

YEMEN

28 Feb. – 13 March 2018

KEY FIGURES

22.2 million
people in need

2,014,026
Internally Displaced Persons
(IDPs)

89 per cent of IDPs
displaced for more than a
year

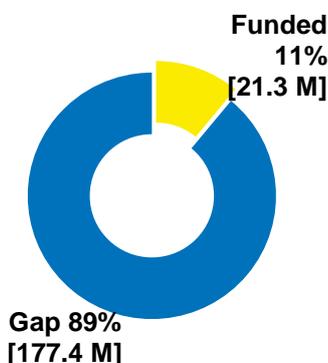
956,076 IDP returnees

1,015,375 recipients of
CRIs since March 2015

280,692 refugees and
asylum seekers

Funding

USD **198.7 M**
requested in 2018



Operational Update

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is outraged and saddened at continuing civilian deaths in Yemen, including internally displaced persons (IDPs). A house was targeted by hostilities in Gohza, Sa'ada Governorate, causing the death of seven displaced Yemenis on 28 February. The house was sheltering three IDP families who fled Haydan district in Sa'ada three years ago. Five women, including an expectant mother, were among those dead. The incident also left six other IDPs wounded by the incident. UNHCR visited the survivors, providing core relief items (CRIs) and emergency shelter support. The war in Yemen continues to take a disproportionate toll on the civilian population. UNHCR reiterates that civilians, including those fleeing for safety, must be protected and parties to the conflict must adhere to their obligation enshrined under International Humanitarian Law.

Hostilities on frontlines continued to result in new displacement. Intense fighting in the districts of Al Khawkhah, Al Garrahi and Hays in southern Hudaydah, and Mokha and Mawza in Taizz, have forced families to flee. Speaking to UNHCR during protection monitoring and distribution missions, IDPs described their struggle with lack of work opportunities, restricted access to food, inadequate accommodation with entire families sheltering in one room or in overcrowded collective shelters. Despite now feeling safe from bombardment, families spoke of the overwhelming disappointment of leaving everything behind. UNHCR has also observed a rise in psychological distress as war takes its toll on Yemen's population, with a lack of specialized services further exposing those displaced to increasing vulnerability and harm.



Newly displaced families reach Aden, fleeing escalating hostilities on Yemen's coastline, including Zahra and her eight children. The family are struggling to find safe accommodation, their savings long exhausted. Photo: UNHCR/ N. Schmidhaeusler

IDP Response

In response to new displacement, UNHCR continued its outreach and emergency response activities. UNHCR field teams completed a distribution in Al Garrahi district, in southern Hudaydah reaching 3,514 individuals with essential household items and emergency shelter kits. The Al Garrahi area, in close proximity to frontlines, has received 1,700 IDP families, mainly from surrounding villages of Al Hays and Al Khowkha since December 2017. Soaring needs have been observed among the new arrivals, including for urgent medical attention, food and potable water. In Abyan Governorate, where the number of newly displaced climbed to over 21,600 individuals in recent months, UNHCR CRI assistance reached 5,710 IDPs displaced in Khanfir district and a further 2,540 IDPs in Zunjibar district.

The number of new IDPs to southern governorates doubled in the past month, as families fled an upsurge in hostilities on frontlines in Taizz and southern Hudaydah. While the rate of this increase has now slowed, UNHCR expects the number to continue to rise. Many remain trapped in frontline areas, including Al Mokha and Hays. A significant number of female headed-households, representing an excessively vulnerable group, have arrived in the south, requiring health assistance, core relief, cash as well as counselling or referrals for those at risk / subjected to sexual and gender based violence (SGBV).

With 89 percent of IDPs displaced for more than one year and amid severe economic decline, IDPs are facing increasing protection risks. The lack of support for basic services coupled with decreasing resources has impacted acutely on vulnerable displaced populations, including those living in public buildings, collective centres and spontaneous settlements. Protection monitoring is a core activity for UNHCR, reaching over 220,000 people in 2017, and constitutes the backbone of the IDP protection response for 2018. A number of initiatives aimed at strengthening the protection response were launched in 2017 and continue this year, including the harmonization of the protection monitoring tool to ensure consistent assessments of protection risks and individual vulnerabilities through a combination of household-level assessments and focus group discussions. Furthermore, the reinforcing of UNHCR's 31 Community-Based Protection Networks (CBPNs) has: enhanced community participation and engagement in identification of protection risks, strengthened IDPs' own capacities to address these risks, as well as helped to develop the common protection service directory for facilitating referrals.

Refugee Response

UNHCR is alarmed at the increasing risk of detention of asylum seekers and refugees across Yemen. Ever-increasing anti-refugee rhetoric and the adoption of stricter policies have resulted in a spike in arrests, the proliferation of informal detention centres, detention of persons of concern and in some cases summary deportations. A lack of documentation, due to a suspension of registration activities in the north, and undue suspicion has contributed to the shrinking asylum space, with UNHCR attempting to address this by undertaking training and awareness efforts for authorities, judges, public prosecutors and police along with refugee communities. Practical support (for example, core relief assistance or legal support) is also essential in an increasingly restrictive environment, with UNHCR visiting persons of concern in detention. Additionally, UNHCR's partner INTERSOS provides legal counselling, representation in court, mediation with services combined with a package of psychosocial support for those who have been arrested or previously detained, with referrals for cash grants or material assistance, life-skills and livelihood trainings for vulnerable cases once released.

Crumbling national services mean an additional burden on UNHCR to provide essential services to persons of concern. Failing health systems at a time of unprecedented need has resulted in a rise in preventable illnesses and mortality. More than 98,000 medical consultations for refugees and host community took place in 2017 at UNHCR-supported clinics. While UNHCR's timely support for cholera interventions has prevented outbreaks among refugee populations in Kharaz refugee camp and urban areas, the increasing susceptibility of all persons of concern due to overcrowded accommodation and below standard hygiene facilities across the country warrants on-going awareness efforts. On a weekly basis, UNHCR's Community Outreach team provide 600 people, including 444 refugees, with information on the diphtheria outbreak, the latest public health emergency in Yemen.

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