

*This report was prepared by the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator in Yemen. It covers the period from 20 to 23 August 2009. The next report will be issued on or around 26 August.*

## I. HIGHLIGHTS/KEY PRIORITIES

- **Fighting between Yemeni government forces and Al Houthi groups has continued to escalate in Sa'ada Governorate, with clashes now spreading to the neighbouring Governorate of Amran.**
- **The Governor of Sa'ada announced that approximately 17,000 families (119,000 persons) from Sa'ada Governorate are currently displaced, including the populations displaced during previous fighting. Little information is available on the displaced populations and their whereabouts. Humanitarian agencies estimate that their number may reach 150,000, including those displaced by fighting in the governorate of Amran.**
- **The international humanitarian community has responded swiftly to the crisis using available in-country resources, and is coordinating its efforts to conduct inter-agency assessment missions to Hajjah, Amran, and Al Jawf Governorates, where the presence of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has been reported.**
- **Humanitarian organisations have raised concerns regarding their access to populations in need, the protection of civilians and the security of humanitarian staff. The recent establishment of a High-Level Inter-Ministerial Relief Committee by the Government of Yemen is a key step in addressing these issues.**
- **The humanitarian community is preparing a Flash Appeal in order to structure its response and seek additional resources.**

## II. SITUATION OVERVIEW



In early August, fighting between the Al Houthi tribal groups and the Government of Yemen began to escalate in Sa'ada Governorate. Military operations extended from Sa'ada District to nine other districts. Confrontations were also reported in Harf Sufyan in the neighbouring Governorate of Amran. Thousands of persons were displaced as a result. The Ministry of Health has also reported that there were six civilian casualties and a number of injured in Sa'ada.

Available information suggests that as many as 35,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are in Sa'ada city and surrounding areas. Other areas of concentration of IDPs within Sa'ada Governorate include Baqim District (an estimated 15,000 IDPs) in the north, and Al Dhaher District in the west. Both districts are close to Saudi Arabia. IDPs have also been reported in the Governorates of Al Jawf (an estimated 4,000 IDPs), Amran (an estimated 28,000 IDPs) and Hajjah (an estimated 12,500 IDPs).

Insecurity has made it difficult for the humanitarian community to access the affected population and obtain accurate information on numbers, locations and needs. The Sa'ada airport has been closed, except for

military operations. No humanitarian charter aircraft are allowed to land. Travel by land between Sana'a and Sa'ada has been hampered by insecurity and road blocks. UN agencies had to evacuate their non-resident personnel from Sa'ada on 20 August. A large part of Amran Governorate is inaccessible to UN agencies and their partners. There is no access to Al Jawf Governorate for many humanitarian organisations.

Humanitarian partners are coordinating their efforts to conduct inter-agency assessment missions to the areas of displacement in Hajjah, Amran, and Al Jawf Governorates, depending on security conditions. A first inter-agency mission was undertaken in Hajjah Governorate on 14 August. A second mission travelled to Amran City on 18 August, and missions to other districts of Amran Governorate are awaiting clearance from the government. Insecurity has prevented an inter-agency mission to travel to Al Jawf. Humanitarian agencies have been monitoring the situation in this governorate through staff and contacts currently on the ground.

The Government established a High-Level Inter-Ministerial Relief Committee to coordinate assistance to affected populations on 18 August. The Minister of Health was appointed as the Chair of the Committee. The Committee held its first meeting in Haradh in Hajjah Governorate on 22 August, during a high-level mission, which included the Minister of Health, the Minister of Human Rights, the Minister of Public Works, the UN Resident Coordinator and the WHO Representative. A second mission of the High-Level Inter-Ministerial Relief Committee together with the UN Resident Coordinator, representatives of UN humanitarian agencies and international NGOs is taking place in Amran on 24 August.

On 23 August, the Minister of Foreign Affairs hosted a meeting with the Minister of Health, and representatives of UN agencies and international NGOs, during which he indicated the Government of Yemen's commitment to facilitating humanitarian assistance to all affected populations in Haradh, Sa'ada and Amran. The Foreign Minister also indicated that the Government envisages to opening humanitarian corridors and to provide air transport for delivering humanitarian supplies to Sa'ada

### III. Humanitarian Needs and Response

#### *Humanitarian needs*

Reports from the Ministry of Public Health suggest that the situation in Sa'ada Governorate is alarming. Many of the health facilities are non-functional, and public health activities, including immunization, are not being provided to the population. The risk of disease outbreaks, such as measles, diarrhoeal and other communicable diseases, is high.

Results from the inter-agency assessment in Haradh conducted on 14 August indicate that a significant number of IDPs are living in a valley without shelter and access to water. They are at risk of heat stroke and severe dehydration. In addition, cases of diarrhoeal diseases, skin rash (due to heat) and child malnutrition have been reported.

