

This report was issued by the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator in Yemen. It covers the period 24 to 27 August 2009. The next report will be issued on 30 August 2009

I. HIGHLIGHTS/KEY PRIORITIES

- Fighting between Yemeni Government forces and Al Houthi groups has continued to escalate in the Sa'ada Governorate, impeding humanitarian access to population in need.
- Anecdotal information suggests that the humanitarian situation in Sa'ada is worsening, as coping mechanisms of civilians population caught in the conflict are getting exhausted. Humanitarian access is urgently required to prevent the humanitarian situation from deteriorating further.
- The humanitarian community is finalizing a Flash Appeal to address humanitarian needs of approximately 150,000 internally displaced persons (IDP) and tens of thousands of people indirectly affected by the conflict.

II. Situation Overview

Fighting between the Government of Yemen and Al Houthi tribal groups has intensified in recent days, resulting in additional displacement of population and straining the coping mechanisms of populations caught in the conflict. Available information suggests that as many as 35,000 IDPs live in Sa'ada city and surrounding areas, in addition to tens of thousands of residents. Reports from humanitarian actors indicate that there is no water and no electricity in the city. There is also a shortage of fuel and it is becoming increasingly dangerous and hard for the people to reach the market to get food. Many health facilities are non-functional, and public health activities are not delivered to populations, which raises concerns over the risk of disease outbreaks.

Humanitarian actors are increasingly concerned over the deterioration of the situation in Sa'ada, as fighting intensifies and there is no indication that confrontations will subside in the near future. A commitment from all parties is needed to facilitate immediate, safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian actors to Sa'ada to allow for urgent needs assessments and the provision of humanitarian assistance to those in need.

In the meantime, some progress has been made in terms of getting access to displaced populations in neighboring governorates. Following a first mission of the Resident Coordinator and WHO Representative to Hajjah Governorate on 22 August, UN agencies' and INGO's representatives traveled to Amran Governorate on Monday, 24 August. The mission reached Khaiwan, some 90 kilometers south of Sa'ada, where newly arrived IDPs were found living in public facilities or with host families. The presence of IDPs was also reported in surrounding areas. The authorities informed the mission of their intention to open a new IDP camp of an initial capacity of 500 families.

As of 27 August, agencies operate humanitarian programs in Sa'ada city, Hajjah Governorate and Amran Governorate. In Sa'ada, UN agencies resumed distribution of assistance this week after activities had been on hold following the outbreak of fighting. However, insecurity is restricting movements of humanitarian personnel, which severely hampers implementation of activities. Agencies are considering possibilities to establish a program in Baqim in the north of Sa'ada Governorate. In Hajjah Governorate, a humanitarian program has been underway in Haradh and Al Mazrak since 14 August. Assistance includes the distribution of food and relief items to displaced populations. Agencies are also helping local authorities establish a camp. In Amran Governorate, and following the mission of 24 August, humanitarian partners are preparing to provide humanitarian assistance in Khaiwan. This entails providing support to the establishment of the above mentioned IDP camp. Al Jawf Governorate has been a no-go area for a few years for many humanitarian agencies due to tribal conflict.

Humanitarian agencies estimate that a total of 150,000 persons have been displaced by conflict in the northern part of the country. This estimation is based on information from the Sa'ada authorities that 120,000 persons from the Governorate are currently displaced and that, in Amran Governorate, fighting in the Harf Sufyan region has forced close to 30,000 persons to flee from their homes.

III. Humanitarian Needs and Response

Protection: In Hajjah Governorate, some incidents were registered in Al Mazrak transit area, involving IDPs carrying weapons. Accordingly, UNHCR requested the local government to make sure that IDPs be without weapons upon entering the area in order to ensure safety of beneficiaries and humanitarian personnel. In Sa'ada Governorate, where distribution of assistance had been on hold since 10 August, agencies were able to register beneficiaries from 22 August in view of distributing assistance. Reports indicate that the delivery of humanitarian aid is complicated by the fighting. There are also concerns over the depletion of stocks.

Camp Coordination and Camp Management: In Sa'ada, humanitarian partners helped relocate some 5,000 IDPs from al-Anad camp just outside the city, which was caught in the line of fire, to safer places. Some were moved to the camps of Al-lhsa' and Sam within the city and al-Talh outside the city, others elsewhere in the city. Reports indicate that the three camps shelter over 4,200 people. As IDPs continue to arrive in the city, their capacity of the camps is being stretched to the limit.

In Hajjah Governorate, UNHCR provides technical support to the Government, in partnership with the Yemeni Red Crescent Society, to establish a camp in Al Mazrak. The camp will initially accommodate 500 families. At least 166 tents have already been erected and are being occupied. In Amran Governorate, the authorities informed the recent interagency mission of their intention to open a new IDP camp in Khaiwan. The camp will initially accommodate 500 families. Priority will be given to displaced families, who are currently living in schools, hangars and other public facilities in the governorate. UNHCR will assist the local authority to set up the camp.

