

HUMANITARIAN UPDATE

Noora is part of the more than 700 internally displaced families at a former school in Dar Saad in Aden. She is among those struggling to feed their children. Giles Clarke/OCHA.

Issue 2 / February 2021

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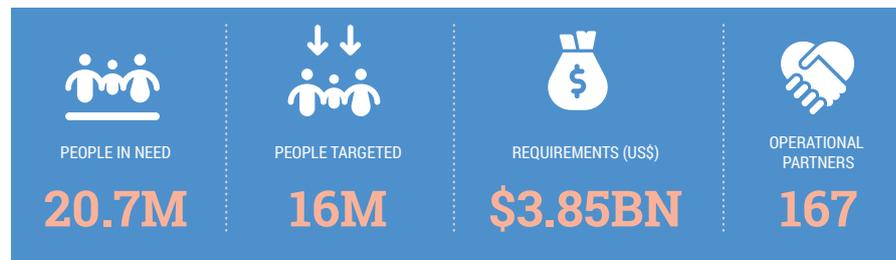


OCHA

YEMEN

DONORS MUST ACT NOW TO PREVENT WIDESPREAD FAMINE IN YEMEN

António Guterres, the United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG), convened a high-level pledging event on 1 March, co-hosted by the Governments of Sweden and Switzerland, to call for immediate funding to prevent a large-scale famine in Yemen.

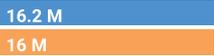
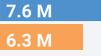
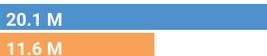
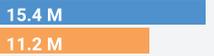
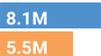
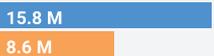
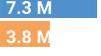
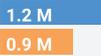
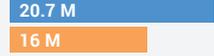


The UN SG noted that two-thirds of Yemenis need humanitarian assistance to survive while more than 16 million people will face hunger this year, and nearly 50,000 Yemenis are already starving to death in famine-like conditions. Almost half of Yemen's children under age 5 will suffer from acute malnutrition, including 400,000 who could die without urgent treatment.

Funding for the aid operation is running out fast. At the high-level pledging event, the UN called for US\$3.85 billion this year to help 16 million Yemenis in desperate need.

Nearly \$1.7 billion were pledged at the high-level event which was attended by more than 100 representatives of Member States, donors, International Organizations, UN Agencies, NGOs and civil society organizations. The UN described the outcome as disappointing. Pledges announced were less than what was received for the humanitarian response plan in 2020 and a billion dollars less than was pledged at the conference held in 2019.

OVERVIEW OF PEOPLE TARGETED AND FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS BY CLUSTER

CLUSTER	% TARGETED	IN NEED TARGETED	NUMBER OF PARTNERS	FUNDING REQUIRED
 Food Security and Agriculture	 99%	 16.2 M 16 M	90	1,708\$ M
 Nutrition	 83%	 7.6 M 6.3 M	43	442.9\$ M
 Health	 58%	 20.1 M 11.6 M	45	438.8\$ M
 Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	 73%	 15.4 M 11.2 M	80	330.7\$ M
 Education	 68%	 8.1 M 5.5 M	70	257.8\$ M
 Protection	 54%	 15.8 M 8.6 M	73	218.0\$ M
 Shelter and Non-Food Items	 52%	 7.3 M 3.8 M	167	207.6\$ M
 Camp Coordination and Camp Management	 73%	 1.2 M 0.9 M	21	61.3\$ M
 Refugee and Migrants Multi-Sector	 100%	 0.3 M 0.3 M	12	58.7\$ M
 Logistics			99	51.2\$ M
 Rapid Response Mechanism	 100%	 0.7 M 0.7 M	11	37.6\$ M
 Coordination			109	37.5\$ M
 Emergency Telecommunications			41	3.3\$ M
Total	77%	 20.7 M 16 M	167	3.85\$ B

Source: Clusters

In his closing remarks, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres said: “Millions of Yemeni children, women and men desperately need aid to live. Cutting aid is a death sentence. The best that can be said about today is that it represents a down payment. I thank those who did pledge generously, and I ask others to consider again what they can do to help stave off the worst famine the world has seen in decades.”

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mark Lowcock, said: “We are at a crossroads with Yemen. We can choose the path to peace or let Yemenis slide into the world’s worst famine for decades. An adequately funded aid operation will prevent the spread of famine and create the conditions for lasting peace. If you’re not feeding the people, you’re feeding the war.”

