

YEMEN

17 – 30 November 2017

KEY FIGURES

20.7 million
people in need

2,014,026
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

89 per cent of IDPs displaced for more than a year

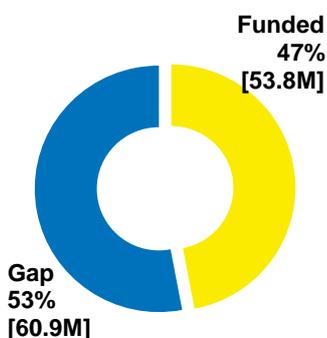
956,076 IDP returnees

1,015,375 recipients of CRIs since March 2015

280,539 refugees and asylum seekers

Funding

USD **114.6 M** requested in 2017



Operational Update

The vulnerability of the Yemeni and refugee population has escalated dramatically since restrictions were placed on commercial and humanitarian activities at land, air and sea ports on 6 November. While limited humanitarian assistance recently reached the country, the blockade continues to impact all areas of life, with Yemen still on a path towards famine. Soaring needs due to the lack of and rising price of fuel, water and medical supplies, can only be addressed through the easing and full resumption of both humanitarian and commercial activities.

UNHCR is particularly alarmed for the well-being of persons of concern. Three years of hostilities have forced waves of Yemenis to seek shelter in safer locations, many living in overcrowded collective shelters, undignified spontaneous settlements or renting rooms in cities and towns and at risk of eviction. Across the country, two million internally displaced Yemenis are struggling to absorb the latest economic shocks resulting in families reducing their food intake to dangerous levels by skipping meals or out of sheer desperation, taking the difficult decision to return to their war-impacted homes in frontline areas.

Furthermore, the refugee population, who number over 280,000, continue to be disproportionately affected by the current crisis. UNHCR carried out a rapid assessment this week of vulnerable families receiving financial support, with 100 per cent of those interviewed indicating that the level of assistance no longer covers their minimum needs due to price hikes on essential household items. Despite the scale of the crisis, humanitarian activities in Yemen are hugely underfunded. Of the US \$114.6 million required by UNHCR to meet the needs of the most vulnerable refugees and internally displaced, only \$53.8 million has been received so far, representing less than half of what is needed.



Persons of concern to UNHCR struggle to absorb the latest financial shock as restrictions on imports remain in place and prices of essential items rise. Photo: UNHCR

IDP Response

Ongoing hostilities in Yemen continue to lead to new waves of displacement. In the south, UNHCR distributed core relief items (CRIs) to some 350 newly displaced IDP families who fled ongoing clashes to Al Turban in Lahj Governorate. The distribution was conducted in partnership with Action Contre la Faim (ACF) as part of the emergency rapid response mechanism that delivers assistance within the first 72 hours of displacement. Families fled in fear, carrying little more than what they could pack in haste.

UNHCR continues to reach internally displaced families countrywide with life-saving assistance, bringing welcome, albeit limited relief. During the past two weeks, UNHCR and partners provided essential household items to over 20,000 people in Dhamar, Ibb, Amanat Alasmiah, Sana'a, Sa'ada and Amran Governorates. Families received a relief package of blankets, mattresses, jerry cans for storing clean water and kitchen sets. UNHCR also reached close to 400 extremely vulnerable IDP families living in makeshift shelters in Alazraqain and Dharwan settlements in Sana'a. Conditions in the settlements are dire, with a distribution of emergency shelters kits also planned for the coming week.

UNHCR is also responding the large number of IDPs in urban settings, struggling to cover their rental costs, living with the constant threat of eviction. In an effort to provide a safety net for the most vulnerable IDP and IDP returnee families, UNHCR is prioritising financial support as part of its emergency shelter and protection response. So far this year, close to 14,000 families, or 98,000 people, have received cash assistance, covering rental costs or protection-related needs including for single parents, persons living with disabilities, and those who face homelessness. The price hikes witnessed in Yemen on food, fuel and medicines during the past three weeks have created further urgency on cash distributions reaching those in need. Since 17 November, 925 families in Amran and Hajjah Governorates received financial support through partner Yemeni Red Crescent Society (YRCS). UNHCR has also verified a list of a further 1,815 families in need in Dhamar Governorate who will receive rental support.

UNHCR's winter assistance response is well underway, with financial support for the initial 1,000 families deposited in the bank this week. Night time temperatures have dropped in mountainous areas to close to 5 degrees Celsius, with the blockade severely limiting IDPs access to fuel to provide warmth in homes. The cash assistance will reach a further 4,000 families in the coming week, with IDP households withdrawing 80,000 Rial (US \$170) to cover their cold weather needs in northern governorates. In total, UNHCR has identified more than 10,000 IDPs in need of cold weather assistance.

Refugee Response

UNHCR this week carried out a rapid monitoring exercise to better understand the impact of the blockade on extremely vulnerable refugee families. Recipients of financial aid, including survivors of sexual and gender based violence, refugees with serious health issues, and unaccompanied children or older persons spoke to UNHCR regarding their concerns as their situation becomes untenable. 100 per cent of respondents described the financial support as no longer sufficient to address their most basic needs. Rising prices as a result of the blockade, coupled with the depreciation of the Yemeni Rial, has resulted in families reducing their food intake, limiting cooking to preserve fuel, and decreasing purchases of clean water and warm winter clothes. One third of refugees decreased or ceased spending on essential health and medications during the past three weeks, with a further 90 per cent of respondents failing to repay debts and facing challenges with landlords and store owners. UNHCR is closely monitoring the situation and will make every effort to address the rapidly escalating needs of the refugee population.

UNHCR and IOM are working closely to facilitate the fifth departure of Somali refugees as part of the Assisted Spontaneous Return (ASR) programme. The closure of Aden port since the blockade has led to the cancellation of three boat departures. Thus far over 2,477 Somalis have been counselled on the process, including return assistance and conditions in Somalia, with 418 individuals having safely reached Somalia. The IOM-chartered boat will be scheduled as soon as the Aden port is fully operational.

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