

HUMANITARIAN UPDATE

12-year-old Ahmed looks at the ceiling of his school in Hajjah, 2021. © UNICEF

Issue 9/ September 2021

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OCHA

YEMEN

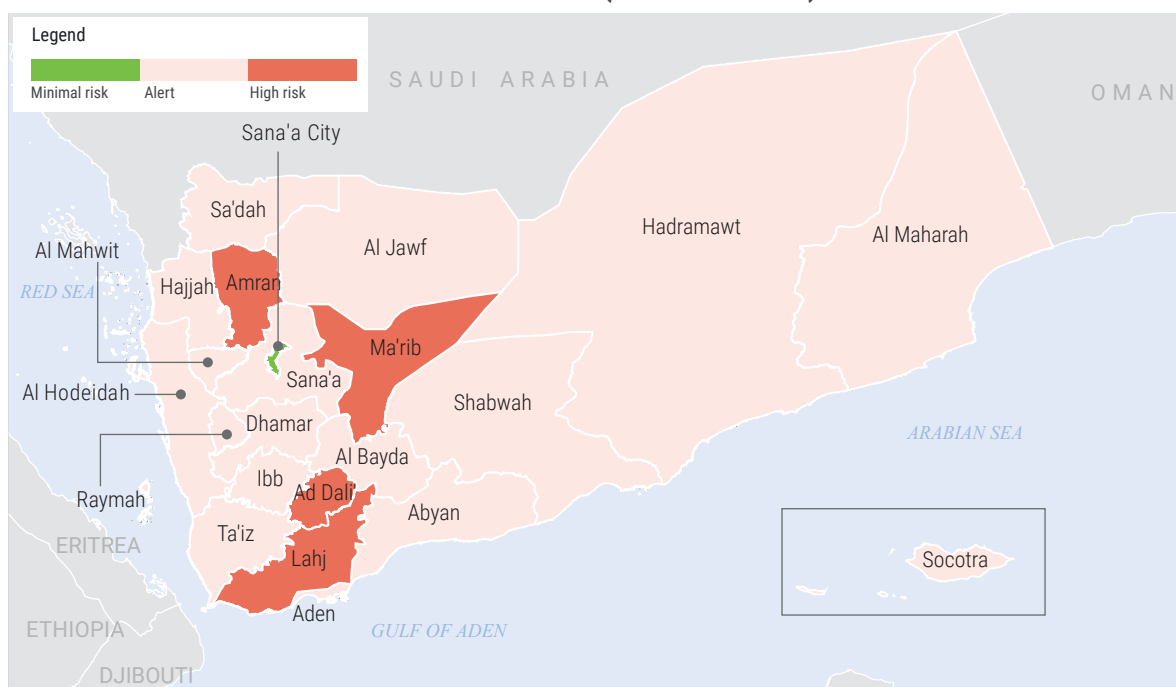
FOOD INSECURITY IN YEMEN GROWS AS ECONOMY SHRINKS

Ongoing devaluation of the Yemeni rial (YER) and soaring prices are compounding hunger in Yemen, where some 16.2 million people already face food insecurity this year. Food prices have risen by around 60 per cent in some parts of Yemen since the start of the year, driven by the collapse of the YER and intensifying already inadequate food consumption – a measure of hunger tracked by the World Food Programme (WFP). In areas under the control of the internationally recognized government (IRG), where food has become most unaffordable, the rial fell by nearly 40 per cent against the US dollar in the first eight months of 2021, surpassing YER 1,000 per USD for the first time ever in July. As of end-September, it had surpassed YER 1,200 per USD. In these southern areas of Yemen, inadequate food consumption is now over 45 per cent. In the country's north, where tight economic

controls imposed by the de facto authorities (DFA) keep the rial relatively stable, it is around 37 per cent.

The devaluation of the rial is making it substantially harder for ordinary people in Yemen to afford basic food, an already difficult prospect given disruptions to market functionality due to over seven years of conflict, the displacement of more than 4 million people, and the impact of COVID-19. This is compounded by the high transportation costs resulting from high fuel costs and the effects of increasing global food prices on a country where some 90 per cent of food and other essential commodities are imported. The cost of the national minimum food basket (MFB) in Yemen – an indicator of the cost of living – reached YER 62,607 in August 2021, some 36 per cent higher than at the start of this year and nearly quadruple the cost in January 2015. In IRG

PROJECTED FOOD SECURITY ALERT LEVEL (JUL-SEP 2021)



Source: FAO

areas, the change has been even more drastic, with the August 2021 MFB costing YER 78,136, around 45 per cent more than in January 2021 and 4.5 times its cost in January 2015.

