Yemen is a historic transit hub for mixed migratory movements of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants from the Horn of Africa to the Arabian Peninsula and beyond. Although Yemen is the poorest of the Gulf countries, it stands out in the region for its generosity towards refugees. It is the only country in the Arabian Peninsula that is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.
Nearly a year into the conflict, the already precarious humanitarian and socio-economic conditions coupled with the security situation has substantially deteriorated. Some 21.2 million people (82% of the population) require some form of humanitarian or protection assistance. WHO has reported on the basis of data collected from health facilities from 26 March 2015 to 29 February 2016 that 6,259 people have been killed and 29,852 wounded as a result of the hostilities. According to OHCHR there have been 3,218 civilians killed and a further 5,778 civilians injured (from 26 March 2015 to 17 March 2016).

With the ongoing conflict, loss of livelihood and internal displacement has come a range of concerns for protection and basic needs for the internally displaced and the hosting communities across the country. Lack of water and sanitation and in some cases overcrowded shelters, expose people to serious risks of disease and gender-based violence.

Basic services across the country are on the verge of collapse. Around 14 million Yemenis do not have sufficient access to healthcare services. At least 7.6 million people are severely food insecure. Over 1,170 schools are now unfit for use due to conflict-related damage, presence of internally displaced people, or occupation by armed groups.

UNHCR and partners address critical needs including shelter, non-food items, protection services, cash assistance, livelihood opportunities, food, health care and education support.

**SPOTLIGHT**

In Taizz, UNHCR has been advocating for unfettered, rapid and sustained access to humanitarian aid, particularly in the hardest hit-areas where most of the internally displaced are located. On 14 February, UNHCR Representative Johannes van der Klaauw led a mission to Taizz, during which he oversaw the delivery of emergency relief aid to 1,000 conflict-affected families in the embattled centre of Taizz city that UNHCR had been unable to access for more than five months. The Representative noted that this first distribution of domestic relief items should be a prelude for sustained access and delivery of various types of aid into the city and surrounding districts in the governorate. © UNHCR/ M. Al Hasani

**REFUGEES**

- UNHCR has maintained a collaborative relationship with authorities to safeguard the protection space and improve access to basic services and rights for people of concern across the country. Regular interaction is maintained with authorities at the national and local level, with partners and refugee community leaders. The refugee protection and assistance hotline remains operational 24 hours a day. The government has mainstreamed access for refugees into public health services, the judiciary system, and access to education, including vocational and technical skills training. However, many of these services and livelihood opportunities have been reduced because of the conflict.

- The number of persons of concern in need of financial assistance has drastically increased; in response, UNHCR has expanded its financial assistance programme to include additional categories of persons with specific needs for refugees and exceptionally some categories of asylum seekers such as single parent headed households and pregnant women. For February, in Sana’a UNHCR partner International Relief And Development (IRD) conducted 555 new assessments and 204 re-assessments for cases whose situation had deteriorated. In Aden, UNHCR partner InterSos provided 654 cases with financial assistance (371 cases in the Basateen neighbourhood in Aden and 283 in Kharaz camp).

- In February UNHCR distributed school kits to 1,474 refugee children (762 girls and 712 boys) through the Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF) family centre in Sana’a. Each student received one school uniform (including a headscarf for girls), a backpack, as well as books and writing utensils.

- On 25 February, UNHCR partner Millennium Development Foundation (MDF) held an opening ceremony for child friendly spaces in Khowlia, Basateen and Alghfiqi schools, which host a large number of refugee children in the Basateen neighbourhood in Aden. UNHCR, representatives from the Education Office, school management, teachers, parents, and students all participated in the event at the Alghfiqi School.

- UNHCR manages Kharaz refugee camp, which hosts some 18,000 (predominately Somali) refugees in Lahj governorate 150km west of Aden. Refugees in the camp receive WFP food rations, supplementary food items and benefit from school feeding programmes and meals for specific cases. Partners provide health care, education, water and sanitation and community services programmes.
Resettlement has been particularly difficult due to insecurity across the country. Nevertheless, the operation has continued to identify and resettle a modest number of refugees with specific needs, such as women at risk, unaccompanied minors and separated children, and refugees with medical conditions to the United States, Sweden, France and other resettlement countries. In February, UNHCR and IOM facilitated the reuniting of a Yemeni mother and her four young children with their father in Montenegro, providing a durable solution for a family who had been separated since 2011 when the head of family had to flee Yemen in search of asylum.

