

HUMANITARIAN UPDATE

Photo by Issa Ahmed/UNICEF

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Uptick in hostilities and civilian casualties in third quarter of 2020

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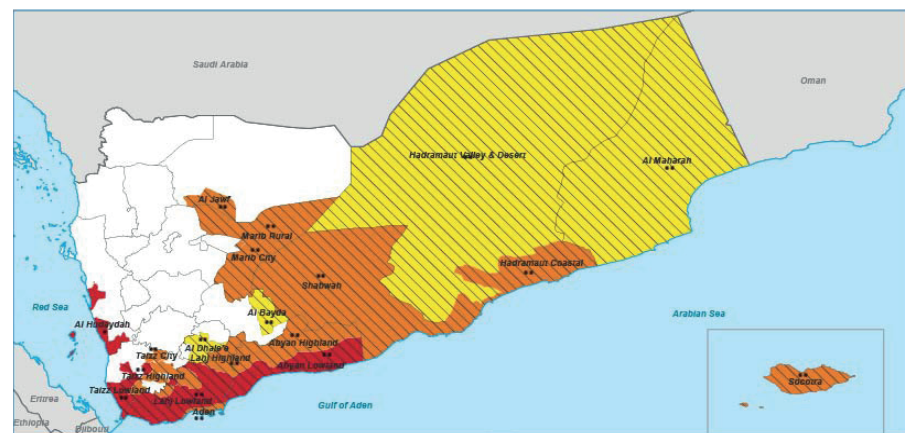
Humanitarian situation continues its downward spiral

The humanitarian situation has deteriorated further in 2020, driven by escalating conflict, an economic crisis and currency collapse and exacerbated by torrential rains and flooding, COVID-19 and a fuel crisis. The operating environment remained restricted while the humanitarian response faces a huge funding shortfall. With more than 24 million people – 80

per cent of the country's population – in need of some form of humanitarian or protection assistance, Yemen remains the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

At its core, the humanitarian situation is driven by conflict, which intensified in 2020 causing civilian casualties and displacement – over 156,000 people have been displaced this year alone, adding to the 3.6 million existing

Projected malnutrition classification in southern governorates (August- July 2020)



IPC Acute Malnutrition Classification

- 1 - Acceptable
- 4 - Critical
- Areas with inadequate evidence
- 2 - Alert
- 5 - Extremely critical
- Areas not analysed
- 3 - Serious
- Phase classification based on MUAC (mid-upper arm circumference)

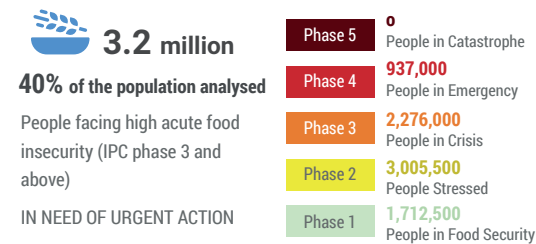


OCHA

YEMEN

Source: IPC Acute malnutrition analysis (Oct 2020)

Projected acute malnutrition situation in southern governorates Aug - Dec 2020



High levels of food insecurity persist, amidst deterioration of the economy, conflict and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Source: IPC (July 2020)

internally displaced persons (IDPs). Some of the highest levels of vulnerability are concentrated in IDP sites where few services are available. An estimated 422,000 migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees in Yemen are at extreme risk and an estimated 138,000 are completely reliant on aid.

Between April and August 2020, heavy rains and flooding devastated communities and IDP sites. Locust infestations are expected to cause damage and losses worth US\$222 million to staple crops, animals and livestock. There are acute WASH deficits in 54 districts while 46 districts are at high risk of cholera.

Another key driver of the worsening humanitarian situation is the economy, which has collapsed further this year. A fuel crisis contributed to increased basic commodity prices and hindered access to basic services. By end of September, the Yemeni rial had depreciated to an all-time low of YER850/US\$ in southern governorates as foreign reserves dried up. Remittances from Yemenis abroad, the largest source of foreign exchange, dropped by up to 70 per cent as a result of the COVID-19 global downturn, leaving more of the population unable to afford essentials. Aside of the economic impact of COVID-19, Yemen continues to grapple with the health impact of the virus – nearly six years of war have left the population with reduced levels of immunity and a decimated health sector.

