

# Djibouti—Response to the Yemen Situation

March 2018

In the last few months, following the assassination of ex-President Saleh and the Saudi blockade on aid, the situation in Yemen has deteriorated significantly and the humanitarian costs of the conflict have increased. As a result, the operation saw a sharp surge in new arrivals in December. Since then, however,

the influx of has tapered off. Nonetheless, as the conflict shows no signs of letting up, the operation in Djibouti remains on stand-by, monitoring developments across the sea and revising a contingency plan in case of an emergency influx. We are prepared with stocks of NFIs and have planned

coordination with the Government and partners so we can mobilize resources and manpower when and where needed. In addition to emergency preparedness, we strive to provide for and maintain the daily needs of the refugees under our care.

## KEY INDICATORS

**38,000**

Number of Yemenis who have come to Djibouti since the start of the conflict in March 2015

**3,959**

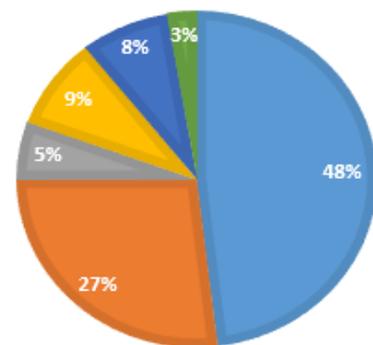
**Current population** of Yemeni refugees in Djibouti—of which, **1,695** live at the Markazi settlement in Obock and **2,264** in the capital city, Djibouti

**48%**

**Percentage of youth** (18 and under)

## Arrivals by Origin

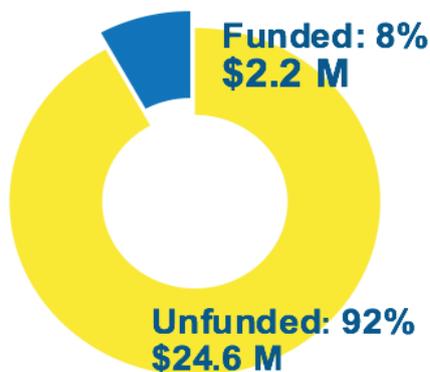
■ Taiz ■ Aden ■ Al-Hudaydah ■ Ibb ■ Sana'a ■ Other



## FUNDING (AS OF MARCH 2018)

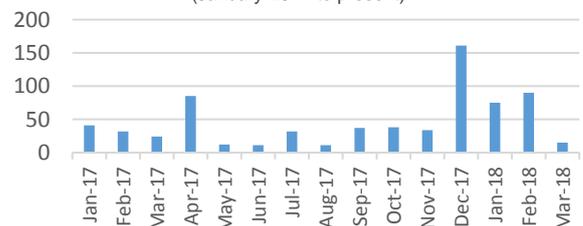
**USD \$26.7M**

requested for Djibouti

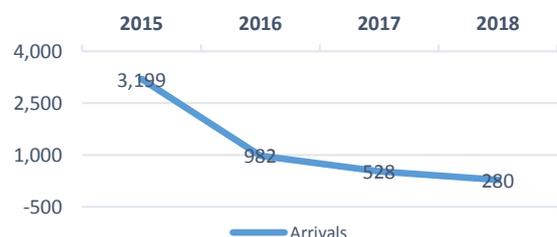


## Trend in Arrivals

(January 2017 to present)



## New Arrivals of Yemeni Refugees Registered in Djibouti Since the Start of the War



## Operational Context

Three years since conflict and fighting broke out in Yemen, scores of Yemenis continue to flee the country in search for safety and protection. People in Yemen are contending with a worsening situation and the insufferable combination of conflict, famine, and disease. Djibouti is among the handful of countries taking in refugees escaping the conflict.

The settlement at Markazi, just minutes outside of the town of Obock in the north of the country, is entirely comprised of Yemenis. Refugees from Yemen are registered *prima facie* upon arrival at Djibouti. The total population as of February 2018 stands at 1,695. UNHCR and its partners strive to provide them with the basics like food, shelter, and healthcare, but also pave paths to durable solutions with livelihoods activities, education, and vocational training. Meanwhile, there are 2,304 Yemeni refugees in the capital city, Djibouti. Most have come with adequate means and assets, developed self-sufficiency, and managed to be independent of aid, allowing them to thrive outside of the settlements. In general, freedom of movement allows them to move onward to other areas like the capital, Djibouti, or even to other countries.

UNHCR Djibouti stands committed to working together with its partners to effectively respond to the Yemen situation and protect the individuals fleeing for safety. The operation gathers and mobilizes resources, expertise, and manpower to bolster progress in establishing long-lasting solutions. Moreover, in seeking to empower refugees into crafting their own independence and putting themselves on paths to self-reliance, the ideals of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) impart guidance on aspirations to also leverage a level of local integration that also produces advantages for the host communities. Additionally, UNHCR's newly adopted Multi-Year Multi Partner (MYMP) strategy is in place to target long-term solutions for refugees in Djibouti and pools together the expertise, support, and shared action of a broader network of partners.



The entrance of the Markazi settlement. ©UNHCR/VPanaligan, 2018.



