

YEMEN

UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE

1 - 14 April 2017

KEY FIGURES

18.8

million people in need

1,991,340

Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)

84 %

IDPs displaced for more than a year

1,048,896

IDP returnees

803,393

recipients of NFIs since March 2015

279,480

registered refugees and asylum seekers

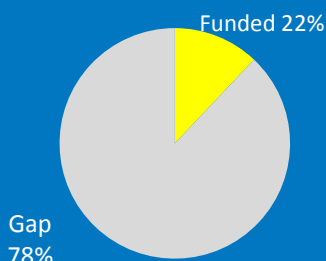
15,948

new arrivals to Yemeni coast since 1 January 2017

FUNDING NEEDS

USD 99.6 million

for the IDP and refugee operation in 2017



HIGHLIGHTS

- **UNHCR's response reaching affected populations in Taizz was bolstered with delivery of humanitarian assistance from both the north and the south.** In the first two weeks of April, 1,650 families have received life-saving support in districts surrounding Al Mokha, with further distributions underway pending access challenges.
- **Growing concern that conflict-led famine is leading to a deepening protection crisis.** An intensification of the conflict is anticipated in the weeks and months ahead, making access to food even more challenging. The risk of hunger is most acute for the most vulnerable among the displaced, with UNHCR cautioning on the clear correlation between protection risks and food insecurity.
- **Focus group discussions take place with Somali community as information campaign on the Assisted Spontaneous Return programme is underway.** The return help desk in Basateen has also been established, with Somalis seeking information on the situation in their country of origin and the support available to them.



Much needed assistance reaches families in Taizz, where over 48,000 people have been displaced. Photo: UNHCR/ A Shaqiri

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

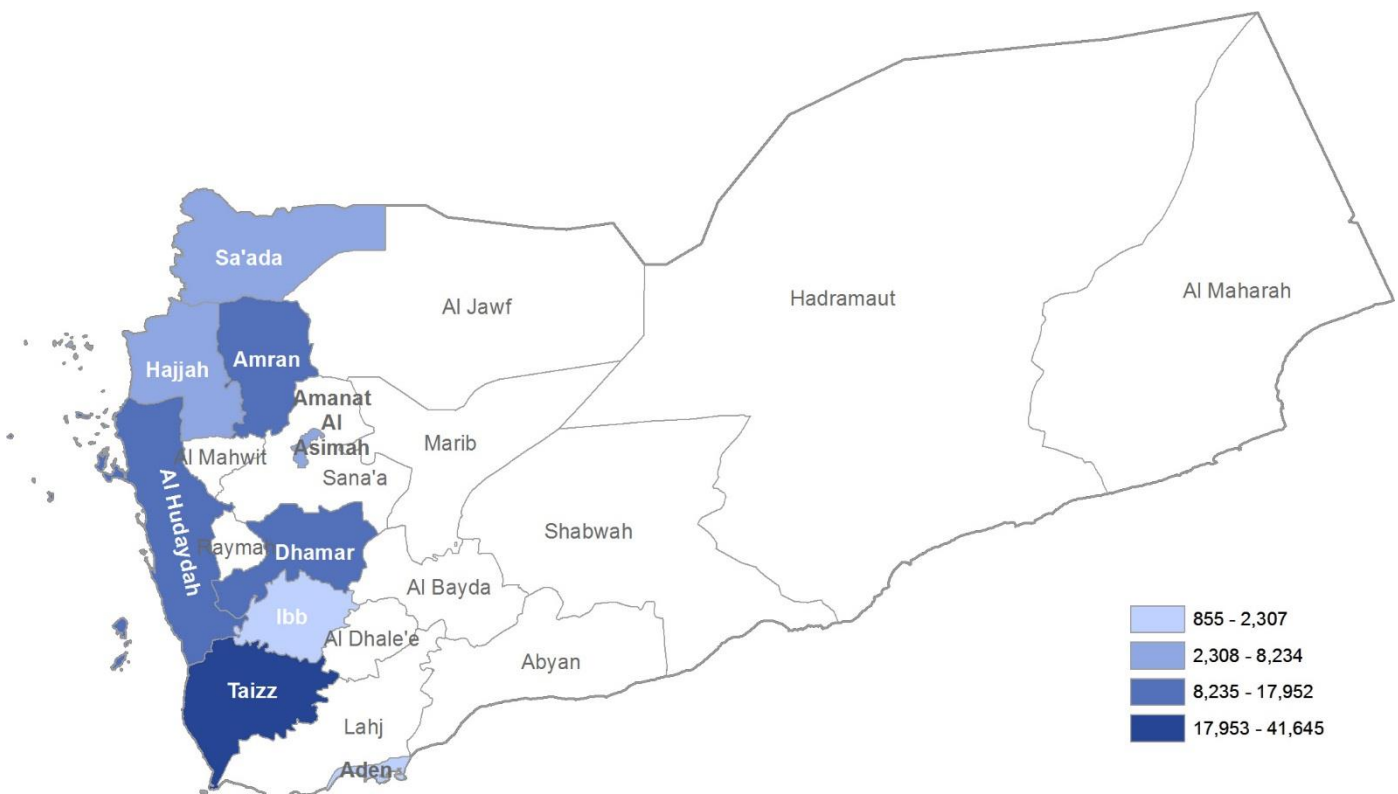
Since the beginning of 2017, hostilities in the Red Sea governorate of Taizz have displaced almost 50,000 people. This is in addition to the three million who have been uprooted since the beginning of the conflict in Yemen, of which two million remain displaced and one million have returned home to precarious conditions.