#### *Response*

**Food:** WFP airlifted 40 metric tons of high energy biscuits from the UN humanitarian depot in Dubai on 16 August. By 18 August, ten metric tons of high-energy biscuits and dates had been distributed to 7,000 newly displaced persons in Hajjah Governorate. The distribution of a full one-month ration of cereals, pulses, vegetable oil, salt and sugar began on 23 August for 10,000 people, including previously displaced people. Assistance is being delivered in Haradh as well as in Al Mazrak, which continues to register new IDPs from areas inaccessible to humanitarian organisations. In Sa'ada, this month's regular food distribution has been on hold due to security concerns. On 21 August, local authorities eventually gave their approval to humanitarian agencies for registering beneficiaries and distributing food afterwards. WFP currently has 960 metric tons of food commodities in Sa'ada town available for distribution.

**Health:** WHO provided two trauma kits to the Ministry of Public Health. Designed for supporting 200 surgical interventions, the kits will be used where recommended by inter-agency assessment reports. Four additional emergency trauma kits have been ordered, which will help support 700 surgical interventions. Four diarrhoeal kits were also stockpiled. Two of them were sent to Hajjah Governorate, as well as two mobile health clinics to provide health services to IDPs in the Al Mazrak transit centre. One mobile health clinic was deployed to Amran on 20 August. The mobile teams are providing integrated management of childhood illnesses (IMCI),

as well as addressing cases of malaria, skin and other diseases. Vaccination, reproductive health issues and severe cases are being referred to hospitals.

**Camp Management:** Local authorities are working on the establishment of a camp for 500 families in the outskirts of Haradh, in Hajjah Governorate. UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO and the Yemeni Red Crescent Society will provide support in the areas of registration and camp management, water and sanitation, and health.

**Shelter and Non-Food Items:** By 19 August, UNHCR distributed relief assistance – including tents, plastic sheeting, mattresses, blankets, jerry cans, kitchen sets, soap and sanitary napkins – to 2,100 IDPs in Haradh. Similar assistance was provided to an additional 228 displaced families a few days later. UNHCR provided 50 families with tents, mattresses and blankets to help them settle at Al Mazrak transit area. In Sa'ada Governorate, 700 new IDP families have so far been registered. UNHCR is triangulating registration data to avoid double registration of previously displaced persons. UNHCR's relief assistance provided so far has come from a contingency stock for refugees, and an order has been placed to procure 25,000 blankets, 6,000 kitchen sets, 6,000 plastic sheeting and 300 tents.

**Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):** UNICEF began distributing essential supplies for 13,000 IDPs in Haradh. Some 825 water filters, 1,000 jerry cans, 500 hygiene kits and 300,000 water purification tablets had been distributed to 550 displaced families as of 21 August.

**Education:** UNICEF, UNHCR, and Save the Children met the Minister of Education on 23 August to coordinate emergency response in the education sector.

**Protection:** The humanitarian community's major concerns with regards to protection relate to access to populations in need, the protection of civilians and the security of humanitarian staff. The establishment of a High-Level Inter-Ministerial Relief Committee by the Government is a key step to addressing these issues. The recent announcement by the Government that it would consider working on the establishment of humanitarian corridors is welcomed by humanitarian agencies.

#### IV. Coordination

The Yemeni Government has pledged to work with the international humanitarian community to help provide assistance to the affected populations. In this respect, the Government established a High-Level Inter-Ministerial Relief Committee to coordinate assistance to affected populations. The Committee is chaired by the Minister of Health.

International support to the Government is coordinated by the UN Resident Coordinator, who chairs the Humanitarian Country Team, with the assistance of OCHA. The WFP Country Representative chairs the UN Emergency Preparedness and Response Team, which facilitates operational coordination. INGOs are participants in all coordination mechanisms.

Humanitarian partners are coordinating their activities through six sectoral working groups or clusters, including food (led by WFP), health (led by WHO), nutrition (led by UNICEF), shelter and non-food items (led by UNHCR), education and protection (jointly led by UNHCR, UNICEF and Save the Children), and WASH (led by UNICEF).

#### V. Funding

The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) allocated a rapid response grant of \$1.2 million on 14 August in order to provide immediate assistance to 25,000 persons displaced by previous fighting in the Sa'ada Governorate.

WFP requires additional funding to respond to the needs arising from renewed fighting in Sa'ada. Overall, the agency is facing a shortfall of US\$20 million or 36 percent of total needs for 2009. UNHCR is appealing for an additional \$5 million to help populations affected by the fighting. Other agencies have yet to communicate their emergency funding requirements.

The humanitarian community in Yemen is preparing a Flash Appeal in order to structure its response and seek additional financial resources. The Flash Appeal will primarily include life-saving activities for 150,000

IDPs as well as a large number of indirectly affected populations until December 2009. Humanitarian activities beyond December 2009 will be incorporated into a humanitarian response strategy document, which will be launched in November 2009 as part of the 2010 Global Appeal process.

## **VI. Contact**

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