The education scene at Markazi: Young children are taught in tented classrooms by refugee teachers. Thanks to the partnership with the Ministry of Education (MENFOP), students are able to learn the Djiboutian curriculum translated in their native Arabic. ©UNHCR/VPanaligan, 2018.

## Achievements



### PROTECTION

#### Achievements and Impact

- Upon arrival to Djibouti, refugees are registered by UNHCR and ONARS (*Office National d'Assistance aux Réfugiés et Sinistrés*), Yemenis are automatically recognized as refugees on a *prima facie* basis and are given an ID card, which enables them to receive shelter, NFIs, and food supply.
- In March 2018, the International Children's Action Network (ICAN) officially signed on to partner with UNHCR in boosting child protection at all the settlements in Djibouti. They had previously only been working at the Markazi settlement, but now this partnership will allow them to expand their aid and services to all refugees across Djibouti.
- The National Union for Djiboutian Women (UNFD) is UNHCR's partner in protecting the rights and wellbeing of women and young girls. In February, they relaunched the protection committee which will hold meetings twice a month with the participation of other humanitarian partners in Djibouti.

- In December 2017, UNHCR and ONARS staff concluded a Biometric Identification Management System (BIMS) exercise at the settlements to better capture refugee statistics.

#### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- With the unpredictability of the conflict, larger exoduses of people could be anticipated and thus, current host countries like Djibouti are prepared to effectively respond to such influxes. In its planning, UNHCR strives for durable and results-driven strategies to, among other things, cushion any shock or strain of such further demographic changes.
- Obock is situated in a precarious location. It not only receives refugees coming from Yemen, it sits along the route of countless migrants (mainly Ethiopian and Somali) aiming to crossover to Yemen in search for better opportunities in the Gulf and elsewhere. UNHCR's *Dangerous Crossings* project, which was set up around the country, is a public information campaign that aims to discourage people from making the risky move across the sea. Measuring the success of the campaign remains a challenge.



#### EDUCATION

#### Achievements and Impact

- In August 2017, UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education (MENFOP), launching the commitment to include refugee children into the national education system. In January 2018, MENFOP officially took the reins from implementing partner, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) on education at the Markazi settlement.
- Following the partnership agreement between UNHCR and MENFOP, a primary school was constructed right outside of the Markazi settlement in the past months. It will serve both refugee and host community children in the spirit of the CRRF and will be inaugurated in the coming weeks. A goal of this project is to get refugees out of classroom tents and into standard permanent structures as they undertake their education.

#### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- UNHCR views education as a right and is working to boost enrollment of students of all ages. At the moment at Markazi, there are 293 primary students and 23 secondary students enrolled. Moreover, to accommodate more students, the settlement would need to build more classrooms to avoid overcrowding and ensure each student can get adequate attention.

**HEALTH****Achievements and Impact**

- The Ministry of Health has taken over providing healthcare to refugees since January 2018. This partnership comes after the Government of Djibouti signed decrees in December 2017, including refugees in the national systems such as those of healthcare, education, and the labor market. Bolstering the priorities of the CRRF, medical staff have been actively rolling out their services at the settlements and the urban areas.

**Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps**

- The current clinic at Markazi is located in a tent, as opposed to a permanent structure, which does not conform to international standards for health facilities.
- Clinic staff report a lack of medication for chronic illnesses like diabetes and heart conditions.
- Cases of mental and psychological stress have increased at the settlement. Recruiting trained experts in psycho-social counselors has been a significant challenge. UNHCR aims to work with the Ministry of Health in identifying the much needed support and treatment for these extremely vulnerable individuals.

**FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION****Achievements and Impact**

- Our partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP) ensures that each refugee receives 6kg of flour, 6 kg of rice, 0.9 kg of beans, 0.9 kg of sugar, 0.15 kg of salt, and 1 liter of oil. These rations support the intake of 2,100 kilocalories per day. Each refugee is also given a supplementary 500DJF to purchase additional food supplies.

**Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps**

- In the past few months, there were approximately 164 individuals struggling with malnutrition at Markazi. WFP and UNICEF have partnered with UNHCR to address this and to increase/sustain individuals' daily caloric intake and achieve a healthy weight.

**WATER AND SANITATION****Achievements and Impact**

- In line with the priorities of the CRRF, UNHCR supported a project to bring sufficient water supply to the Markazi settlement and the host community of Obock through

boreholes. Now, refugees and locals alike are able to receive 22 liters per person per day, which is slightly above the 20-liter recommended daily standard.

- In December, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) rolled out a waste management campaign at the three settlements with the objective of cutting back on litter and promoting proper disposal of garbage. Bins have been placed around Markazi and are collected every Monday.
- NRC also created a hygiene promotion program where committees work throughout the settlement to encourage handwashing and proper cleaning of jerry cans and latrines.

#### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- UNHCR and its partners continue to engage refugees in being agents of positive change in their communities. As such, we work to promote active participation in waste management and hygiene as well as sanitary measures to keep the settlements clean.
- The settlement also grapples with stagnant water and how to renew the supply at the various water points. WASH engineers are currently coming up with solutions to remedy this.