With livelihood and income opportunities unchanged, people must now work more hours in order to afford the full cost of the monthly MFB. People in Lahj Governorate are worst affected, having to work 17 days per month to afford the minimum monthly cost of living for a household in 2021, compared to eight days per month a year ago. In an effort to mitigate this, in July food security partners aligned the cash transfer amount with market prices to facilitate families' ability to cope with rising food prices. Yet keeping pace with such rapid price increases remains impossible given the daily fluctuations of the exchange rate.

The impact of this can be seen in the worsening Food Consumption Scores (FCS) across Yemen. A proxy indicator of household caloric availability developed by WFP, the FCS aggregates household-level data on the diversity and frequency of food groups consumed, and is weighted according to the relative nutritional value of the consumed food groups. In 12 of Yemen's 22 governorates, at least 40 per cent of the population experience inadequate food consumption, including five in which at

least a fifth of the population endure more critically poor food consumption – Ad Dali', Al Jawf, Amran, Lahj and Raymah. In the third quarter of 2021, while the food security level in Al Jawf Governorate is expected to be adjusted from high risk down to alert status, four governorates are expected to deteriorate from minimal risk to alert status (Al Bayda, Hadramawt, Al Maharah and Socotra). The situation has grown so dire in some places that some families have resorted to eating leaves in order to subdue their hunger, as highlighted by WFP in a recent [article](#).

Food security partners have been able to increase their life-saving assistance in Yemen thanks to a generous \$1.2 billion contributed by donors this year, although a further \$797 million is needed to prevent some 4.8 million people from losing food assistance from



A family shares a meal at home in Abyan, 2021.
© WFP/Alaa Noman

October onwards. Crucially, food assistance must also be complemented by longer-term sustainable solutions, as the severity of needs will continue to grow if food is not made accessible and affordable for the average person. Alongside additional funding to deliver food assistance, substantive support

is needed for Yemen's economy, including through foreign currency injections, to sustain the importation of essential goods and prevent further devaluation of the rial, and consequently to enable people to self-sufficiently access the nourishment they need.

OVER 3,500 CHILDREN IN YEMEN SUFFERED GRAVE VIOLATIONS IN 2019 AND 2020

On 27 September, the Office of Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict published its [third report on the situation of children and armed conflict in Yemen](#). According to the report, 8,526 grave violations against children were recorded in Yemen between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2020, with denial of humanitarian access, killing and maiming, and the recruitment and use of children being the most prevalent. In total, more than 3,500 children suffered one or more grave violations.

The report documented a staggering rise in incidents of denial of humanitarian access to children in the two-year period, which was by far the most verified violation, with 4,881 incidents recorded. Sixty per cent of these related to restrictions of movement within the country, mainly due to the imposition of restrictive regulations and unpredictable blockages obstructing the delivery of assistance and services as well as routine travel. Other ways in which access was restricted included interference in the implementation of humanitarian activities, violence affecting humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities – including assault, arbitrary detention, arrest, harassment, threatening and intimidation of humanitarian personnel – and constraints on the movement of humanitarian personnel and goods into Yemen.

These restrictions prevent children from being reached with life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection activities, increasing their vulnerability and susceptibility exploitation, abuse, and other grave violations. Alarming, 2,600 children were killed or maimed during the reporting period, mostly through the indiscriminate use of mortar and artillery shelling, including in residential areas, ground fighting, anti-personal landmines, and other explosive remnants of war. 861 children – mostly boys – were recruited in 2019 and 2020, two-thirds of them used in active combat and the remaining children used to guard military checkpoints, to place or clear mines, or in other roles such as spies, guards, porters and cooks.

In issuing the findings, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict called on “all parties to actively work towards a political solution for the conflict in order to save children from further harm,” noting that “the atrocities and immense suffering would likely leave a generation of Yemeni children scarred for life”.

CALL TO ACTION FOR DEMINING TO SAVE LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

Aid agencies are calling on donors to provide more resources to support Mine Action in Yemen, and engaging with authorities to help address challenges in importing specialized equipment such as mine detectors, protective equipment and vehicles into the country. High-level advocacy on behalf of the sector is needed to overcome bureaucratic obstacles, which continue to inhibit the access and work of Mine Action partners to protect people from indiscriminate harm.

