



**CHILD
ALERT**

Yemen: Childhood Under Threat



CHILD ALERT

Child Alert is a briefing series that presents the core challenges for children in a given crisis location at a given time. This issue focuses on Yemen, where the conflict is exacting a huge toll on the country's children.

The scale of the crisis

Yemen is one of the most terrifying places in the world to be a child. Children are bearing the brunt of a brutal armed conflict which escalated in March this year and shows no sign of a resolution. Scores of children are dying every month, while those who survive live in constant fear of being killed. Since the escalation of fighting basic services that children depend on have been decimated. Food, medicine and water are all in short supply. Nearly 10 million children – 80 per cent of the country's under-18 population – need urgent humanitarian assistance. More than 1.3 million people have been forced to flee their homes. Children killed by bullets and bombs can be counted, but countless more risk death from malnutrition or otherwise preventable diseases as essential social services fail.



398
children killed since March 2015



605
children injured since March 2015



377
children recruited by armed forces and groups



1.3 Million
people have been forced to flee their homes



1.8 Million
children are expected to suffer from malnutrition

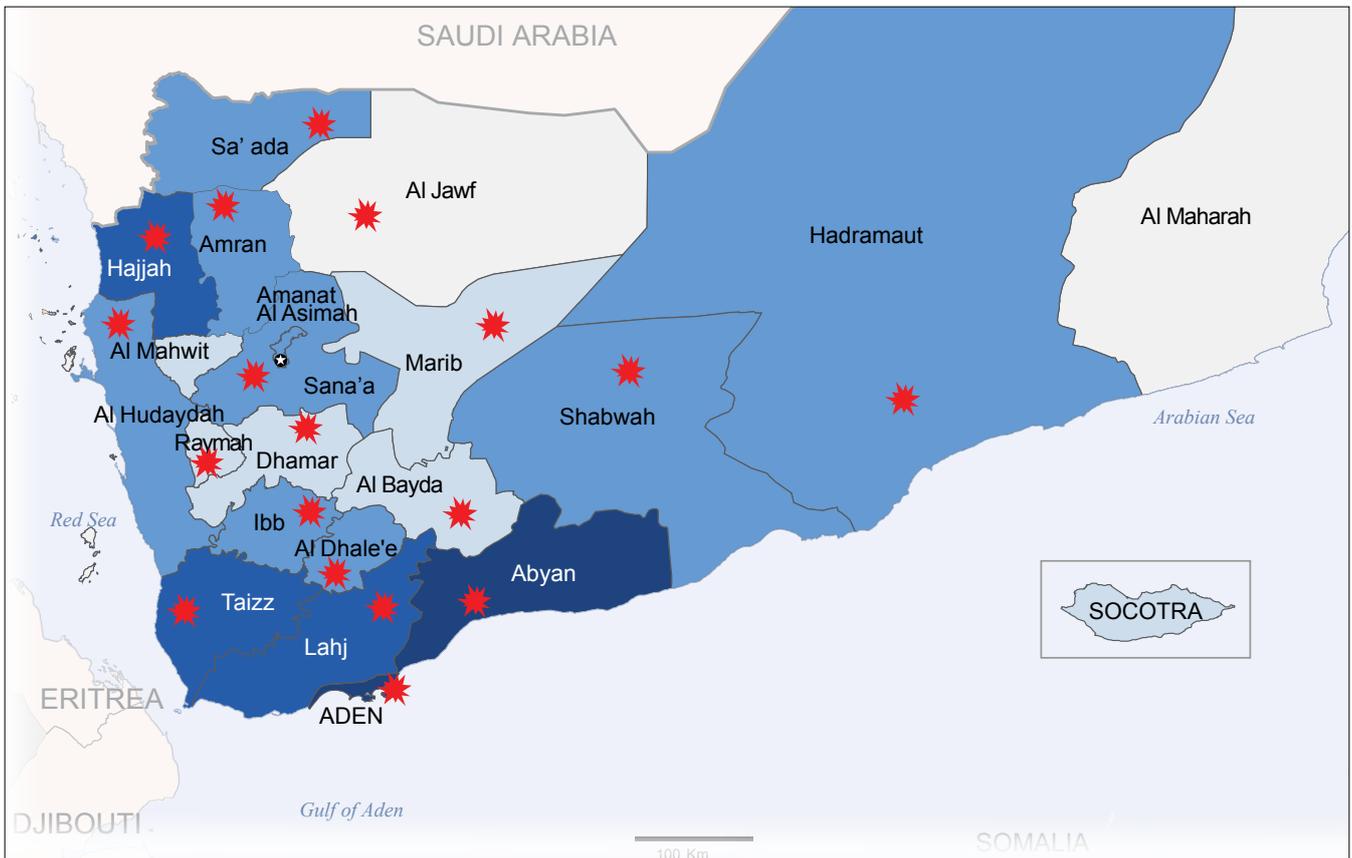


537,000
children under the age of five will be at risk of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) in 2015