#### SHELTER AND NFIS

#### Achievements and Impact

- Currently, the refugees at Markazi live mainly in tents. Each family is given a tent upon registration at the settlement. They are made of canvas and typically help withstand the elements, but the sweltering heat of the summer (highest recorded temperatures: 45°C/ 114°F) as well as the harsh sandstorms of the region prove extremely challenging to bear.

#### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The climate in Obock can be unforgiving, reaching very high temperatures and ushering in searing heat. In respect to housing, heat is always a concern, and it is important to find solutions that will shield refugees from the harsh climate. UNHCR and partners aspire to provide good housing solutions that can weather these difficult conditions, but also those that uphold dignity to the families and individuals living in the settlement.



#### ACCESS TO ENERGY

#### Achievements and Impact

- ONARS manages the supply of fuel for some 23 light posts that provide three hours of lighting to the settlement after dusk.
- ONARS also now gives 4 liters of kerosene to each household for cooking.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The operation is seriously looking into the possibility of installing solar panels that would help bring more lighting to the settlement. Beyond lighting, the solar panels could help power up the settlement, allowing the use of appliances and other equipment. The panels would offer a sustainable solution to the basic needs and rights of adequate lighting and energy.



### COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SELF RELIANCE

#### Achievements and Impact

- In December 2017, UNHCR applauded the passing of decrees by the Government of Djibouti guaranteeing refugees the right to pursue employment opportunities. This move by the Government has been lauded as a positive step toward socio-economic inclusion of refugees in the country.
- LWF has been a steadfast partner in the area of livelihoods development. Over the last few months, 20 women have been trained in hairdressing, and 27 out-of-school adolescent girls have been trained in tailoring. LWF had also been leading training on women's artisanship. Various women in the settlement had been taught to make woven bags and wallets. Many of them had been purchased by the UN Resident Coordinator's office and visitors to the Japanese military base (in cooperation with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA)). In these trainings, LWF also aims to instill business savvy and a spirit of entrepreneurship in the participants.
- Thanks to the donations from the Joss Stone Foundation in October, refugees at the settlements throughout Djibouti have been enjoying the gift of music. At Markazi, some youth are now engaged in lessons taught by a musician among the refugees where they are learning how to play the various instruments.

#### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Following the passing of the landmark law allowing refugees to work, UNHCR continues its outreach to line ministries, the private sector, and the general public about refugees' right to work in Djibouti. We are also working with refugees so that they know their rights. Moreover, our staff is conducting a skills profiling exercise to determine in what fields of work refugees are interested and what possible outlets for vocational training exist or can be created to leverage their chances of integrating into the labor market.

The Yemeni work ethic and business savvy are well-known. This invaluable motivation drives UNHCR and partners to help seek outlets for growth and development through livelihoods activities. While, the refugees are offered the training sessions mentioned above, the local job market remains poor and offers limited revenue for the refugees' independent ventures.



## DURABLE SOLUTIONS

### Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR's three principal targets for durable solutions include voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and local integration. Since repatriation is an undesirable concept given the volatile environment in Yemen, we strive to help Yemeni refugees integrate into Djiboutian society, an objective that is part of UNHCR's commitment to achieving durable solutions.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Whenever possible, UNHCR advocates for resettlement of refugees in third party countries. However, as more countries have adopted stricter refugee acceptance policies, it is becoming more difficult to succeed on this pathway.

## Working in Partnership

- UNHCR leads the multi-sector response for the Yemeni refugees at the Markazi settlement and in urban settings, in addition to the refugees and asylum seekers in the Ali Addeh and Holl-Holl settlements in the southern region of Djibouti. Close collaboration is maintained with the Government of Djibouti and authorities at national and local levels, with sister UN agencies, with international and national NGOs, and with refugee community leaders to ensure effective coordination and timely response to refugees' needs.
- UNHCR works through national and international partners, namely, NRC (water, sanitation, shelter, hygiene); LWF (community services); the Ministry of Health (health/reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and nutrition); the Ministry of Education (education and vocational training); UNFD (SGBV); the Ministry of Habitat, Urban Planning; and Environment; and ICAN (child protection). UNHCR also collaborates with NGOs such as the DRC, Al Rahma Association, and Caritas. The Government agency in charge of refugee-related issues is ONARS, who manages the refugee settlements.
- UNHCR also co-leads the Mixed Migration Task Force (MMTF) with IOM to strengthen regional and international co-operation enhancing national response to reduce irregular migration flows.

For more information on UNHCR's regional response to the Yemeni refugee situation, please visit: <http://data.unhcr.org/yemen/regional.php>



Livelihoods at Obock: (left) a restaurant owner worked his way from living in the settlement to the town through his earnings from serving up popular Yemeni dishes; (right) a woman weaves baskets and other goods to sell at the local markets and also teaches others the craft. ©UNHCR/VPanaligan, 2017–18.

# Financial Information

## External / Donors Relations

### Donors who have contributed to the operation

United States of America | Canada | IGAD

### Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds

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### Thanks to other donors of unrestricted and regional funds

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