UNHCR and other humanitarian actors are concerned, however, that recent military escalations in Taizz and Al Hudaydah governorates, could potentially displace up to half a million people, further exacerbating Yemen’s deep humanitarian crisis. UNHCR is cautioning that an intensification of conflict in Al Hudaydah will lead to large-scale displacement, further increasing needs and vulnerabilities in an area already host to a sizeable displaced population and suffering from critical levels of food insecurity.

At the same time, hunger is increasing across swathes of the country, particularly concentrated in the north. Food insecurity is rapidly precipitating a deepening protection crisis. The risk of hunger is not only most acute for the most vulnerable among the displaced, but it is these same vulnerable persons who are most likely to resort to negative coping strategies for lack of alternatives, thereby highlighting a direct link between food insecurity and protection risks.

UNHCR continues to respond to the needs of those displaced from and within Taizz Governorate. Reaching affected populations from 1,650 families who fled Al Mokha from both north and south of Taizz during the first two weeks of April. Conditions in Taizz continue to be dire, with staff and partners reporting huge needs on the ground including food and assistance, not only for those displaced, but for the hosting communities who in many cases are equally as in need.

Numbers of IDPs assisted by UNHCR per governorate between January and April, 2017.



IDP PROGRAMME

Achievements

Protection

UNHCR leads the Protection Cluster in Yemen, and in coordination with other UN agencies and organizations is working to provide protection to displaced people across the country through five strategic operational hubs that cover Sana'a, Sa'ada, Al Hudaydah, Taizz/Ibb, and Aden. UNHCR and partners are expanding outreach to IDPs and host communities with the target population identified through protection monitoring and information collected through community-based protection networks.

Response



Participants of the Protection Cluster Coordination training in Sana'a. Photo: UNHCR

■ **Protection cluster coordinators training takes place in Sana'a**

In April, the Protection Cluster (PC), chaired by UNHCR, organized a four day intensive training on “Protection Cluster Coordination”. The training, held in Sana'a, brought together 35 participants including national and sub-national PC Coordinators, as well as the Gender Based Violence and Child Protection Sub-Cluster Coordinators at national and sub-national level. Authorities in the north also participated.