10 Million
children need urgent humanitarian assistance

Yemen: Areas of conflict



Map: OCHA

Nearly 8 children killed or maimed every day in Yemen's deadly conflict

Since the conflict escalated on 26 March 2015, at least 398 children have been verified as killed and over 605 injured. In other words, nearly three children are being killed every day and another five injured. That's more than four times the number killed in 2014 and three times the number injured. UNICEF believes that the true number of children killed or maimed could be much higher.

Children are also being recruited and used by armed forces and groups across the country. UNICEF can confirm that at least 377 children have been recruited and used by parties to the conflict up to the end of July—more than double the total of 156 children in 2014.

Recent rapid assessments on child protection show that most children are living under enormous stress—up to 80 per cent of affected children say they fear playing in the open. In addition, in 18 out of 22 governorates, children are at greater risk of being exposed to injury caused by mines and other unexploded ordnance (UXOs).

Photo: © UNICEF/NYHQ2015-1297/Hamoud

On 21 April, boys hold shrapnel from exploded artillery shells while standing on a street damaged by blasts in Sana'a, Yemen's capital.



"I was playing with my sisters and ignoring the bombs exploding nearby, but then an explosion took place close to us. We could not see each other from all the dust around us, and it was difficult to breathe. We ran for shelter. We could hear the whistling of flying missiles followed by loud bangs when they exploded. I was terrified. All we could do was pray for God to protect us.

It was no longer safe and we had to leave our home. Our everyday life has been interrupted. I pray for an end to this war."

Latifa, 9, fled Sa'ada governorate in Yemen

"I still remember the day when the rocket shelling was heavy. My mother woke us up, pushed us through the door and told us to run, run, run. We found ourselves here, in this school. I want to go back home. I want to be safe.

12-year-old Al-Omari who lives in a school used to house internally displaced people in the southern city of Aden.

A woman wearing a black niqab is looking towards a young child. The child has a white medical bandage on their right arm. The background is a simple room with a bed and a window with pink curtains.

"I would sell everything I have to ensure my children's wellbeing, what really disturbs me is how difficult it has become to get proper medical treatment." - Umm Faisal

Faisal is 18 months old. His mother, Umm Faisal, says he was born a healthy baby weighing 2.7 kilos. At age of one, he weighed 12 kilos. Now he weighs just 5 kilos.

He was admitted to Al-Sabeen Hospital 45 days ago. Several weeks earlier, he had lost his appetite and then started vomiting. His mother says she couldn't afford enough food and decided to sell her only piece of land to provide for Faisal and his two siblings. However, Faisal's condition deteriorated.

"I would sell everything I have to ensure my children's wellbeing. What really disturbs me is how difficult it has become to get proper medical treatment.

The hospitals are no longer what they used to be. The conflict has made all things worse, everything got more expensive, nowhere is safe even here at the hospital as it's near a military base. I just hope that my son gets better soon so I can return home to my children."