H.E. Mr. Ignazio Cassis, Vice-President of Switzerland and Head of the Federal

Department of Foreign Affairs, said: “COVID-19 is not only a global health crisis; it also acts as a magnifying glass. The people of Yemen have suffered for years from armed conflict, famine, infectious diseases, the effects of climate change and high inflation. COVID-19 has made the dire living situation of these people even worse.”

H.E. Ms. Ann Linde, Sweden’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, said: “Yemen is the world’s most dangerous place for children. The only sustainable solution to the humanitarian crisis is an end to the fighting and a political solution to the conflict. The international community must step up on funding to the UN-coordinated humanitarian response and increase political support to the UN-led peace efforts.”

H.E. Mr. Per Olsson Fridh, Sweden’s Minister for International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs, added: “The people

of Yemen are being starved by the continued conflict. Without increased support to the humanitarian response, they will face the worst famine the world has seen in decades. Donors must now demonstrate their commitment to the Yemeni people and to our shared humanity.”

In 2020, funding for the aid operation in Yemen dropped dramatically. The UN and NGO partners received \$1.9 billion, or around half of what they received the year before and

half of what was needed. Aid had to be cut as a result, and people who need help are not getting it.

This year, aid agencies aim to help more than 16 million people. Given the alarming data on famine risk, with nearly 2.3 million children under five who suffer acute malnutrition, as well as the presence of COVID-19, cholera and other threats, donors are urged to make funds available without delay.

YEMEN REMAINS WORLD'S WORST HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN NEED BY CLUSTER (2021)



Source: Clusters

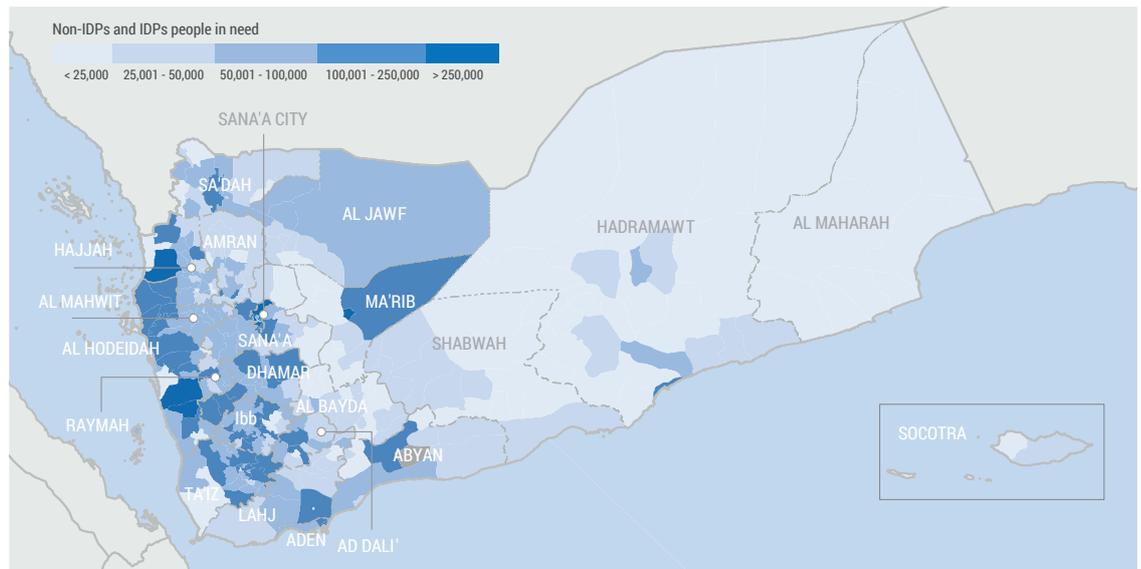
Yemen remains the world's largest humanitarian crisis, with more than 20.7 million people estimated to need humanitarian assistance in 2021; 12.1 million people of whom are estimated to be in acute need, according to the Humanitarian Needs Overview released by the Yemen Humanitarian Country Team on 22 February 2021. These people are facing crisis or worse levels of severity of needs, in obtaining the necessities of life, maintaining their health and wellbeing, and the coping strategies employed just to stay alive. The analysis covers all 333 districts in Yemen; each has been affected by the humanitarian crisis.

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen is a result of a brutal armed conflict that escalated six years ago. It has killed and injured tens of thousands of civilians, causing immense suffering for the Yemeni people. In 2020, the conflict intensified, displacing 172,000 people, which

brought the number of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) to at least 4 million.