Due to the legacy and current conflicts in Yemen, landmines, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) continue to kill and maim civilians and pose major protection risks to aid workers and civilians alike. Since 2018, landmines, IEDs and unexploded ordnance have killed or injured at least 1,424 civilians in Yemen, many of them children. Indeed, on 13 September 2021, one explosion in Ta'iz Governorate caused 19 casualties, 15 of whom were children.

In addition to causing direct and deadly harm, these explosive weapons and remnants instill terror in the communities exposed to them, with deeply negative impacts on life, livelihood and the wider economy. Many farms and fishing communities in Yemen stand idle due to the physical and psychological impact of mines and ERW on land and at sea. This presents a major hurdle to domestic food production and income generation when Yemen is already facing dire levels of food insecurity and poverty.

At the UN Security Council Briefing on 10 September 2021, OCHA's Deputy Director, Ghada Eltahir Mudawi, urged "all parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law, including by refraining from using weapons which are by nature indiscriminate, and by taking constant care to spare civilians and civilian objects throughout their military operations." She also called for practical steps to be taken to scale up humanitarian mine and ERW clearance



"Everything went dark... it is still dark even now,"

said 17 years old Ahmed who lost his sight and one of his hands to an explosive device in his home village in Lahj when he was just 11.

© Mahmoud Al-Filastini/NRC
To read more about Ahmed's story and others [\[click here\]](#)

activities and support for it – including by permitting and expediting the passage of demining equipment into the country – as this would go a long way towards protecting civilians.

Despite limited funding and bureaucratic challenges, aid agencies are scaling up Mine Action activities to improve the safety of civilians. Mine Action partners are focused on preventing risks and casualties in highly impacted communities by ensuring that mine and ERW contamination is mapped and that their impact is assessed and prioritized, in order to clear critical infrastructure and public service facilities such as schools, roads, hospitals and farmland.

Awareness campaigns on threats posed by mines and ERW have been stepped up, while survivors of explosions are supported and rehabilitated socioeconomically. Between January and August 2021, Mine Action partners surveyed or cleared 2.1 million square meters of land, benefitting more than

1.7 million people, and removed 403 IEDs, 4,095 mines, and 31,173 items of unexploded ordnance.

The increased presence of Mine Action partners supporting authorities to survey, clear and raise awareness is helping to expand coverage, raise skills and develop a sustainable capacity for the people of Yemen, regardless of age and gender. In the first half of the year, 56 deminers received explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) training, with 60 others being trained specifically on how to deal with IEDs. Developing national capacity has included training women in culturally appropriate technical skills including explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) and surveying, allowing Mine Action activities to benefit all parts of Yemeni society. An assessment was also conducted on the threat posed by sea mines to shipping, food security and livelihood along the Red Sea coast.

EDUCATION IS A RIGHT. BUT WHAT IS LEFT FOR THE CHILDREN OF YEMEN?

The number of out-of-school children in Yemen has more than doubled since the start of the conflict, reaching just over 2 million school-age girls and boys by 2021. Without proper support, these children may never return to school, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and increasing the risk of exploitation and abuse. When not in school, the likelihood increases of girls being forced into early marriage, and children of all genders are more vulnerable to being coerced into child labor or recruited into the fighting.

Since March 2015, the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave violations committed against children in times of conflict recorded at least 236 attacks on schools and 245 incidents of military use of education facilities in Yemen, highlighting how the ongoing conflict is compounding factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, poverty, displacement and lack of opportunities in depriving children of their right to education. Over 2,500 Yemeni schools are reportedly destroyed, damaged

and/or utilized for non-educational purposes. An estimated 8.1 million children now need emergency education assistance, a more than seven-fold increase from the 1.1 million reported around the start of the conflict. In addition to negatively impacting learning, these conditions are already imposing devastating and long-lasting effects on the mental and physical wellbeing of children and adolescents in Yemen.

Worsening matters is that more than 170,600 teachers have not received a regular salary for over four years, due to the conflict and geopolitical divides. This constitutes two-thirds of all teachers in Yemen. As unpaid teachers leave the profession to seek alternative means of supporting themselves and providing for their families, four million more children are placed at risk of having their education disrupted, or of dropping out of school entirely. As is unfortunately common, it is those already experiencing heightened vulnerabilities who are most affected – girls, as well as children of all



11.3 M

Children in need of humanitarian help



10.2 M

Children in need of basic health care



8.1 M

Children in need of emergency education support



9.58 M

Children without access to safe water, sanitation or hygiene



2 M

Children out of school

genders from displaced communities or marginalized groups, or who live in rural or hard-to-reach areas. Over 523,000 displaced school-aged children are hindered from accessing education due to lack of space in existing classrooms. Yet even where schooling is available, the quality of education is negatively impacted by the prevailing conditions.