By mid-2020, Yemen had returned to alarming levels of food insecurity, and a catastrophic food security crisis was looming. A partial Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) analysis published of southern governorates in July 2020, warned that economic shocks, conflict, floods, locusts and

COVID-19 could reverse food security gains in Yemen. The report indicated that by December 2020, the population facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above) would increase from 2 million to 3.2 million people (40 per cent of the population analyzed) unless aid was maintained at 2019 levels.

A second IPC report in October 2020 covering the south of the country, highlighted how acute malnutrition rates among children under age 5 are now the highest ever recorded in some districts. The analysis reveals a near 10 per cent increase in cases of acute malnutrition this year. The greatest increase is in cases of young children suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM) which has increased by 15.5 per cent, leaving at least 98,000 children under age 5 at high risk of dying without urgent treatment.



A months old child after undergoing nutrition testing in Al-Sabeen Hospital, Sana'a City in June 2020. Photo by Ahmed Haleem/ UNICEF

“We’ve been warning since July that Yemen is on the brink of a catastrophic food security crisis. If the war doesn’t end now, we are nearing an irreversible situation and risk losing an entire generation of Yemen’s young children,” said Ms. Lise Grande, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen in a statement on 27 October. “The data we are releasing today confirms that acute malnutrition among children is hitting the highest levels we have seen since the war started.”

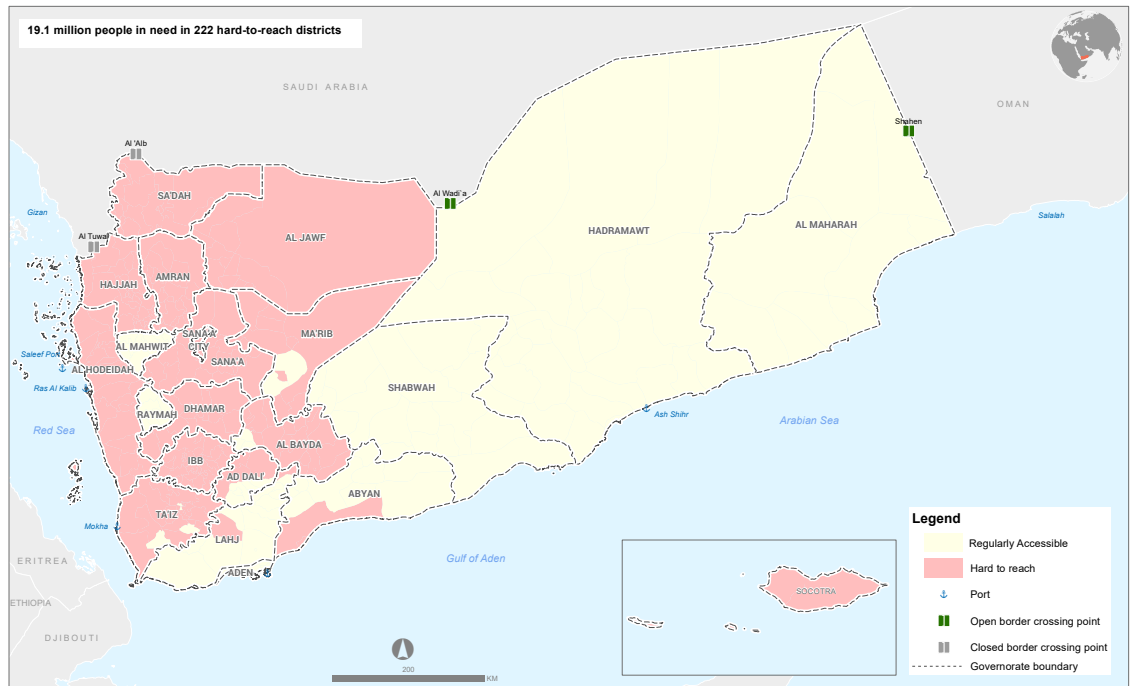
“For the past two years, we’ve been able to roll-back the worst famine in a generation. We’ve done this by providing massive amounts of humanitarian assistance and working with authorities to stabilize the economic factors driving the crisis,” said Ms. Grande. “It’s heartbreaking that when people need us the most, we can’t do what’s necessary because we don’t have funding.”