NEW ARRIVALS AND MIXED MIGRATION

In February, there were 7,705 new arrivals to the coast of Yemen (5,260 Ethiopians and 1,109 Somalis along the Arabian Sea, and 1,309 Ethiopians and 27 Somalis along the Red Sea). Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants continue to make the perilous journey from the Horn of Africa to Yemen, usually on rickety, overcrowded smugglers’ boats risking their lives at sea. They are often misinformed about the severity of the conflict in Yemen and believe that the situation has become relatively calm in some of the southern governorates, or follow rumours of improved access into neighbouring Gulf countries. They land dehydrated, in shock and in need of basic assistance, and further risk abduction and exploitation, particularly along the Red Sea coast, where organized gangs and smugglers continue to operate. According to reports, various local armed groups have taken to arbitrarily detaining new arrivals on suspicion that they may join the conflict. As new arrivals make their onward movements, they risk being caught in ground fighting, airstrikes and heavily mined areas.

UNHCR partner Society for Humanitarian Solidarity (SHS) completed drilling a new well at Mayfa’a reception centre in Shabwah governorate in early February, which now serves new arrivals, UNHCR and partner staff, as well as the host community in Mayfa’a with water for basic hygiene, sanitation, and for washing of clothes.

Alongside the continuing inflow, due to the conflict and ever-deepening humanitarian crisis in Yemen there has also been an outflow of 173,290 persons (over 50,000 Yemenis, 30,000 refugees – mainly Somalis, and third country nationals), who have fled to countries in the Horn of Africa and the Gulf.

IDPs

The TFPM 7th report highlights that there have been increasing levels of displacement in areas where the conflict has continued to escalate, although there has been a relative stabilization in the internal displacement figure since the previous report in December 2015. Taiz governorate, which includes areas that have been besieged for several months, has the largest number of IDPs in the country with 555,048 individuals (23% of the total IDP population), followed by Hajjah (353,219 individuals), Sana’a (253,962 individuals), Amran (245,689 individuals) and Sa’ada (237,978 individuals). In addition, Sa’ada, Sana’a and Amran have the highest IDP to host community ratios; 33%, 21%, and 20%, respectively, while Sa’ada, subject to continued airstrikes, has suffered the largest population change with a reduction of 31% of the original population. Among the IDP population, 25% reported a priority need for shelter and shelter materials, followed by 20% for food, 16% for water, 16% for clothes, and 16% for blankets.

Most IDPs have lost their livelihood opportunities and sought shelter with relatives and friends, in schools, public and abandoned buildings, makeshift shelters or in the open with little to no protection. UNHCR in coordination with other UN agencies is working to re-establish and expand its presence in Yemen at five strategic operational hubs each covering for a number of governorates surrounding Sana’a, Sa’ada, Al Hudaydah, Taizz/Ibb, and Aden in order to facilitate the provision of life-saving protection and assistance to persons of concern. As the leader of the Protection Cluster, UNHCR and partners are expanding outreach to communities with large concentrations of IDPs and their host communities by providing psycho-social, legal and cash assistance. Community-based protection networks, composed of volunteers from the IDP and host communities, are assisting with protection monitoring, information collection, awareness raising and sensitization.

UNHCR leads the Non-Food Item (NFI), Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM), and Shelter Cluster, and since January to the end of February, UNHCR has reached some 88,825 IDPs and other conflict-affected persons in Yemen with emergency relief assistance such as blankets, sleeping mats, plastic buckets, plastic sheeting, kitchen sets, tents, and emergency shelter kits (comprised of wooden poles and planks, plastic sheeting, and tools such as hammer, axe, rope and nails). From the time of the escalation in the conflict in March 2015 until the end of 2015, UNHCR has assisted 288,060 IDPs and other conflict-affected persons in all 22 governorates in Yemen except Socotra. Despite extremely challenging circumstances, UNHCR and partners are doing their utmost to deliver essential life-saving supplies and critical protection services fully adhering to the humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality.

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