cyclone Chapala hits Yemen

Tropical Cyclone Chapala made landfall on Yemen’s Arabian coast on 3 November, with category 1 cyclone force winds.

Current projections estimate that 1.1 million people could be directly impacted by Cyclone Chapala. While the effects of the cyclone will be felt over large parts of Yemen, the impact will be most severe in Shabwah and Hadramaut governorates. These two governorates have a combined population of about 1.9 million people, 76 per cent (1.4 million) of whom are already in need of humanitarian assistance according to the 2015 Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview. In the past several hours, the cyclone has already caused severe flooding in the country's fifth-largest city, Mukalla, with 25 reported injuries. Initial reports suggest that more than 12,750 people have left their homes in coastal areas of Hadramaut governorate. At least 90 homes have reportedly been damaged or destroyed.

Officials in the governorate of Shabwah report that 6,000 people moved to higher ground to avoid anticipated flooding and potential rock falls.

In Socotra an estimated 20,000 people were reportedly evacuated from coastal areas, and close to 400 houses damaged or destroyed. Three deaths and nine injuries were reported on the island.

Meteorologists forecast that Chapala will weaken as it continues north-west towards the capital Sanaa. None the less, sustained winds of 118km/h are expected and the trailing edge of the storm system will continue to bring heavy precipitation to coastal areas for the next 24 to 48 hours.

The cities of Aden and Sana’a are predicted to receive 25-76 millimetres (1-3 inches). However, areas in Shabwah and Hadramaut may see as much as 230 millimetres (9 inches) or even 610 millimetres (24 inches) in certain places – many times the total annual rainfall in Yemen.

The UN is coordinating closely with the central emergency operations cell Yemeni authorities have established to respond to humanitarian impacts of the storm. The UN and partners will deliver humanitarian aid to a main hub in Mukalla. Aid will then be distributed by implementing partners including NGOs, local government, civil society organisations and local relief committees.
Humanitarian Preparedness and Response

The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) developed a cyclone response plan and humanitarian aid supplies were prepositioned during the critical days before the cyclone hit. The HCT has a comprehensive inventory of staff, stocks and implementing partners, and a list of contacts with de facto local authorities in the areas anticipated to be worst affected by the storm. This will allow the UN and partners to mount response operations and identify government counterparts with whom the humanitarian community can work.

A number of different aid delivery routes into the affected areas are being utilised. The HCT is primarily moving supplies from existing stockpiles in Aden along the coastal roads to Mukalla, which remains passable (as of 3 November), although with some detours. If the route is closed due to flooding, a secondary option will be to move relief supplies from Sana’a east through Marib to Mukalla as this route is less likely to be affected by the storm.

The HCT will use supplies from the Humanitarian Response Depot (HRD) in Dubai, that will be moved by road into Oman, and then by road or sea to Mukalla.

A UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Team is being deployed to Oman on 4 November to manage delivery operations in the east of Yemen. The UNDAC team will deploy to Muscat, where it will organize, manage and facilitate aid convoys coming from the HRD, and to Salalah at the border, where it can dispatch convoys into Yemen as well as managing any sea movement and operational coordination with the IFRC and ICRC, both of whom have their main logistics hub in Salalah. For convoys moving from Oman to Yemen there may be a need to ‘cross load’ relief supplies from convoy to convoy as Dubai/Oman contracted trucking is unlikely to agree to proceed into Yemen.

Initial Humanitarian response

The humanitarian community has prepositioned supplies and personnel to respond to the impact of the cyclone on the most vulnerable people in Yemen, already severely affected by the on-going conflict.

Food: As an initial step, WFP has prepositioned 29.9 metric tons of high energy biscuits in Mukalla in Hadramaut, sufficient to feed 25,000 people for three days.

Health: In close cooperation with the Ministry of Health, WHO has delivered three trauma kits, five interagency emergency health kits and two diarrhoea kits to Ministry of Health hospitals and health facilities in Mukalla in Hadramaut governorate. WHO has also provided 20,000 litres of diesel to eight hospitals in Mukalla, and 2,500 litres of petrol for 16 ambulances. UNICEF and WHO surveillance rapid response teams are being deployed.

Shelter/Non-Food Items (NFIs): UNHCR has transported 1,000 NFI kits to Mukalla and 1,000 kits to Shabwah and has begun distribution through local partners. A further 5,000 shelter kits from Sana’a are being deployed into the area.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH): Water and sanitation partners have prepositioned stocks of hygiene packs in Aden, and will deliver emergency water provisions and support post disaster clean up efforts.