With more than 40 per cent of Yemen's population below the age of 14, challenges to the country's education system need to be urgently and adequately addressed, lest learning losses extend beyond this generation

and erase decades of progress, especially in girls' education. Funding to enable this remains drastically insufficient – as of 30 September, only 35.4 per cent of the US\$258 million needed to support education activities under the 2021 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan (YHRP) had been received. Education partners are raising the alarm, calling on all stakeholders in Yemen to work together to achieve lasting and inclusive peace; to stop attacks on schools and the repurposing of schools away from education, to ensure regular incomes for teachers, and for education programmes to be supported with long-term funding.

MORE SUPPORT IS NEEDED TO PROTECT AND ASSIST MIGRANTS AND HELP THOSE STRANDED RETURN HOME

Aid partners estimate that over 138,000 migrants – and some 140,000 refugees and asylum seekers – in Yemen need urgent support. Of those, it is estimated that 32,000 migrants are stranded in dire conditions due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, which have impeded their journeys to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Thousands of these stranded migrants are being held in detention, while others are being held by smugglers and traffickers who exploit them to make profits as they try to make up for losses from smuggling migrants into the KSA.

Aid partners are doing everything they can to support migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, who are completely reliant on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic

needs. They are providing them with multi-sector life-saving assistance and specialized protection services, as well as promoting self-reliance and community cohesion. However, the Refugees and Migrants Multi-Sector – which aims to address the multiplicity of threats, risks, vulnerabilities and overall needs of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees – has so far received only 4.7 per cent of the US\$58.7 million required this year.

The humanitarian community continues to advocate with the authorities in Yemen and along migration routes to ensure that migrants have access to life-saving assistance. Humanitarian partners emphasize the need to respect the human rights of migrants and refugees, including freedom of movement,

and to protect them from being subjected to forced transfers or arbitrary detention. They also advocate for addressing the drivers of irregular migration; and guarantee safe, voluntary and dignified return options for stranded migrants, as well as refugees and asylum-seekers.

Aid partners continue to support voluntary return options despite limited funding. Many of the migrants stranded in Yemen lack access to life-saving humanitarian assistance and endure multiple human rights violations. According to International Organization for Migration (IOM), some migrants are forced to work off their debts on farms, while others are exposed to gender-based violence (GBV) and are extorted for ransom. The vast majority lack access to water, food, sanitation and health care. Unsurprisingly, many migrants have become increasingly desperate to return home. IOM estimates that, since May 2020, at least 18,000 migrants have made the perilous return journey by sea to Djibouti or Somalia, using the same network of smugglers they used to travel into Yemen. Dozens of migrants have drowned this year after overcrowded boats capsized.

As of 27 September, IOM has assisted nearly 1,300 migrants to voluntarily return on 11 flights from Aden and 79 others on a flight from Sana'a so far in 2021. IOM is aiming to operate two Voluntary Humanitarian Return



Migrants prepare to depart from Aden on a Voluntary Humanitarian Return flight organized by IOM in September. ©Majed Mohammed/IOM Yemen.

(VHR) flights per week for the remainder of the year. In addition to arranging flights, IOM offers counselling to the migrants before they leave, helps them secure travel documents and liaises with authorities in Yemen and Ethiopia to ensure safe passage and transit. In Ethiopia, returning migrants are temporarily accommodated at the IOM transit centre, where they are given food, essential non-food items, counselling services, and a transport allowance to their final destinations. IOM also arranges medical and psychological care, as well as family tracing and reunification for unaccompanied migrant children.

IOM urgently needs \$3 million to help nearly 5,000 stranded Ethiopian migrants who are waiting for their chance to safely return home by the end of 2021.

LACK OF VACCINES AND MEDICAL RESOURCES HINDERS EFFECTIVE COVID-19 CONTAINMENT

In Yemen, COVID-19 has put additional pressure on a health system devastated by conflict. After more than six years of war, half of the country's hospitals are out of service and the population has become vulnerable to endemic diseases, including cholera, polio, diphtheria and dengue fever. Aid partners estimate that 20.1 million people in Yemen need health assistance, including 11.6 million people in acute need. At least one child dies every 10 minutes because of preventable diseases.