The shrinking economy is also a major driver of suffering. The economy and the currency continued to collapse in 2020 as foreign reserves were depleted and the government was unable to subsidize food and other commodities for which Yemen is 90 per cent import-reliant. The situation was exacerbated by the global COVID-19 turnaround which led to a sharp drop in remittances – the largest source of foreign currency and a lifeline for many families where 80 per cent of people live below the poverty line. As a result, millions of people are unable to afford their basic needs. A fuel crisis in the north has led to price hikes, and provision of services in the health and WASH clusters is becoming a challenge. Government capacity to regularly pay salaries and pensions to public employees has been

PEOPLE IN NEED BY DISTRICT (2021)



Source: 2021 Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview

hindered and public services have been degraded.

The combined impact of these drivers of the crisis is most visible in the growing risk of famine and severe acute malnutrition, disease outbreaks, conflict casualties, forced displacement and reversal of past development gains. Recurring natural hazards will likely increase vulnerabilities and humanitarian needs in 2021. There is a real risk of a major oil spill with potentially devastating implications for the population if the maintenance of the FSO 'SAFER' tanker, floating off the Red Sea Coast, is not conducted urgently. In addition, the conduct of the parties to the conflict has had a profound impact on the aid operation – particularly humanitarian access, aid delivery and data collection.

The HNO analysis projects a further deterioration in 2021 with the severity of needs expected to increase unless the war stops, improvement in the economy, and increased humanitarian funding. In the absence of a political agreement, conflict will continue to cause civilian casualties, internal displacement and damage to critical infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, main supply routes and economic markets. While armed conflict will continue to impede humanitarian operations, bureaucratic restrictions, which had obstructed the humanitarian response in past years, are expected to continue to be a predominant stumbling block.

DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS

Conflict



Number of active frontlines increased from 33 to 49 between 2019 and 2020

+2K

2,087 civilians killed or injured in 2020 as a direct result of the conflict

Economic collapse

80%

80% of the Yemeni population lives below the poverty line

40%

More than 40% of Yemeni households have lost their primary source of income

Market trends and exchange rate fluctuation

150%

Food and fuel prices have increased by more than 150% compared to pre-crisis levels



Value of Yemeni rial has depreciated by two thirds in the north and three quarters in the south compared to pre-crisis averages

Natural disasters and hazards

>300 K

More than 300,000 people affected by flooding in 2020

\$222 M

In agricultural losses due to locusts in 2020

Source: 2021 Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview

BLOCKADE AND CONFLICT TAKE A HEAVY TOLL ON YEMEN'S ECONOMY

The blockade and ongoing conflict have taken a heavy toll on Yemen's economy, which has shrunk by more than half since the conflict began in 2015. Without the lifting of the blockade, macro-economic stability and an adequately capitalized central bank, the socio-economic environment is expected to decline further in 2021. Experts estimate that GDP losses endured in the first 5 years of the conflict could double to \$181 billion if the conflict continues through 2022. The Yemeni rial is expected to continue to depreciate, severely affecting the purchasing power of the population.

Job opportunities have become scarce and many of those employed – especially in the public sector – have for years been receiving only partial and irregular salary payments. In the meantime, restrictions on imports have sharply increased fuel prices in the north.

As Yemen imports around 90 per cent of its food and fuel needs – and almost everything else – the depreciation of the Yemeni rial has seriously eroded Yemenis' purchasing power. In the south, trading at around 880 to the US dollar, the rial is worth about a quarter of the value it had before the conflict began. In northern governorates, the exchange rate is almost three times higher than pre-conflict levels.

The rial's depreciation has accelerated in recent months, driving spiraling inflation. One factor driving the rial's depreciation has been the impact of the COVID-19-induced global economic downturn on the flow of remittances from Yemenis working abroad, which by some estimates had dropped by as much as 80 per cent in 2020 and have only slowly begun to recover since the beginning of 2021. Remittances have for years been the country's largest source of foreign currency, in addition to being a primary source of

income for millions of Yemenis.

A more immediate driver of the rial's depreciation had been the lack of donor-supported foreign currency injections, which had in the past been used to support the import of basic commodities and keep the exchange rate at sustainable levels. The \$2.2 billion cash deposit by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Central Bank of Yemen (CBY) in Aden, which has since March 2018 helped importers buy staple commodities at subsidized exchange rates, had been exhausted, affecting the CBY's ability to cover funds for imports of basic commodities in foreign currency. The Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), Mark Lowcock, has repeatedly called on Yemen's partners to work with the Government on the provision of foreign-exchange injections to stabilize the rial and allow it to pay some of the delayed salaries of key public sector workers.