Marginal improvements in a restricted and complex operating environment

The operating environment for humanitarians in Yemen remains extremely challenging and aid workers continue to face serious difficulties delivering assistance across the country as a result of armed conflict and insecurity, restrictive

regulations and logistical impediments. Partners have worked with the authorities to address access issues and there has been some improvement since an all-time low at the end of 2019 and start of 2020. However, by August 2020, the number of people in

Hard-to-reach districts by principal impediment (as of August 2020)



Source: OCHA Yemen

need living in hard-to-reach (HTR) areas had shot up from 5.1 million in April 2019 to an estimated 19.1 million people – 80 per cent of all those in need – including about 11.7 million people in acute humanitarian need. Most HTR areas are in northern governorates.

Bureaucratic impediments

Over 3,200 cases involving bureaucratic impediments were reported between January and September 2020, including arbitrary attempts to interfere in the delivery of aid, which contributed

Bureaucracy and interference cause delays to multi-sectoral projects

An NGO negotiated a multi-sectoral project funded by the Yemen Humanitarian Fund (YHF) in the south for 5 months, delaying the delivery of \$5.7 million worth of assistance to more than 78,000 beneficiaries. A final governorate-level signature was required in Aden, before the project could be submitted to the Ministry of Population and International Cooperation (MoPIC) HQ for final approval. A recent change in a governor caused further delays, with requests for additional paperwork. However, strong relationships with local stakeholders in all targeted governorates allowed implementation to begin and further delays were avoided.

The approval process for a similar project in the north has been more challenging and has taken close to 7 months, delaying the delivery of assistance to 73,000 beneficiaries. The NGO has addressed all technical comments for WASH and Shelter activities. However, the authorities insist that camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) is its mandate and that it should lead on implementation. The NGO has negotiated for months to explain project design, different responsibilities and the need to maintain an integrated package of activities based on assessed need and has now called on the donor to support negotiations.

to significant delays and some reduction in aid distribution. Nearly 2,300 reports involved restrictions on the movement of humanitarian organizations, personnel and goods within and to Yemen, and most related to arbitrary delays and denials of travel permits, including for supplies and aid deliveries, and for staff movement.

Interference in projects

About 930 incidents where the authorities interfered in humanitarian operations were reported across the country in the year to September. These included attempts to manipulate beneficiary registration and targeting, obstructing assessments and monitoring, arbitrarily suspending activities, and attempting to influence and control the NGO project management cycle, including project design, budgets, procurement and staffing. The delay by authorities in approving NGO projects

Power dynamics delay to an education project in a northern governorate

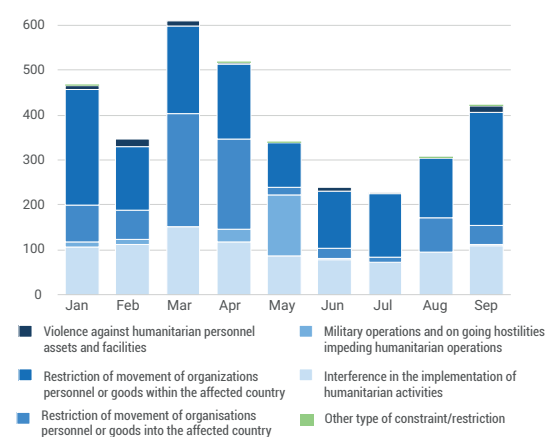
A recently approved YHF Education and WASH project in a northern governorate was initially delayed because of disputes and power dynamics involving the Supreme Council for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (SCMCHA) and the relevant ministries. The project was finally approved in September 2020 after five months of negotiations. However, at the governorate level, National Security has since blocked a SCMCHA directive for an inception workshop and is insisting on reviewing sub-agreements and training material, and sending all documentation back to Sana'a for a secondary review even though National Security signs off all projects centrally prior to approval by SCMCHA HQ. While the NGO has escalated the matter to the central level, almost 16,500 beneficiaries have been deprived of critical WASH-related COVID prevention activities and children are experiencing delays to their education.