The goal of the workshop was to further capacitate coordinators and the national authorities in the promotion and provision of legal protection, and covered a wide range of topics including, protection principles, legal and normative frameworks, the humanitarian architecture and cluster approach, humanitarian assessments and protection monitoring, protection analysis and advocacy, gender based violence prevention and response, and child protection in emergencies.

The timing of the workshop was particularly pertinent, as across Yemen, children, women and men are facing serious threats to their physical safety as a result of the two year conflict. Beyond the physical scars of the conflict, the psychological effect as hostilities continue on civilians are devastating, and working alongside

authorities and partners can help to strengthen the humanitarian response. Moreover, freedom of movement restrictions and lack of civil documentation directly impact their ability to access various forms of humanitarian assistance, particularly cash assistance.

■ **Cash as a protection tool as hunger leads to vast protection crisis**

The protection needs of people affected by the conflict in Yemen are staggering. Displaced families are living in appalling conditions, lacking in water and sanitation and sharing limited resources with the local host communities. The humanitarian community is also ringing alarm bells on a possible looming famine in parts of the country, with an estimated seven million are severely food insecure.

IDPs and returnees' vulnerability to hunger is influenced by their gender, age (especially children and older persons), and dependency on others, including persons with disabilities and chronic illness and consequent ability to access humanitarian assistance. The risk of hunger also places families in a precarious situation, with pressure mounting to resort to negative coping mechanisms including pulling children from school, child labour, child recruitment, begging, survival sex and exposing children, women and men to sexual and gender based violence, as families make every effort to secure food, drawing a clear line between hunger and protection risks.

Cash assistance is one of the Yemen operation's most important protection tools, preventing thousands of IDPs and returnees from dangerous coping mechanisms. UNHCR's one-time, unconditional cash assistance programme is aimed at addressing immediate and serious protection threats to persons affected by the conflict who have a specific needs that cannot be addressed through alternative means. In 2016, cash assistance was distributed to the most vulnerable IDPs with focus on women-headed households, families with young children, people living with disabilities and the elderly. UNHCR assisted 6,643 persons (4,300 South; 2,343 North) with cash assistance in total, with a goal to increase that figure further in 2017 contingent on funding.

UNHCR also provides financial assistance in other circumstances, such as emergency shelter support in the form of rental subsidies and return grants, and one-off non-food items vouchers. Financial and voucher assistance delivered through partners, allows refugees and IDPs to choose what is best for themselves and their families, in a dignified manner. Responding to protection and shelter/NFI and supporting populations of concern through cash and vouchers ensures that the donor contributions entrusted to UNHCR are used in the most effective manner possible, and most importantly places the recipient at the centre of the decision making on their needs. In 2016, 7,740 households received rental subsidies (5,970 heads of household (HHs) in the North and 1,770 HHs in the South).

Shelter and NFIs

UNHCR is the cluster lead agency of the Camp Coordination Camp Management (CCCM), Non-Food Item (NFI), and Shelter Cluster, supporting partners in ensuring that families in need are receiving adequate and appropriate assistance including NFIs and financial support. UNHCR has distributed NFIs to over 803,393 IDPs since the escalation of the conflict, in 20 of the 21 governorates. NFI assistance includes blankets, mattresses, plastic sheeting, kitchen sets along with distribution of emergency shelter kits (ESKs) to families whose houses have been heavily damaged or destroyed. Despite extremely challenging logistics, access and security constraints, UNHCR and partners are doing their utmost to deliver essential life-saving supplies and services in an impartial and neutral manner.

Response

■ **Shelter and CCCM Cluster Finalize Two-Year Strategy**

Looking forward to 2018, the Shelter/Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, led by UNHCR, finalized a two year strategy. The strategy, which will inform and guide the response of all cluster partners, includes a comprehensive response package and outlines activities for enhancing and diversifying shelter programming to better match the needs on the ground for displaced and returning IDP families.