Shelter and Non-Food Items: Distribution of non-food items (NFI), kerosene stoves, mattresses, blankets, tents, plastic sheets and soap is taking place for IDPs in- and outside camps in Haradh and Al Mazrak (Hajjah Governorate) and Sa'ada. In Sa'ada, UNHCR has registered 700 families. However, they only have NFIs for half of this population due to the impossibility of replenishing their stocks. The agency is preparing to dispatch NFIs for 300 families to Amran. UNHCR's relief assistance provided so far has been from a contingency stock for refugees. UNHCR placed an order to procure 25,000 blankets, 6,000 kitchen sets, 6,000 plastic sheeting and 300 tents.

Food: In Hajjah Governorate, distribution of food aid is underway, in spite of some difficulties related to crowd control and insecurity. As of 25 August, 2,030 IDPs had benefitted from distribution of a full food basket. In Sa'ada, WFP resumed food distribution on 26 August following an interruption of nearly two weeks. Distribution began in Al-lhsa and Sam camps for 2,500 IDPs, including 1,100 newly-arrived persons. Families are receiving full food rations. Distribution to beneficiaries in the town is pending completion of distribution. Humanitarian aid is reportedly complicated by the fighting: insecurity is currently hampering access of agencies to Al Talh camp. WFP currently has 960 mt of food commodities in Sa'ada town positioned and ready for distribution. There are also concerns that further food distribution will be in jeopardy if stocks cannot be replenished.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH): UNICEF has distributed 1,025 water filters, 2,000 jerry cans, 10 tanks of capacity 2,000 liters each, 1,000 hygiene kits and 300,000 water purification tablets to 1,000 displaced families in Haradh.

Health: WHO mobilized one trauma kit to Amran to support 100 surgical interventions. One diarrhea kit was also sent to the same place for treating 500 severe cases. In addition, locally purchased medicines were sent to health units in Amran and Haradh (Hajjah Governorate). A WHO local staff conducted an assessment of the health situation in Al Jawf. The assessment report indicates that there are around 4,000 IDPs scattered across four districts. The Ministry of Health and WHO will send one mobile clinic to Al Jawf in order to enhance the capacity of local health authorities. Some 700 long-lasting insecticide treated bed nets were distributed on 25 August to IDPs in Al Mazrak. Rapid diagnostic testing has begun for all suspected cases of malaria and treatment is given accordingly.

Logistics: Transportation of humanitarian staff and supplies to Sa'ada has been on hold due to lack of access and insecurity. A mission of the Logistics Response Team (LRT) is scheduled to visit Yemen very shortly to assess modalities of organizing passenger air service and transport of commodities to Sa'ada in the

event that the security situation improves and that clearance is given for air and road transport. The mission will review customs and clearing arrangements in place for the humanitarian community in Yemen. Alternative routes to the governorate will also be assessed in order to dispatch commodities as soon as conditions allow.

WFP is looking at available options to have four mobile storage tents dispatched to Yemen in order to increase warehousing capacity in Sa'ada, should air and road transport be allowed to resume.

IV. Coordination

The Yemeni Government established a High-Level Inter-Ministerial Relief Committee to coordinate assistance to affected populations, which 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. International NGOs are participants in all coordination mechanisms.

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

V. Funding

WFP requires additional funding to respond to the needs arising from renewed fighting in Sa'ada. WFP is reviewing its Emergency Operations to cover 150,000 IDPs in Sa'ada as well as Hajjah, Amran, and Al-Jawf Governorates. 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 also require additional funding but have yet to communicate their emergency funding requirements.

As of 26 August 2009, the CERF has granted under the CERF rapid response window a total of \$2,621,530.

The humanitarian community in Yemen is preparing a Flash Appeal in order to respond to the Sa'ada crisis. The Flash Appeal will include life-saving activities for 150,000 people and tens of thousands of populations indirectly affected by the conflict until December 2009. Humanitarian activities beyond December 2009 will be incorporated in a humanitarian response strategy document, which will be launched in November 2009 as part of the 2010 Global Appeal process.

VI. Contacts

For further information please contact:

UNRC YEMEN:

Ms. Pratibha Mehta, Resident Coordinator email: pratibha.mehta@undp.org, Tel: +967 71 222 2200

OCHA, ROMENACA:

Abdul Haq Amiri, Head of OCHA Regional Office email: amiri@un.org, Tel: +20 16 861 5339

OCHA, New York: Charles Bernimolin, Coordination Response Division (CRD), bernimolin@un.org
+1- 917-640-6399

Stephanie Bunker, Spokesperson and Public Information Officer (CISB), bunker@un.org
+1-917-892-1679

VII. For Reference

Situation reports can also be found on:

OCHA's site for humanitarian information on complex emergencies and natural disasters

<http://www.reliefweb.int/>