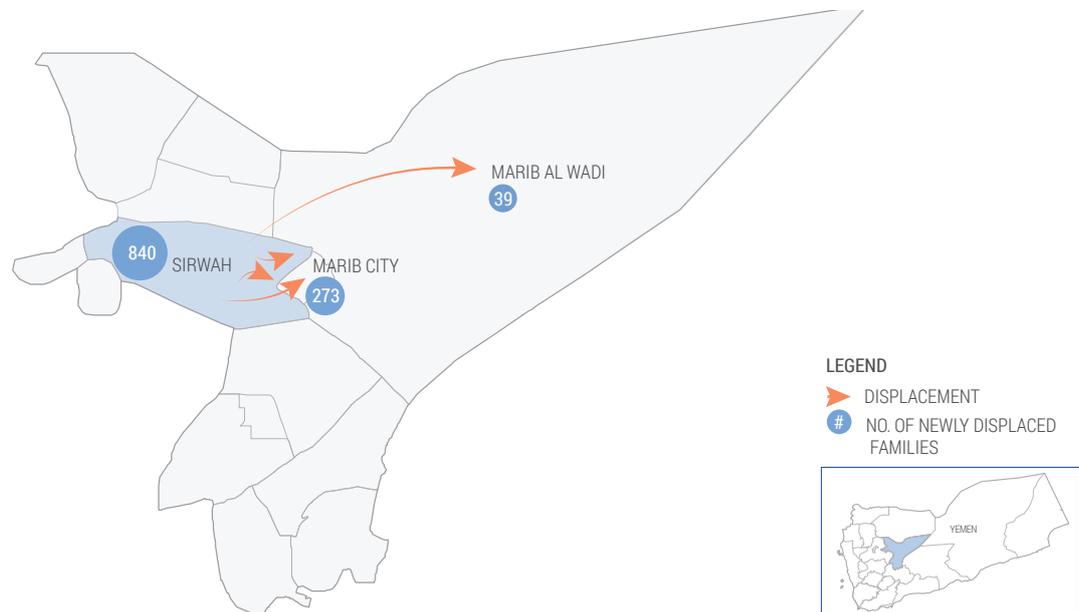
The inflation rate for food commodities has increased by 17.5 per cent in January 2021, compared with January 2020. In the meantime, fuel prices have been increasing in northern governorates for seven consecutive months – with prices for petrol, diesel and cooking gas in the parallel market increasing by 59, 70 and 88 per cent, respectively, compared with official prices, which have remained unchanged. The rial's depreciation has not been the only factor driving inflation. Restrictions on the import of essential commodities have also played a role. Fuel imports have remained near record lows since the beginning of 2021, contributing to severe fuel shortages and rapidly increasing prices in northern governorates. Mr. Lowcock has repeatedly called for lifting restrictions on Yemen's ports to expedite the movement of much-needed commodities and help reduce their prices.

AVERAGE PARALLEL EXCHANGE RATE OF THE YEMENI RIAL AGAINST THE US DOLLAR SINCE JULY 2018 TO NOVEMBER 2020



Source: FAO

ESCALATING HOSTILITIES IN MA'RIB FORCE THOUSANDS OF DISPLACED PEOPLE TO FLEE AGAIN



Source: IOM

Intense clashes which broke out in several districts of Ma'rib Governorate in the first week of February 2021 have continued, leading to the displacement of more than 8,000 civilians. Initial field reports indicate massive displacement within Ma'rib Governorate, especially from Sirwah District, which has seen the heaviest fighting.

Ma'rib Governorate already hosts an estimated one million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) – the largest IDP population in Yemen according to local authorities – and some live in approximately 125 IDP sites. Sirwah District hosts around 30,000 displaced people in at least 14 displacement sites, and there are reports of fighting close to several sites. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), on average, some people have been displaced three times and most newly displaced people had been living in displacement sites, with some reportedly carrying their shelters with them to their new locations.

The overall civilian casualty figures and the number of displaced persons remain unclear due to continued fighting in the affected areas. IOM estimates that 1,152 families (8,064 individuals) have been displaced since 8 February and the number of displaced families might be much higher. Most displaced families fled to safer areas within Sirwah and Ma'rib Al Wadi districts and Ma'rib City. The majority

of displacement is secondary from existing IDP sites and locations to safer areas in Sirwah. Four IDP sites in Sirwah – Al-Zur, Dhanah Alhayal, Dhanah (Alsawabin) and Almustashfa – were impacted by the fighting and one of them has emptied due to hostilities and two health facilities had to suspend operations.