The strategy also incorporates practical and financial support for the authorities with respect to households seeking shelter in collective centres, which include public buildings such as schools and hospitals, and spontaneous sites, which are a temporary home to some of Yemen's most vulnerable populations. The strategy paper, which will serve as the definitive reference document for shelter and CCCM activities, was well received by partners, donors, and UN agencies responding to the crisis in Yemen.

■ UNHCR ramping up preparedness for Hudaydah response



UNHCR Warehouse in Hudaydah. Photo: UNHCR

Military operations have intensified along the Western coast of Yemen since early January of this year, with active fighting forcing thousands of families to flee from Al Mohka and Al Dhubab districts of Taizz. There is a growing expectation among the humanitarian community that conflict could and will reach the strategic port city of Hudaydah. Fighting in the neighbouring governorate of Taizz since January has already displaced nearly 50,000 people. Humanitarian partners are hugely concerned that further escalation into Al Hudaydah Governorate could potentially displace up to 500,000 people and threaten access to Al Hudaydah port, which is the main entry point for essential commercial and humanitarian goods, including food and humanitarian assistance for the north.

As hostilities risk further escalation, UNHCR is working toward three critical and overarching objectives; first ensuring UNHCR is prepared to respond to an onset of emergency displacement, as witnessed currently in Taizz governorate, and second to operationalize the preparedness in the event of a mass displacement in Hudaydah Governorate. A third objective is to provide planned and ongoing protection and assistance to vulnerable displaced families across Yemen, as conflict continues to sweep across all governorates with the exception of the island of Socotra.

In anticipation of the new displacement, UNHCR is pre-positioning supplies to respond to affected populations. During April, the UNHCR warehouse in Hudaydah has received large deliveries of key items, with a current

capacity to respond to 5,000 households with NFIs and 550 households with emergency shelter kits. In addition, a shipment containing 108,864 blankets for IDP distributions was released from Aden seaport and delivered to the Aden warehouse.

In the event of mass displacement, assistance will be delivered directly in affected areas in Hudaydah, in IDP destination locations, and in temporary service points established along displacement route. The planning figures are based on displacement figures of a maximum of 500,000 IDPs, with projections derived by the UNHCR-IOM led Task Force on Population Movement and based on historical displacement data for Hudaydah since March 2015. The Shelter/CCCM requirement, with UNHCR as cluster lead, represents 50% of the requested amount, with the cluster also positioned to lead on the integrated response.

■ **Assistance reaches displaced families in Taizz with response launched from north and south**

In April, UNHCR continued in its efforts to reach affected populations with emergency shelter and NFIs in the embattled Taizz Governorate, with activities undertaken both from the north and from the south.

UNHCR and partner Charitable Society for Social Welfare (CSSW) responded to the latest Taizz displacement with distribution of emergency core relief items to 1,050 families (7,350 persons) who have been displaced for over two months in Al Ma'afar, Al-Wazeiyah and Dhubab districts. UNHCR provided them with blankets, buckets, sleeping mats and mattresses.