affected the timely delivery of humanitarian aid to 9 million people. By the end of October, at least 97 NGO projects worth \$220.76 million, targeting 7.22 million people, remained unimplemented, in part or in full, due to outstanding project sub-agreements. The most significant delays were reported in the north of the country, where project approval periods were estimated at between 140 and 150 days, compared with between 80 and 90 days in the south.

Restrictive regulations

In northern governorates, the aid operation was particularly affected by restrictive regulations that often contravened humanitarian principles, agency rules and regulations, and contractual agreements with donors. In 2020, the authorities issued directives to share protected information about beneficiaries, banning some types of humanitarian activities and imposing taxes on humanitarian operations. In southern governorates, the

Access incidents reported (Jan-Sep 2020)



Source: OCHA Yemen

authorities also attempted to restrict humanitarian operations, although to a lesser degree. While most restrictions associated with the threat of COVID-19 had been lifted by the end of September, including

travel restrictions, pre-existing bureaucratic impediments continue to hamper efforts to scale back up.

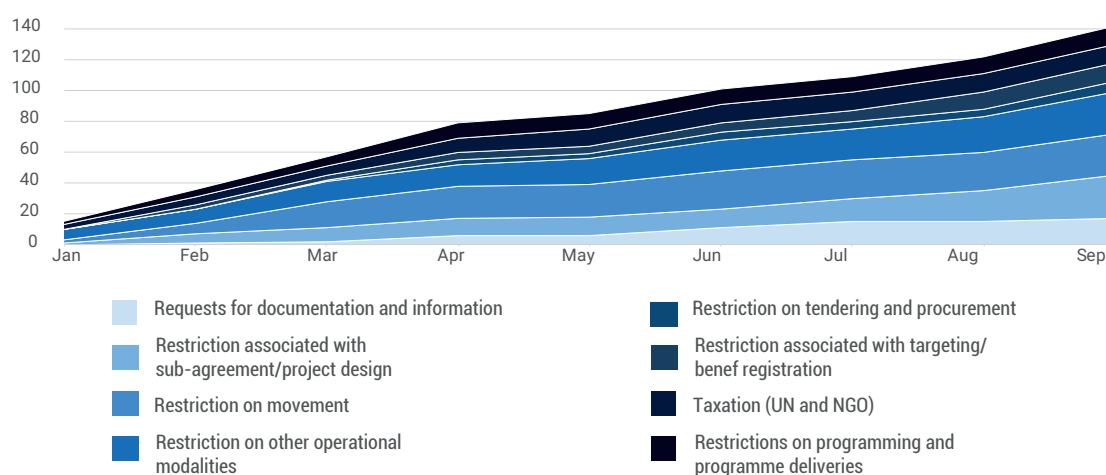
Conflict and security

Access to nearly a third of the population in need in HTR areas was impeded by factors relating to armed conflict, in 71 districts where some 5 million people in need are located. Violence, often compounded by bureaucratic restrictions, disrupted humanitarian deliveries, obstructed key access routes and led to the temporary withdrawal of humanitarian personnel. Sixty-nine incidents where violence directly targeted or affected organizations were reported between January and September. These included detention, assault, harassment of humanitarian personnel, confiscation and attacks on humanitarian assets, and occupation of humanitarian premises. In 2020 hostilities escalated along old and new frontlines. Since January, clashes intensified in border areas of Marib, Sana'a and Al Jawf governorates with intermittent escalations in Al Hudaydah, Hajjah, Ad Dhale'e, Al Bayda, Sa'ada and Taizz governorates. Since May, tensions between the Government of Yemen (GoY), and the Southern Transitional Council (STC) have flared up in Aden, Abyan and Taizz.

