September was the deadliest month in 2019 for civilians

September 2019 was one of the deadliest months in Yemen with scores of civilians killed in attacks - with reports of 388 killed or injured due to conflict across the country - equivalent to an average of 13 people every day. On 23-24 September, 22 civilians were killed in two separate air strikes. The first incident occurred on 23 September in Al Sawad, in Amran Governorate when strikes hit a mosque, killing seven civilians, including women and children from the same family. The next day, 15 civilians were killed and 15 more were injured when airstrikes hit a house in the Al Fakhir area in Al Dhale’e Governorate. In the same period, air strikes damaged a UN-supported water system serving 12,000 people. This was the fourth time the facility was hit since 2016.

The Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen, Ms. Lise Grande, called the attacks “deeply disturbing” particularly as they occurred against the backdrop of the UN General Assembly, “when world leaders were coming together to advance peace and security.”

In September, in a briefing to the Security Council, on the humanitarian situation in Yemen the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, stated that there is “a persistent pattern of attacks in Yemen that kill and injure civilians, or damage critical civilian infrastructure” and called for respect for international humanitarian law. In particular, he urged all parties to the Yemen conflict to ensure respect for civilians and civilian infrastructure and to take constant care to spare them throughout military operations.

Civilian fatalities up while overall casualties decreased in third quarter

Protection partners report that civilian casualty rates decreased in the third quarter (Q3) of 2019. From 1 July 2019 to 30 September 2019, there were 806 civilian casualties reported countrywide, of whom 354 died. This is a 20% reduction from the second quarter (Q2) of 2019, during which a peak of 1,011 civilian casualties were reported. Despite seeing an
overall reduction in civilian casualty rates, the number of fatalities increased for the second quarter running to the highest it has been this year, up 17% from 303 fatalities during Q2 to 354 civilian fatalities in Q3. Al-Hudaydah Governorate again saw the highest civilian casualty toll, 211 of 854, followed by Dhamar Governorate where a mass-casualty incident accounted for 44 per cent of civilian casualties in Q3 of the year.

A large proportion of the civilian casualties in the quarter were driven by a mass-casualty incident on 1 September, when airstrikes hit a prison in Dhamar, killing 156 people and injuring another 50. The incident was responsible for 44% of civilian fatalities in Q3 2019.

Incidents impacting on civilian houses continue to impact on children and women. Civilian houses remain the most heavily impacted civilian structure in the country, resulting not only in the direct displacement of households, but also heightening psychosocial trauma and, due to the domestic nature of the spaces being impacted, exacerbating the vulnerability of groups such as women and children. Three hundred twenty-seven incidents directly impacted on civilian houses in 2019, representing 60% of the total incidents. Half of the child and women casualties so far in 2019 are a result of incidents that impacted on houses.

**End of Year report highlights achievements against the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan**

Over the past year, the humanitarian operation in Yemen has undergone a step-change, becoming the largest operation worldwide. The 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan end-year report indicated that despite increasingly difficult conditions, 254 international and national partners delivered food assistance, health care, nutrition support, protection, shelter, education, water and sanitation and livelihood support to millions of people in need.

In the course of 2018, the number of people provided with food and livelihood assistance each month increased from 5.9 million to 7.5 million, a 27 per cent increase. Some 5.8 million people received nutrition support - a 241 per cent increase from 2017, when 1.7 million people received nutrition support. As a result, the food and nutrition situation improved in more than half of the 107 districts at-risk of famine, and as of October 2019, one-fifth are no longer at risk of famine and a higher percentage of ill and malnourished children are surviving in Yemen than at any time since the conflict started.

The largest cholera outbreak in modern history was contained with suspected cholera cases reducing from 1.5 million in 2017 to 311,000 before the end of 2018. Millions of people received safe drinking water and sanitation support thanks to the considerable scale up of WASH service provision and rapid response teams, with WASH cluster partners reaching an
estimated 11.5 million people, compared with 8.9 million in 2017, representing 29 per cent increase in people reached.

The health cluster reached 12 million people in 2018, compared with 8.6 million people reached in 2017 - an increase of 40 per cent.

Although nearly 25 per cent of all students remained out of school, millions of children were able to learn because of the support provided by humanitarian partners. Overall Education Cluster partners delivered education services to 1.8 million students.