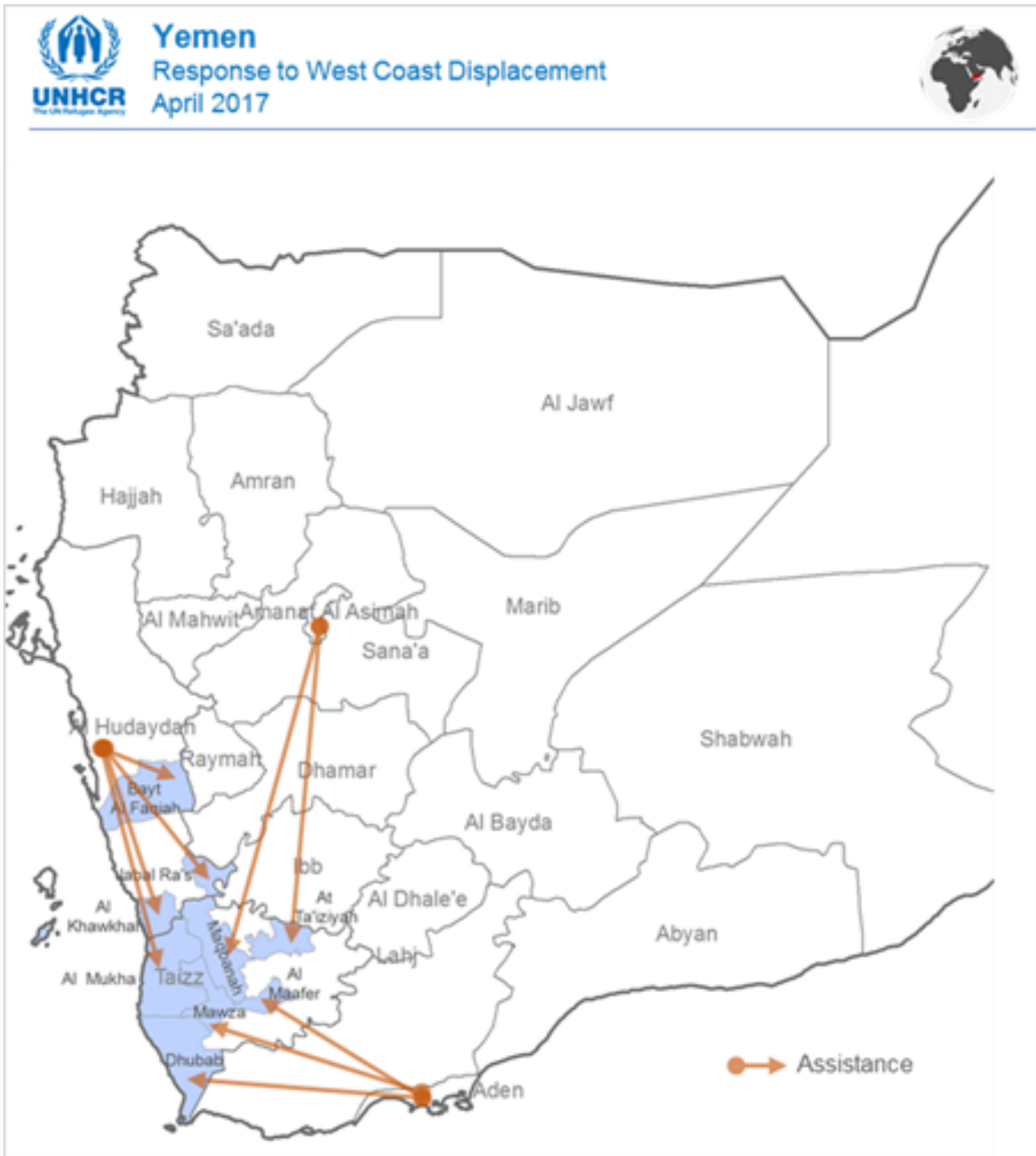
This was the first distribution in Taizz launched from the south, coordinated by the UNHCR team in Aden. A further 1,850 families will be receiving assistance in the coming weeks. The development comes as the situation in Taizz becomes more acute, with families reporting to UNHCR's partner that they left with nothing when they fled their homes in Al Mokha.

In addition, UNHCR carried out a mission to Maqbanah district for the first distribution of emergency assistance through new partner Yemeni Red Crescent (YRC) in Taizz on 2 April, to respond to the needs of recently displaced families from Al Mokha, many of whom are sheltering in horrific conditions. Assistance was also provided to local host communities who are equally in need. The distribution which reached some 600 families, was overseen and monitored by international staff including UNHCR Representative Mr. Ayman Gharaibeh. The distribution was considered a success, with the operation looking to further capitalize on the strategic advantage of working through national partners in such settings.

