

## SITUATION OVERVIEW

While progress on redeployment in al-Hudaydah remains fragile following the Stockholm Agreement, the conflict continues to exact its brutal toll on civilians, particularly following escalation in recent months in the neighboring governorate of Hajjah. Indiscriminate attacks, whether due to airstrikes or shelling, and increasingly landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs), continue to pose a major threat to civilians. In this context, ensuring protection of civilians remains paramount, as does addressing the growing protection needs for the conflict-affected and displaced population of Yemen.

### *Protection of Civilians*

As released in the 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview for Yemen, civilian casualties verified by OHCHR have increased 11% year-on-year, while 56% of districts in Yemen were affected by airstrikes, shelling or armed clashes in 2018. The worst-affected 10% of districts experienced these almost every day, notably in Sa'ada and al-Hudaydah. The Protection Cluster's Civilian Impact Monitoring Project released its annual report for 2018<sup>1</sup>, among which some of the key findings are:

- *Nearly 100 civilian casualties each week in Yemen in 2018*
- *95 mass casualty incidents (4% of total incidents) caused 44% of all civilian casualties*
- *60% of mass casualty incidents were airstrikes*
- *More than half of all civilian impact incidents affected women and children, including 7% impacting children alone and 3% women alone*
- *Landmines and UXOs were the deadliest form of armed violence (in terms of casualties per incident), deadlier than airstrikes or shelling*
- *More civilians were killed and injured inside their own homes than anywhere else*
- *After homes, being in cars or buses were the most common location for civilian casualties*
- *More than 100 conflict incidents directly impacted health, education, food, water and aid sites*



*Eight-year-old Mariam was displaced with her parents and two brothers from Taizz and is now living in a spontaneous site in Lahj. She doesn't attend school due to distance and her parents cannot afford transportation. Credit: UNHCR/B. Ahmed*

<sup>1</sup> Available at: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/yemen/document/civilian-impact-monitoring-report-annual-2018>

In the first three months of 2019, estimated civilian casualties have decreased by 30% compared to the monthly average in 2018, mainly due to developments in al-Hudaydah and Sa'ada governorates, while Taizz, Hajjah, Amran and Shabwah all saw increases in civilian casualties.

### Internal Displacement

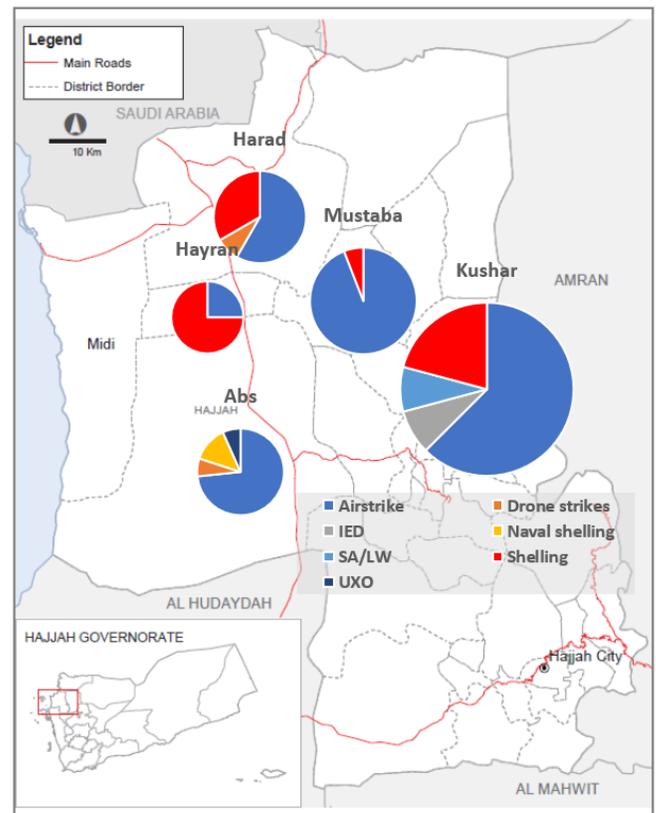
Internal displacement has increased and, according to the most recent assessment of the Task Force on Population Movement, there were more than 3.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 1.3 million IDP returnees in Yemen as of November 2018.<sup>2</sup> The governorates of Marib (21%), Taizz (11%), Hajjah (10%), Hudaydah (10%), Amran (7%) and Amanat al Asimah (7%) represented the largest IDP hosting locations. Marib estimates are higher than previously estimated likely due to increased access in the governorate. Over half of displacement occurred in 2015 at the beginning of the conflict, while 2018 represented the highest level of displacement since then (121,678 households), more than double the level of displacement in 2017. While the majority of IDPs live in rented accommodation, 20% are estimated to live in spontaneous settlements, and 4% living in public buildings, schools, hospitals or religious buildings.