Improvements in the operating environment

The UN, NGOs and international donors continue to engage with the authorities in Yemen and work towards a sustained, safe and principled humanitarian response across the country. Following engagement with authorities in Sana'a, 109 NGO sub-agreements worth \$205 million and targeting over 5.1 million people have been approved since January 2020. Delays in approving project agreements are down by an average of 20 days and a 2 per cent levy on NGO projects was rescinded in February. Progress was also made in renewing the registration of some international

Directives issued by the de facto authorities in Sana'a (January - September 2020)



Source: OCHA Yemen

NGOs and on the implementation of coordinated needs assessments to inform country-wide humanitarian planning. However, many issues remain outstanding, including agreeing standardized procedures to process NGO agreements, travel permits and monitoring activities and devising a tax and customs framework for humanitarian operations. Coordinated engagement with the GoY has similarly focused on addressing key challenges

posed by bureaucratic impediments, with decisive progress made on international NGO principal agreements in recent months and 92 NGO sub-agreements worth \$136 million targeting 3.5 million people have been approved this year. With increased hostilities in the south and tensions among security and military actors, there has also been a focus on civil-military coordination to ensure a safe and principled humanitarian response.

Humanitarian needs and cluster achievements

In 2019, restrictions imposed by the authorities prevented humanitarians from completing critical humanitarian assessments. The Multi-Cluster Location Assessment (MCLA), Food Security Livelihood Assessment (FSLA), and SMART surveys – crucial tools for determining levels of need – were blocked for months. This made it difficult to develop a robust evidence base for humanitarian needs in Yemen, including response planning for 2020.

As a result of the challenges faced in conducting assessments, aid agencies launched a Humanitarian Response Plan extension – a technical rollover from the 2019 plan – outlining a strategy for delivering assistance in Yemen. The financial appeal was reduced from \$4.19 billion in 2019 to \$3.38 billion in 2020, reflecting capacity to implement, and targeted 19 million people in need. However, by the end of October, only US\$1.43 billion of the 2020

appeal had been received, forcing 31 of 41 major humanitarian UN programmes to close or reduce.

By March 2020, it became clear that cluster capacity to deliver a principled, effective and efficient operation was affected by five key factors: increasing access restrictions on the response, an acute funding shortage, reduced partner presence, risk and programme re-calibration as clusters implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure a principled response, and since March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of these factors on each cluster reduced their reach at a time when the humanitarian situation was deteriorating and needs were increasing. The number of people reached with assistance decreased across many cluster areas, with partners reaching an average of 10.6 million people each month by September 2020 down from 14 million per month reached in the first quarter of the year.

Uptick in hostilities and civilian casualties in third quarter of 2020

By the end of September, the number of active frontlines across Yemen had reached 47, up from 33 at the start of the year. With an uptick in fighting in the third quarter of the year, there was a corresponding increase in the number of civilian casualties. The Civilian Impact Monitoring Project (CIMP) reported that 527 civilians were killed or injured in hostilities between July and September, an increase of 11 per cent on the previous quarter; the number of fatalities alone rose to 215, an increase of 28 per cent; and the number of civilian casualties from air strikes doubled, up from 47 to 94.