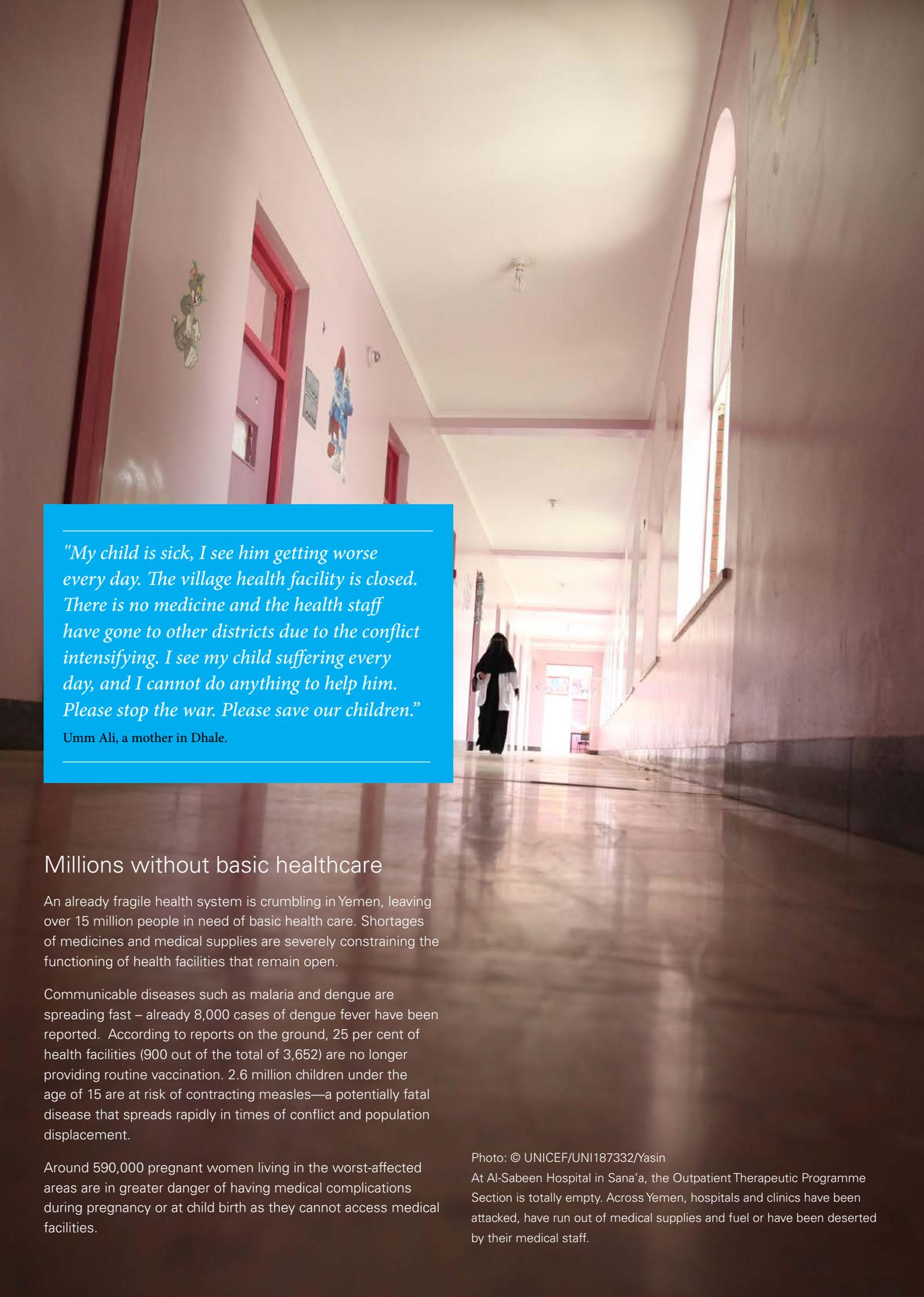
Rising Malnutrition - reversal in gains made so far

As the conflict escalates, malnutrition – long endemic in Yemen – is posing an even more insidious threat to Yemen's children. Overall, around 1.8 million children are likely to suffer from some form of malnutrition in Yemen in this year alone – a total increase of almost one million children from 2014. A projected 537,000 of these children will be at risk of severe acute malnutrition in 2015, which is over three times the 160,000 reported in 2014.

Recent years had seen a slight improvement in the situation: Stunting, or chronic malnutrition, among young children had declined from 58 per cent – the second highest rate in the world – to 47 per cent in 2013.

The current conflict is reversing these gains. Some of the governorates most affected by the fighting are now officially classified as suffering from a food security emergency. Recent food security reports suggest that in the coming months, the number of people in Yemen facing food shortages will increase dramatically, and that children are particularly at risk. Half of Yemen's population—12 million people—are now estimated to require vital food aid or humanitarian assistance to survive.

Yemen produces only a fraction of its food needs; a full 90% of basic foodstuffs has to be imported from overseas. But normal commercial imports are currently facing tight restrictions. Unsurprisingly, food prices have increased by an average of 30 per cent.



"My child is sick, I see him getting worse every day. The village health facility is closed. There is no medicine and the health staff have gone to other districts due to the conflict intensifying. I see my child suffering every day, and I cannot do anything to help him. Please stop the war. Please save our children."