Verification is ongoing for further distributions in Taizz, including for Al Mokha, which remains the focus of aerial and ground hostilities. The critical distributions in Taizz take place following weeks of negotiations and preparation, and are part of a broader response in Taizz which will reach up to 6,000 families (42,000 people). Nonetheless, challenges for humanitarian response remain, including in gaining access to affected communities, as conflict is ongoing.



Distribution of NFIs take place across Taizz Governorate.
Photo: CSSW/ UNHCR



REFUGEE PROGRAMME

Achievements

Protection

UNHCR is maintaining a collaborative relationship with authorities to safeguard the protection space and improve refugees' access to basic services across the country. Regular interaction is maintained with authorities at national and local level, with implementing and operational partners, and with refugee community leaders. The latest figures indicate that as of 31 March 2017 there are 270,460 refugees and 9,136 asylum seekers, mainly from Somalia (255,637) and Ethiopia (13,616) in Yemen.

Response

■ Ongoing assistance for survivors of the Hudaydah boat incident

UNHCR continues to support survivors and families of the deceased following the March 16 boat incident, when a vessel carrying Somalis, many of whom were carrying UNHCR documentation, was attacked by unidentified assailants off the coast of Hudaydah. UNHCR has been conducting individual protection interviews to the 76 persons of concern who remain in government facilities in Hudaydah, and is working to improve conditions through provision of water and sanitation, non-food items including clothing. However, it is clear from the daily missions taking place that survivors of the incident are under severe stress and continue to feel the psychological effects of the harrowing incident.

Medical treatment also continues for the 10 individuals still in hospital and support for a further 31 individuals accommodated at the IOM Migrant Response Point (MRP). UNHCR in coordination with IOM, is looking at all options for durable solutions for survivors, including assisting in their return to Somalia, or return to Kharaz refugee camp.

■ Somalis begin to approach UNHCR and partners on return

In April, the information campaign on the Assisted Spontaneous Return (ASR) programme was underway, providing support to those who wish to return to Somalia. Some Somalis have expressed their intention to return home as the situation in Yemen becomes untenable, in particular in the north, and where protection space for persons of concern continues to contract.

The Return Help Desk in Basateen has been established, with Somalis already approaching the desk for information on the situation in their country and area of origin and on the process itself. Some families indicated that they may split with one or two members traveling ahead as anticipated, and to take this opportunity as a go-and-see, and report back.

UNHCR and partners INTERSOS and SHS conducted focus group discussions with refugee committees (Somali Grand Counsel, Elders, Youth and Women committees) to discuss the planned ASR programme in Kharaz Refugee Camp. The refugee committees are engaged on the programme and provided advice and guidance on the information campaign, including that the campaign should further highlight the voluntariness of the return programme, provide detailed information on the assistance package upon return, livelihood support, and support for housing and protection for returnees. The guidance of the committee is being incorporated into the information campaign, with ongoing opportunities for further feedback.

■ Entrepreneurs fail to let crisis dampen their ambition with the help of UNHCR

So far in 2017, UNHCR Yemen has awarded 175 refugees a microloan through partner CSSW in Sana'a. The microloans programme for aspiring business owners aims to establish income generating projects to improve refugees living standards in Yemen. In line with the economic downturn, livelihood opportunities across the country have diminished, with persons of concern failing to access the job market and relying almost completely on aid. UNHCR's partner, CSSW, have carried out livelihoods skill training on a monthly basis, including start-up courses for men and women covering business development, project management, and finance.

In addition to training, the livelihoods programme grants a one off assistance package for budding entrepreneurs who can provide a strong business plan. The goal of the programme is to encourage and build refugees self-reliance. The loan can be awarded to either individuals or on a group basis, with an average US \$1,000 granted per loan. A total of 698 loans have been given since 2015, with the initial amount paid back to support future businesses. In a positive development, in 2017, the loan programme has reached self-sufficiency – with the initial seed-money continuously reinvested in the skills and talents of refugee business people.