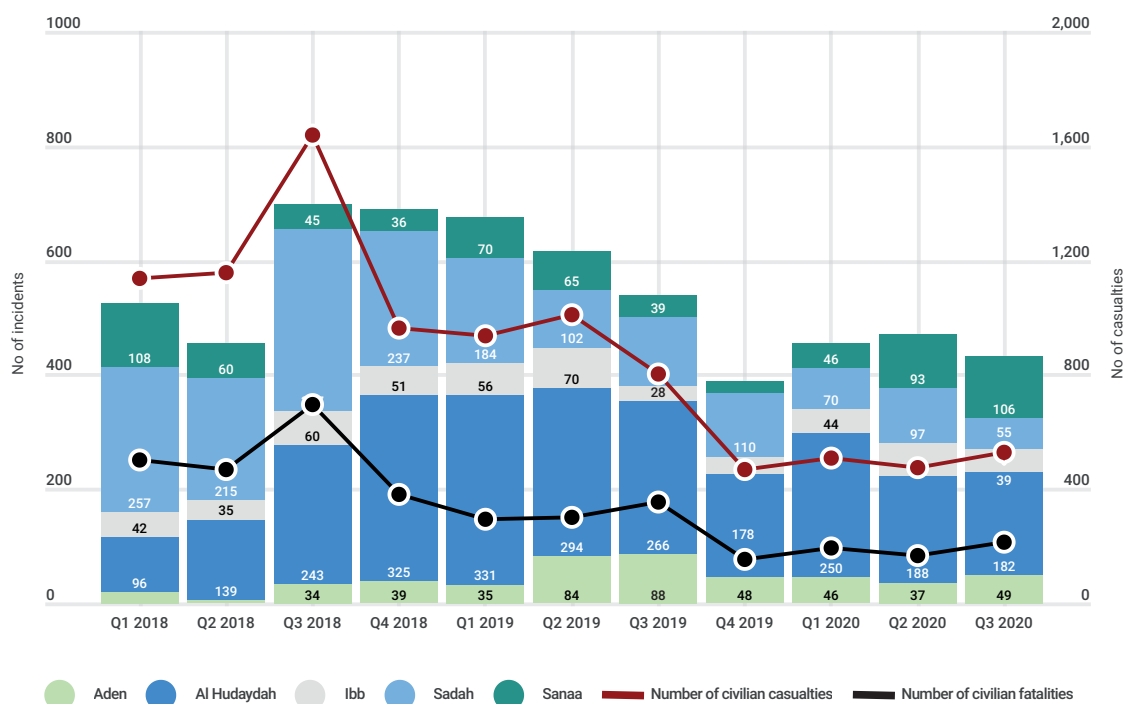
The hotspots were in Taizz, Al Hudaydah, Al Jawf, Marib and Al Bayda. The highest number of casualties was in Taizz for the second consecutive quarter, where 94 civilian casualties were recorded, followed by Al Hudaydah, with 76 civilian casualties. In Al Jawf, there was a reported spike in the number of civilian casualties with a sixfold increase, driven by a high casualty count (52) from air strikes. In Marib and Al Bayda, civilian casualties rose by 78

per cent as hostilities and air strikes increased along Marib's southern border with Al Bayda. Air strikes hit 186 houses in Marib out of 241 houses damaged by air strikes across the country. In September, there was an increase in cross-border attacks in Shada'a and Monabbih in the north of the country, near the border between Sa'ada Governorate and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and 50 civilian casualties were reported across the governorate over the three-month period. Child casualties reached 135 during the quarter, including 53 fatalities – an increase of 61 per cent on the previous quarter – and 54 children were killed or injured by air strikes, a fivefold increase on the previous quarter.

Renewed call for political dialogue

In response to the sharp uptick in fighting and a spike in civilian casualties in the Taizz and Al Hudaydah governorates over a two-week period from the end of September, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, Ms. Lise Grande, issued a

Number of Incidents per hub and total civilian casualties per quarter (Jan - Sep 2020)



Source: CIMP

statement, calling on the parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and to return to peace negotiations. “We have to be clear, absolutely clear about this,” said Ms. Grande. “Parties which have taken up arms are responsible, morally and legally, for doing everything possible to protect civilians and

ensure they receive the assistance they are entitled to and need. There are political options on the table to end the fighting and move to political dialogue. With famine looming and funding running out, the parties have to find the strength and courage to do this.”

For further information, please contact:

Aiden O’Leary

Head of Office, UN-OCHA Yemen

E-mail: oleary@un.org

Tapiwa Gomo

Head of Communication, UN-OCHA Yemen

Tel: +967 712 222 860

E-mail: gomo@un.org

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