Since it arrived in Yemen in April 2020, COVID-19 has forced health officials and aid partners to reassign scarce medical resources to save lives and contain the spread of the virus. It is estimated that some 15 per cent of the functioning health system has been repurposed for the COVID-19 response, which contributed to reducing overall health coverage by 20 to 30 per cent.

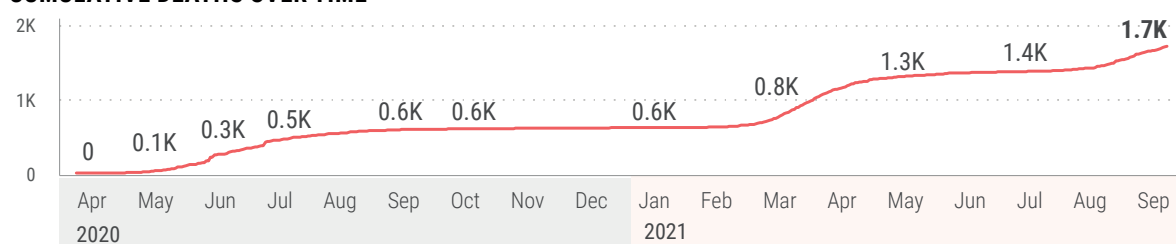
The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in southern governorates spiked in mid-August 2021, prompting health officials

COVID-19 EPI CURVE

CUMULATIVE FIGURES OVER TIME



CUMULATIVE DEATHS OVER TIME



Source: WHO

to raise the alarm about a third wave of the outbreak. Since then, weekly rates of COVID-19 deaths have increased more than five-fold. In early September, the spike in cases prompted the Government of Yemen to close all public and private schools in southern governorates. By 30 September, more than 9,000 confirmed cases were reported across southern governorates, with over 1,700 people losing their lives in the pandemic. These figures greatly underestimate community spread, given the lack of testing capacities across the country. They also exclude cases in governorates controlled by the de facto authorities (DFA) in Sana'a, where most of Yemen's population lives.

The lack of resources has been the main impediment to the implementation of country-wide response and containment strategies. Testing capacities are almost non-existent, except for travelers. The few existing COVID-19 isolation centres are overwhelmed, while hospitals and community health centres lack medical supplies and resources to be able to respond to mounting needs effectively.

More importantly, the vaccines made available for Yemen so far fall far short of existing needs. Yemen is expected to receive 14 million doses through the COVAX facility, which aims to guarantee fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines

for all countries, and which is co-led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi and WHO, with UNICEF as its key delivery partner. However, so far, only 867,800 doses have been delivered to Yemen. Of these, 716,800 are AstraZeneca doses, enough for 358,400 individuals to be fully vaccinated. An additional 151,200 doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine were delivered to Yemen on 29 August.

Available vaccines are nowhere near enough to meet needs across the country, and to date only 0.1 per cent of Yemen's population have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, according to [Our World in Data](#). This mainly comprises some 305,366 people who received the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine in areas under the internationally recognized government (IRG), including 21,529 health care workers. Only 14,864 of them have received the second dose thus far. In DFA-held areas, 2,659 health workers have received the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine, including 47 who have also received the second dose. As of 22 September, some 33,239 more people, including 1,252 health workers, have received the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Dispensation of the remaining Johnson & Johnson vaccines is ongoing.

HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR ADVOCATES FOR YEMEN IN GULF COUNTRIES

The Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, William David Gressly, accompanied by the OCHA Yemen Head of Office, Sajjad Mohammad Sajid, undertook a three-day mission to Gulf countries from 16 to 18 September, visiting the State of Kuwait, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In Kuwait, the delegation met with representatives of the Arab Fund, the Kuwait Red Crescent, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During their meetings, the delegation provided updates on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen, explored ways to strengthen collaboration on relief efforts in the country, and urged scaling up

of humanitarian funding and development support. In the KSA, the delegation met with the senior leadership of the Government of Yemen to discuss the humanitarian situation, response and resource gaps; the importance of expanding access; and ensuring a principled aid operation. They also highlighted the importance of facilitating and expanding mine action activities in the country. In the UAE, the delegation met with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Dubai Cares and the Emirati Red Crescent to explore opportunities for scaling up humanitarian and development support in Yemen.