### Vulnerability and Persons with Specific Needs

Conflict, unabating risk of cholera and populations facing famine-like conditions continue to take their toll, resulting in new vulnerabilities and protection consequences for those who have suffered the loss of heads of households, family separation and the breakdown of community structures. According to the most recent Multi-Cluster Location Assessment conducted at the end of 2018, in 8% of assessed districts, key informants reported that at least ten out of every 100 people had exhibited signs of conflict-related psychosocial distress in the previous twelve months, while the percentage of persons possessing various forms of civil documentation ranged between 13% to 54%. The assessment also identified more than 300,000 children at risk of exploitative work and more than 8,000 survivors of violence, exploitation or abuse.

### RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Conflict in the governorate of Hajjah escalated in recent months, resulting in a spike in civilian impact, civilian casualties, new displacement, as well as reports of civilians trapped between conflict lines unable to access services, including life-saving victim assistance. The number of civilian impact incidents in Hajjah since the beginning of 2019 has more than doubled compared to the monthly average in 2018, and the number of estimated casualties almost tripled. The most affected districts have been Kushar (27%), where a mass casualty incident on 10 March resulted in the deaths of scores of civilians, Mustaba (19%), Abs (17%), Harad (13%) and Hayran (9%).



Hajjah: Types of Conflict Incidents (Oct-Mar)

<sup>2</sup> IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix, Yemen Area Assessment, Round 37, March 2019

Meanwhile, despite the de-escalation and fragile ongoing talks on redeployment in al-Hudaydah, the governorate continues to witness ongoing civilian impact, particularly along the outskirts of the city and in southern districts. Since December 2018 and the Stockholm Agreement, the number of civilian impact incidents remains at similar levels as the beginning of the western coast offensive in the summer of 2018. However, in an important development, the number of estimated civilian casualties in al-Hudaydah has decreased by some 30%, most notably due to the virtual halt in airstrikes in the governorate since December. Still, it is estimated that nearly 100 civilians continue to have been killed or injured each month in 2019, not due to airstrikes, but rather shelling, landmines, UXOs and small arms fire. Major incidents in February and March include four incidents of shelling which struck residential homes in at-Tuhayat and al-Khawkha, resulting in the deaths of dozens of civilians, as well as more than a dozen estimated casualties when a fishing boat was struck in February off the coast of al-Hudaydah. On 18 March, a Yemeni staff member of an international NGO was killed when she and her sister were caught in shelling in al-Hudaydah city.

## PROTECTION CLUSTER STRATEGY

**Monitor key protection issues** (including violations of IHL/IHRL, displacement, vulnerable populations, gender-based violence and child protection) in order to **identify persons in need of assistance**, inform the humanitarian response and advocate for the protection of civilians

Provide **life-saving protection assistance and services** to vulnerable, conflict-affected individuals, including children and gender-based violence survivors

Develop **community-based responses** in order to prevent, mitigate or address protection needs and risks, and enhance individual and community coping strategies and conflict resolution

**Strengthen the capacity** of partners, service providers, civil society and authorities on protection

**Mainstream and integrate protection** into all sector and cluster-specific humanitarian responses

Fighting in Taizz governorate spiked in January, with the level of civilian casualties more than double the monthly average in 2018, due to frontline fighting along the outskirts of the city and in southern districts. Shelling, fighting between armed groups, including sniper fire, and landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and UXOs continue to be the major threats to the safety of civilians. Major incidents in Taizz include shelling of residential houses in January, resulting in dozens of civilian casualties, as well as IED explosions in February and March which resulted in civilian casualties. Overall, with the recent developments in Hajjah and Taizz, the number of civilian impact incidents nationwide since the Stockholm Agreement remains similar to 2018, while the nationwide level of civilian casualties has reduced by almost 30%, largely due to the reduction in airstrikes in al-Hudaydah governorate.