With continued fighting, more civilians are expected to continue to flee towards the eastern outskirts of Sirwah and into Ma'rib City, where IDP sites are already crowded and response capacities are overstretched. Should hostilities move towards the city and surrounding areas, it could displace another 385,000 people outside of the city and into Hadramawt, while limiting humanitarian access and placing significant strains on the already limited resources.

Humanitarian partners on the ground continue to scale up assessment and contingency planning. They are stepping up the response for the IDPs they can access and have identified shelter, food, water, sanitation, health and protection assistance as urgent needs. Read more: [Ma'rib Situation Update No. 1 \(pdf, reliefweb.int\)](#).

There has been widespread concern by member states over the escalating hostilities in Ma'rib Governorate. At the UN Security Council briefing on 18 February, ERC/USG Mark Lowcock [warned](#) that the escalation of

attacks on Ma'rib was extremely dangerous and threatened "to send hundreds of thousands of people again running for their lives at a time when everyone should be doing everything possible to stop famine." On 19 February, a spokesperson Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights also expressed increasing concern for the fate of civilians and urged parties to the conflict to protect all civilians and to respect international humanitarian law principles on the conduct of hostilities.

Humanitarian partners continue to scale up response and preparedness. An estimated 11,000 displaced people have already been assisted. Some 25 aid organizations, including seven UN agencies, 6 INGOs and 12 NNGOs are present and providing assistance in Ma'rib. OCHA has deployed two staff to strengthen coordination. An OCHA-led Coordination



Families fleeing hostilities in Sirwah District. ©IOM

Taskforce for Ma'rib is in place to coordinate response. The taskforce is comprised of nine clusters which include Food security, Camp Management, Shelter, WASH, Health, RRM, Nutrition, Protection and Education. Plans are underway to transition the Task Force to a fully functional Regional Coordination Team and a Ma'rib Operational Plan is being finalized.

Thousands of migrants are stranded in Ma'rib

In addition to the estimated 1 million IDPs in Ma'rib Governorate, more than 4,500 migrants who were heading to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) are stranded in the governorate as the border is closed. Many have settled in the Batha Bin Mueyli area in a transit settlement where IOM and partners provide basic services, including WASH, NFIs and protection assistance. There are reported ongoing tensions between the migrants and the local community and between newer and more established migrants, and IOM works to limit these.

Several hundred new arrivals joined the settlement in January and many, particularly women, report that they have been subject to violence and abuse on their journey, often at checkpoints. Women and girls are the most vulnerable to exploitation and are frequently exploited by traffickers and smugglers, who control their movements and sources of income, and when they reach their destination, they are expected to pay the smuggler or trafficker. IOM estimated that in the second half of January, around 100 women were forced to move to Sana'a to work as domestic labourers while other migrant women have been forced to work off their debts on farms in Ma'rib. Food and medical care are the most

prevalent needs, and IOM provides tents, food and water; makes referrals for medical care; and provides individual care for vulnerable cases. The recent surge in hostilities has also displaced migrants; between 30 and 40 Ethiopian farm workers were displaced from Dhanah (AlHayal) and Al Zur to Al Rawdah. In the first three weeks of February, IOM distributed 1,356 food kits to 1,129 men and 227 women in Ma'rib City and Ma'rib Al Wadi. Migrants are amongst the most marginalized and excluded groups; their needs remain acute across Yemen.



Migrant women stranded in Ma'rib. ©IOM

HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY WELCOMES DAVID GRESSLY AS THE NEW HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR FOR YEMEN

On 15 February, the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres appointed David Gressly of the United States as the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen. Mr. Gressly brings to the role more than 40 years of international experience in peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and development. He held several leadership positions at the United Nations, including, most recently, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Protection and Operations with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He also occupied the posts of United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-

General for Stabilization and the Rule of Law as well as Humanitarian Coordinator with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, Head of Mission for the United Nations Office in Mali (UNOM) and Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the 2012 food crisis in the Sahel. Before that, Mr. Gressly served the United Nations for more than 20 years, including as Regional Coordinator covering South Sudan. He also held managerial positions in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, India and Nigeria within the Organization, working in the development and humanitarian fields. He takes over from Ms. Lise Grande who concluded her mission in Yemen in 2020.



Mr. Gressly in the DRC. MONUSCO / ©Flickr

For further information, please contact:

Sajjad Mohammad Sajid

Head of Office, UN-OCHA Yemen

E-mail: sajid@un.org

Tapiwa Gomo

Head of Communication, UN-OCHA Yemen

Tel: +967 712 222 860

E-mail: gomo@un.org

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