FUNDING THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN YEMEN

As a strong supporter of protection interventions in Yemen, the Yemen Humanitarian Fund (YHF) provided nearly 10 per cent of the US\$50.5 million allocated under the first standard allocation (SA1) launched in June 2021 to support partners' protection activities, including child protection, protection against gender-based violence (GBV) and mine action and awareness. The funding was allocated to six humanitarian partners implementing seven projects across 11 governorates, aiming to benefit more than 184,500 people. Recipient partners include four international NGOs which received \$2.8 million, one national NGO which received \$750,000, and one UN agency which received \$1.3 million.

This funding helps boost the protection response under the 2021 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan (YHRP), which remains generally underfunded. As of 30 September, the YHRP had received only 55.1 per cent of the \$3.85 billion required for the overall humanitarian response this year. YHRP funding for protection activities is even more severely short, covering only 27.8 per cent of the \$218 million the sector needs.

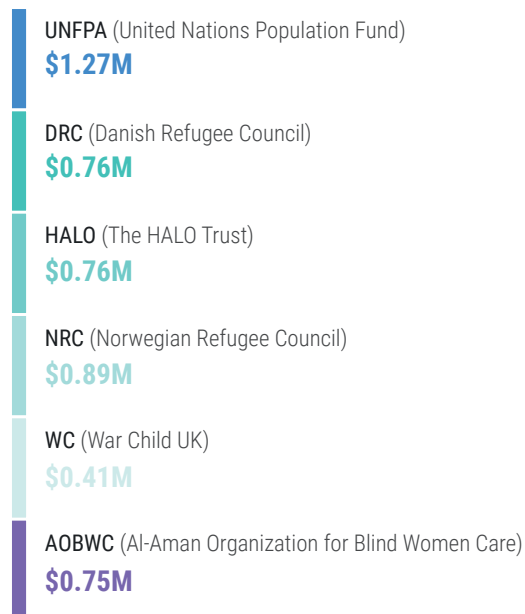
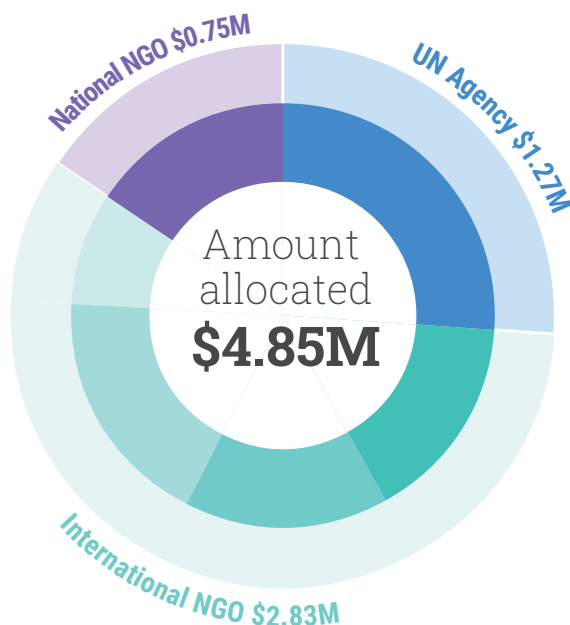
Among the projects supported by the YHF funds is one by the Al-Aman Organization for Blind Women Care (AOBWC) in Al Hodeidah Governorate. The project provides comprehensive community-based protection services to 13,405 people through community center services and outreach to affected populations, with a particular focus on victims of GBV and people with disabilities. The YHF also supported War Child UK to provide critical child protection services for 1,486 people, including vulnerable children and their families living in conflict-affected districts in Ibb Governorate. Other examples of protection interventions funded under the SA1 are Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and HALO Trust mine action interventions, respectively targeting 16,128 and 6,600 people from displaced and conflict-affected communities in Ta'iz, Al Hodeidah and Lahj governorates. These two projects include community-based awareness activities as well as activities focused on technical and non-technical surveys of locations contaminated by mines and explosive ordnances, along with clearance and marking activities.

Seven women and girls' safe spaces (WGSS)

and one safe shelter in Ad Dali', Ma'rib and Shabwah governorates at risk of closing have also been supported, through \$1.3 million allocated to UNFPA. These centers are located in areas where the protection needs of women and girls are most severe,

and YHF funding will help ensure that more than 40,000 women and girls can continue to access a range of protection services including psychosocial support, medical care, legal aid, livelihood assistance and shelter support.

YHF 2021 SA1 PROTECTION FUNDING



Source: YHF

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