## PROTECTION RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

Despite gaps in funding and constraints on humanitarian access, Protection Cluster partners continue to respond to the protection needs of the conflict-affected and displaced population. Recent highlights include:

- The 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview and Humanitarian Response Plans were finalized and launched. The number of people in need of protection assistance increased by 12% to 14.4 million people in 2019, compared to 12.9 million last year, with the most significant increases in Al Hudaydah, as a result of the military escalation on the western coast, as well as in Amanat al Asimah, Marib, Al Jawf, Al Bayda and Al Dhale'e governorates. Meanwhile, the number of people in acute need increased by 27% to 8.2 million people, compared to 6.5 million last year. Protection Cluster requirements for 2019 are 153 million USD to provide protection and specialized services for 4.8 million vulnerable, victims of violence and communities.
- The Protection Cluster continued to provide intensive support for new partners establishing community centers funded by the Yemen Humanitarian Fund. Community centers, as a model endorsed by the authorities, represent a "One Stop Shop" to provide access to a wide variety of services and programmes such as case management (including child protection, GBV and persons with specific

needs), psychosocial support, protection cash assistance, legal assistance, mine risk education, livelihoods, together with community outreach.

- In February and March, the Protection Cluster technical working group supported with trainings on protection cash assistance, livelihoods and legal assistance for protection cluster partners, with a specific focus on cash as an enabler for case management responses, protection risk analysis, and guidelines for facilitating civil documentation.
- With the support of the Yemen Humanitarian Fund and its first allocation for 2019, the Protection Cluster is focusing on ensuring minimum protection services in 88 priority IDP collective sites, strengthening nationwide emergency victim assistance for victims of conflict, and establishing new community centers in Hajjah and Taizz governorates.
- The Child Protection Sub-Cluster met with the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor (MOSAL), in order to discuss and facilitate approvals for child protection activities. MOSAL shared a pre-screening and endorsement process together with NAMCHA, which has been shared with cluster partners. With the support of Save the Children International, the Child Protection Sub-Cluster is also in the process of identifying dedicated INGO co-coordinators for the Aden and Al-Hudaydah hubs, which will significantly strengthen coordination capacities.
- The Psychosocial Support (PSS) Task Force under the Child Protection Sub-Cluster, under the leadership of CYPO and in collaboration with Handicap International, completed service mapping for all PSS actors and is in the process of collecting additional data on mental health service providers. The Mine Risk Education (MRE) Technical Working Group, led by YEMAC and UNICEF, also met and agreed to consolidate all MRE materials for unified messaging during campaigns. A two-day workshop was held in March to consolidate MRE messaging.
- Following a Training of Trainers in November, the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Sub-Cluster began GBV mainstreaming training and orientation sessions covering Sana'a, Aden, al-Hudaydah and Hajjah for UN agencies and NGOs and benefiting some 75 participants.
- Yemen has been chosen as one of two countries for rolling out of a new GBV coordination handbook. Twenty-one GBV Sub-Cluster members will participate in a Training of Trainers in April to roll out the handbook countrywide.
- On the occasion of International Women's Day, GBV Sub-Cluster partners held a three-day bazar under the slogan "Educating girls builds Yemen." Arts and crafts were available from more than 150 women participants, as well as a gallery and other events.
- Save the Children conducted a five-day Training of Trainers on Child Resilience for staff from Sa'ada, Hudaydah, Hajjah, Ibb, Lahj and Aden. The trainings target child-friendly space facilitators and teachers to run child resilience sessions with in- and out-of-school children in an effort to improve their psychosocial well-being and resilience. In April, Save the Children, together with IRC, are planning a training on caring for child survivors of sexual violence in Aden.
- In the last quarter, community-based protection networks supported by UNHCR conducted awareness sessions benefiting more than 68,000 individuals. Topics for these sessions included child protection, community center services, back to school, individual hygiene, women's protection, documentation, peaceful coexistence and positive coping strategies during conflict. In addition, more than 90,000 individuals were referred to the eight UNHCR-supported community centers, which provide legal assistance and psychosocial support, among others.

