

YEMEN

10 – 16 November 2017

KEY FIGURES

20.7 million

people in need

2,014,026

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

89 per cent of IDPs

displaced for more than a year

956,076 IDP returnees

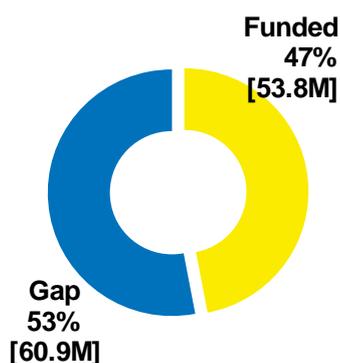
1,015,375 recipients of CRIs since March 2015

280,539 refugees and asylum seekers

Funding

 USD **114.6 M**

requested in 2017



Operational Update

UNHCR is alarmed at the worsening humanitarian situation in Yemen following the temporary closure of land, sea and air borders on 6 November. This latest crisis has generated intolerable suffering for people in Yemen, including the 21 million already in need, with closures preventing life-saving humanitarian and critical commercial supplies from entering the country, and restricting the movement of aid workers.

Among some of the worst hit are Yemen's two million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Many live in crowded, unsafe, unsanitary and undignified collective centers, sheltering in unfinished or war-impacted buildings, or exposed to the elements in makeshift shelters in spontaneous settlements – made of little more than rags and cardboard. Among this huge number of people in need, UNHCR this week witnessed a doubling in the numbers of IDPs, as well as refugees and asylum seekers, approaching UNHCR-supported community centres, as prices across the country rise. In Sana'a alone, some 800 people a day approached the ADRA centre seeking assistance as families become more destitute and unable to absorb this latest financial shock. Speaking with UNHCR, persons of concern have highlighted their urgent needs including rent, health care, fuel and food.

At least 375 refugees, who were hoping to return home to Somalia, supported by UNHCR and IOM through an Assisted Spontaneous Return programme, remain in Yemen, as three boat departures from the Port of Aden to Berbera in Somalia were postponed due to the closure of Yemen's sea ports. Furthermore, border closures are also impacting aid deliveries. New stocks of UNHCR emergency assistance destined for close to 140,000 IDPs have been halted. Together with the humanitarian community in Yemen, UNHCR is advocating for the border closures to be lifted without delay, as closures are posing a critical threat to the millions already struggling to survive.



The numbers of IDPs and refugees approaching UNHCR-supported community centres in need of assistance doubled this week. Photo: UNHCR / S. Mantoo

IDP Response

The impact of the closure of land, sea and air borders on humanitarian activities is placing millions of Yemenis and refugees at even greater risk. One facet of the UNHCR response impacted is the supply line for life-saving assistance. New stocks of UNHCR emergency assistance destined for close to 140,000 IDPs have been halted. UNHCR also aimed to distribute relief aid to 140,000 people, provide cash assistance for winter preparations to 13,000 households and rental subsidies to 9,000 households by the end of the year. However, fuel shortages linked to the border closures may hamper and delay these critical distributions.

Rapidly rising living costs have forced an increasing number of IDPs to put their safety at risk once again, with hundreds of families returning to frontline areas in an effort to ease their financial burdens. UNHCR is preparing an urgent assessment following reports of an estimated 500 families returning from Sana'a to the northern governorate of Sa'ada out of sheer desperation this week. Unable to afford the increased cost of living in Yemen's capital, and at risk of homelessness and hunger, families have made the difficult decision to put themselves back into harm's way, in order to share the burden with family members. Once the assessment is complete, UNHCR will respond with assistance for the most vulnerable, using stocks already in-country.

UNHCR also continues to respond to the newly displaced in southern governorates. Some 850 families displaced from Taizz Governorate in October are currently being assessed for financial support as a matter of urgency, adding to 1,832 families in southern governorates supported with rental subsidies and cash grants in recent weeks. UNHCR is also mobilising support for an estimated 659 newly displaced families from one district of Lahj who have fled due to an escalation in hostilities by warring parties to the conflict.

UNHCR's cold weather response is moving closer to implementation, as night time temperatures in high-altitude areas drop below 5 degrees Celsius. UNHCR has identified more than 10,000 IDPs in need for cold weather assistance. The remaining 5,000 recipients will be identified in the coming month. UNHCR's winter assistance response is expected to commence next week for some 1,000 individuals as part of a pilot distribution in the Sana'a municipality (Amanat Al Asimah). Winter assistance is particularly needed in mountainous areas and has been further compounded by the current crisis, severely limiting IDPs' access to fuel to cook and to heat their homes.

Refugee Response

The current closure of seaports has also placed over 280,000 refugees and asylum seekers in Yemen in a precarious situation. Already struggling to survive with limited livelihood opportunities, the latest crisis has had an immediate impact on those under UNHCR's protection. Speaking to UNHCR, refugees and asylum seekers have highlighted the jump in food prices, as much as 60 per cent in some areas of the country. Furthermore, refugees living in urban centres including Aden, are increasingly considering a move to Kharaz refugee camp in order to avail themselves of assistance as payment of the escalating rental costs becomes untenable. A number of refugee-run businesses have also been impacted, ceasing operations due to the rapid devaluation of the Yemeni Riyal.

UNHCR is monitoring the impact of the cancellation of three planned boat departures as part of the Assisted Spontaneous Return (ASR) programme for Somali refugees. Thus far over 2,351 Somalis have been counselled on the process, including return assistance and conditions in Somalia, with 418 individuals having safely reached Somalia from Yemen. Some 375 returnees were scheduled to return to Somalia on three departures on an IOM-chartered boat, which will be re-scheduled as soon as the Aden port is operational. However, the prevailing uncertainty on when boats may depart, will likely impact Somalis' decision on whether to now apply for ASR or to delay until there is more clarity and a greater degree of predictability.

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

For more information, please follow us on Twitter at @UNHCRYemen and on Facebook at UNHCRYemen