Abdulrahman Hussein and Habiba Mahmood are two stories of success, despite the struggling economy in Yemen. The project aims to empower and capacitate women and men alike, with opportunities for one-on-one consultations through-out the business cycle with every effort made to ensure their success and profitability.

Abdulrahman Hussein, faced the reality of bankruptcy and the closure of his olive oil and thyme business as crisis followed him from his home in Syria to Yemen. Through the refugee business project, Abdulrahman was able to apply for a loan with CSSW, who followed with a feasibility study of the market and assessment of his business credentials.



Abdulrahman has re-established his business thanks to a microloan. Photo: CSSW/ UNHCR

Awarded a US \$2,400 loan, the businessman has re-established his wholesale business and is distributing olive oil to stores. The loan and subsequent success of his business, has allowed Abdulrahman to regain self-sufficiency and ensure his family of six are well cared for. With the business growing, Abdulrahman has employed three Syrians, further supporting families in Sana'a.

Habiba Mahmood, a refugee from Somalia, has turned her life around, as well as that of her family through the establishment of a clothing business.



Habiba is turning a profit through her clothing business. Photo: CSSW/UNHCR

Spurred on by necessity and the desire to support her family of eleven, upon hearing about the microloan, Habiba applied. The businesswoman was granted a loan in 2014 and again in 2016, and with just US \$300, launched a street vendor enterprise for clothing and accessories. The business, which has been running since 2014, has improved Habiba's standard of living, along with that of her family substantially thanks to a reliable and predictable income.

Health

The government has mainstreamed access for refugees into public health services, and provides primary health care, including treatment of conflict related injuries, as well as health care for chronic medical conditions and emergency cases. Prevention and response to Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) and psychosocial counselling are provided through UNHCR's partner-run refugee community centres.

Response

■ Provision of health care remains a lifeline for refugees

Crumbling public services across Yemen has resulted in refugees being more reliant on aid than ever before. This is especially in the case of medical assistance, and so far this year, UNHCR has provided health services to over 29,793 refugees, which include primary care consultations, mental health and psychosocial care, case management for persons with non-communicable diseases, vaccinations, emergency treatment and referrals for higher level of care.

The UNHCR health programme supported the cholera response at designated public health centres for both refugees and host community. Further support to women and children has been provided through supplementary feeding programmes for children and expectant and new mothers, along with reproductive health services. Across the country, support to survivors of SGBV was also available for refugees and asylum seekers, including counselling and clinical management.

In addition, awareness sessions took place across Yemen to further educate both refugees and Yemenis on issues including cholera, HIV/Aids, reproductive health, breast feeding and nutrition. Since January of this year, 11,160 refugee and asylum seeking and a 3,728 Yemenis have been reached through awareness sessions.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Total recorded contributions in 2017 amount to US\$ 21.8 million received from the Government of the United States of America, the Government of Japan, the Government of Sweden, private donors in Germany, the Government of Switzerland, Educate a Child Programme and private donors in the United Kingdom.

US\$ 77.8 million is still requested for UNHCR's operation in Yemen in 2017.

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds in 2017.

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR (in USD):

United States of America (95 M) | Sweden (76 M) | Netherlands (52 M) | Norway (41 M) | Denmark (23 M) | Australia (19 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | Private Donors Spain (13 M) | Germany (12 M)

Thanks to other donors of unrestricted and regional funds

Algeria | Austria | Belgium | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Canada | Costa Rica | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | Indonesia | Ireland | Kuwait | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Malta | Monaco | Morocco | New Zealand | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Singapore | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Zambia | Private Donors

Contact: Aoife McDonnell, External Relations Officer, mcdonnell@unhcr.org

For more information, please follow us on Twitter at [@UNHCRYemen](https://twitter.com/UNHCRYemen) and on Facebook at [UNHCRYemen](https://www.facebook.com/UNHCRYemen)