## KEY FIGURES

|                      |                |
|----------------------|----------------|
| PEOPLE IN NEED       | <b>14.4 M</b>  |
| PEOPLE IN ACUTE NEED | <b>8.2 M</b>   |
| IDPs                 | <b>3.6 M</b>   |
| IDP RETURNEES        | <b>1.3 M</b>   |
| PERSONS TARGETED     | <b>4.8 M</b>   |
| PERSONS REACHED      | <b>1.5 M</b>   |
| FUNDING REQUESTED*   | <b>153.0 M</b> |
| FUNDING MET          | <b>7.9 M</b>   |
| UNMET NEEDS          | <b>145.1 M</b> |



**5%**  
**FUNDED**

\*Funding figures as of 28 March 2019

- UNHCR also supported displaced and host communities with several quick impact projects. In Dhamar, IDPs, host community and local authorities jointly designed improvements to road conditions around the UNHCR-supported community centre. Other projects include rehabilitation of a water point in Al Jawf, in partnership with Yemen Alkhair for Relief and Development (YARD), to improve access to clean water for 1,800 displaced and host community members, and in Amran, providing laboratory equipment and medical supplies to the hospital nearest to a public land site allocated to IDPs.
- Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) provided information, counseling and legal assistance in Abyan, Aden, Amran, Lahj, Hajjah, al-Hudaydah, Taizz, and Sana'a governorates, including providing 224 identification cards and 1,162 birth certificates to IDPs and host community members, with support of DFID and UNHCR. Protection monitoring, referrals, rental subsidies and emergency cash were also conducted in Abyan, Aden, Lahj and Taizz governorates, with the support of UNHCR and the German Federal Foreign Office.
- In December, NRC conducted a training on housing, land and property (HLP) for protection cluster partners in Aden and Hajjah governorates, attended by 50 staff from 15 different agencies. NRC also held inter-agency Psychological First Aid (PFA) trainings for 26 protection staff as well as community protection networks from Abyan and Lahj, reaching 43 community leaders. NRC plans to provide three PFA and protection trainings in Aden and Taiz with community members and field workers.
- In Amanat Al-Asimah, Life Makers Meeting Place Organization (LMMPO) has established two child community centers, funded by Save the Children International, to provide vulnerable and conflict-affected children with PSS and case management response services, benefiting 55 boys and girls. In Hajjah, LMMPO provided children with MHPSS and case management services in conjunction with WASH and shelter, benefiting 113 through four child community centers.
- SRA Foundation for Sustainable Development established community committees in Bura, Qawanis and Al-luhayah districts in conjunction with Food Security and Nutrition projects for conflict affected populations in Taizz and al-Hudaydah governorates.
- In Arhab district, Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF) assessed the needs of 1,052 cases and provided information on available services and feedback mechanisms. More than a hundred individuals benefited from case management, protection cash assistance, legal counseling, as well as PSS, GBV responses and livelihoods.

## IN FOCUS: ASSISTING IDP COLLECTIVE SITES WITH CIVIL DOCUMENTATION BY NRC

The Norwegian Refugee Council started an Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) project in July 2018 to provide services to some 300 displaced households at Al-Lail IDP site in Amran Governorate. Numerous IDP site residents, which included members of the *al-Muhamasheen* historically marginalized community, were suffering from lack of access to basic services, humanitarian assistance, as well as threats of eviction. Lack of civil documentation was assessed as one of the main reasons behind the problems faced by members of this IDP community. Following the targeted interventions of NRC's ICLA project and in cooperation with the local authorities, IDP residents were assisted in obtaining civil documentation, and many have finally been recognized officially for the first time, vastly improving their access to basic services. The success of the project has also helped facilitate additional humanitarian partners, such as the Yemen Red Crescent Society and CARE. Legal assistance, with a focus on functioning administrative remedies such as obtaining lost or missing civil registration documents, is a key part of the Protection Cluster strategy in Yemen.



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