The response to displacement improved with the establishment of a Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) to assist people in the immediate aftermath of a crisis. The RRM was introduced for newly displaced families in 2018 in response to an escalation of hostilities in Al Hudaydah. Following the launch of RRM, some 680,000 newly displaced people received emergency assistance within days, and sometimes within hours of their displacement. Hundreds of humanitarian staff remained in Al Hudaydah despite conflict and bombardment, helping to keep the port open, and storing, loading and dispatching nearly half a million metric tons of wheat to districts across the country.

Cluster response achievements (Jan - Dec 2018)

The Yemen Humanitarian Fund provides stopgap funding to programmes at risk of shutting down

At the beginning of September, the 3rd Reserve Allocation of the Yemen Humanitarian Fund in 2019 was launched to provide short-term “lifeline” funding for critical humanitarian projects at risk of shutting down in the last two quarters of the year. The four programmatic priorities of the response included:

- emergency and life-sustaining health services, including reproductive health services
- non-food items for vulnerable households
- services for victims of gender-based violence
- funding for the annual Multi-Cluster Location Assessment, upon which the annual Humanitarian Needs Overview and Humanitarian Response Plan are based.

A total of US$16.2 million was allocated to 5 projects targeting 1.1 million people in need in 15 governorates across four clusters.
Humanitarians are unable to reach millions of people who need help to survive

The operating environment in Yemen is one of the most non-permissive in the world. In addition to conflict and insecurity, interference in humanitarian operations and restrictions on movement are the main obstacles to project implementation. Restrictions include: lengthy delays by the authorities in approving projects, imposition of additional documentation requirements and payments of additional taxes. Humanitarians report that at least 5.1 million people in need live in 75 hard-to-reach districts.

Widespread fuel shortages continue

Following the arrival of eight fuel ships at the Hudaydah port, fuel stations reopened and queues started to subside in Sana’a. However, the situation has not yet stabilized and remains fragile, particularly in northern governorates. The WASH Cluster in Yemen reported that thousands of people are still suffering from weeks of fuel shortages, particularly IDPs who rely on regular water trucking, as well as people living in remote communities who need to travel long distances to reach markets or distribution points for food and other assistance. Fuel shortages have resulted in the reduction of some services such as water trucking and the deployment of WASH Rapid Response Teams (RRTs), thus creating concern over the spread of cholera.

In Ibb Governorate, water systems are now functioning; however, the Ibb Local Water and Sanitation Corporation (LWSC) exhausted its contingency stocks of fuel leaving it vulnerable to future short-term shocks. In Hudaydah Governorate, the situation in general improved and returned to normal in the main cities; however, in the rural areas pumping hours are still reduced and movement of trucks is not back to normal. In Amran and Sana’a, IDP camps relying on water trucking are still impacted by the reduced water provisions.
Additional partners were mobilized to step in and fill the gaps. In Hajjah Governorate, there was a slight improvement with more fuel available and movements of trucks resuming. In Shafar and Abs, however, there are still large queues in front of fuel stations that operate for only few hours. In Taiz, quantities of diesel for pumping water from wells are expected to run out in a matter of days. In addition, the WASH cluster is following up with UNICEF to get WFP support on accelerating the delivery of diesel allocated for the months of September and October. In Al Mukhalla, the situation continues to deteriorate. The capacity for the LWSC to pump water in Shabwah and Hadhramaut has decreased. The government water pumping station works for 6 hours a day only in Shabwah Governorate, causing a water shortage resulting in almost 475,000 inhabitants being affected. The directors of the LWSC in Shabwah and Hadhramaut governorates have reached out to humanitarian organizations to seek fuel support.

In terms of access to healthcare, some mobile clinics were suspended, and fuel shortages may hamper patients’ ability to travel to health facilities to seek treatment. Around 180 hospitals (73 per cent of the total number of functional hospitals across the country) rely on generators to operate life-saving equipment such as incubators, monitors, oxygen concentrators and operation theaters. Fuel shortages could hamper the continuity of medical care and the provision of 3.6 million medical consultations.

YHRP Funding update

As of 27 October, the 2019 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan is approximately 70 per cent funded. Top donors include the United States of America, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom.

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