Umm Ali, a mother in Dhale.

Millions without basic healthcare

An already fragile health system is crumbling in Yemen, leaving over 15 million people in need of basic health care. Shortages of medicines and medical supplies are severely constraining the functioning of health facilities that remain open.

Communicable diseases such as malaria and dengue are spreading fast – already 8,000 cases of dengue fever have been reported. According to reports on the ground, 25 per cent of health facilities (900 out of the total of 3,652) are no longer providing routine vaccination. 2.6 million children under the age of 15 are at risk of contracting measles—a potentially fatal disease that spreads rapidly in times of conflict and population displacement.

Around 590,000 pregnant women living in the worst-affected areas are in greater danger of having medical complications during pregnancy or at child birth as they cannot access medical facilities.

Photo: © UNICEF/UNI187332/Yasin

At Al-Sabeen Hospital in Sana'a, the Outpatient Therapeutic Programme Section is totally empty. Across Yemen, hospitals and clinics have been attacked, have run out of medical supplies and fuel or have been deserted by their medical staff.

“The clinic in my village is closed, and there are no door-to-door immunization campaigns anymore. I am worried about my only child not being able to get his remaining vaccinations. I am still keeping the vaccination card so that whenever vaccination staff come, I can show the next dose needed. Even if our children survive the rockets they will not survive the diseases if they don’t complete their vaccinations.”

Umm Mohammad, Lahj, in southern Yemen



Photo: © UNICEF/UNI187332/Yasin
Umm Mohammed holds the vaccination card for her son Mohammed, whose vaccination schedule has been interrupted by the war.

Yemen's looming water and sanitation crisis

If nothing is done to restore water and sanitation services, Yemen could be on the verge of a major public health crisis. Around 20.4 million people in Yemen lack access to safe water, raising the risk

of water-borne diseases, including cholera. Sewage treatment plants and solid waste collection in many areas have stopped working. Over 2.5 million children are at risk of diarrhoeal diseases, while more than 1.3 million children face the threat of acute respiratory tract infections.



Photo: © UNICEF/NYHQ2015-1292/Yasin
Children use jerrycans to collect water in Sana'a.

1.8 million children already missing out on education

Nearly 400 schools have been damaged due to shelling or airstrikes since the end of March, including 95 that have been completely destroyed. A further 346 schools are currently unusable; at least 23 have been occupied by armed groups and 317 are housing internally displaced families. At least 3,600 schools have closed over the past two months, leaving 1.8 million children deprived of education.



Photo: © UNICEF/NYHQ2015-1297/Hamoud

Ibn Sina School in Sana'a was heavily damaged during an air strike. The impact of the blast destroyed the outer wall of the school yard and left classrooms covered in rubble and broken glass. The school, where 1,500 girls studied in primary and secondary classes, is closed indefinitely.



Photo: © UNICEF/NYHQ2015-1130/Mahmoud

A damaged classroom at Ibn Sina School.

Massmoum school is in Darr Saad district of Aden, a city which has experienced heavy conflict.

"All the people in the neighbourhood left after the shelling," says Nabila Mobarak, who worked as a cleaner at the school. "I stayed and now we're alone and all doors are closed in my face. Where can I go? Tell me where to go."

Nabila's 11 year old daughter, Dekrah says: *"I miss school. I promised my father I'd be an engineer when I grow up – but now I've missed the final exam. I am so scared. The sound of the rockets frightens me. I am the eldest of us children and I should be strong - but I can't help it. I'm afraid to close my eyes at night in case I die while I'm asleep."*

"I want the whole world to hear my story. So they can see this is what this war has reduced us to," says Nabila. "We fear everything: fear we may die suddenly, and fear we may die slowly and in silence."

Seven-year-old Nada Nussir will not be going to school tomorrow. Or the day after. Or the day after that. And her 4-year old friend, Abdul Rahman, will never return to school at all.

"Abdul was 4 years old, and he was killed by a sniper. I do not want to die like him", Nada says.

[READ MORE](#)

Forced to flee: Children are among thousands of Yemeni refugees in Djibouti

Hundreds of children have fled the country. More than 20,000 people have escaped to Djibouti since the conflict escalated in March and thousands of Yemenis have registered there as refugees.

UNICEF and partners are working to provide urgent humanitarian aid at transit centres and at Markazai refugee camp. Children are coping with extreme conditions in the desert, including 47 degree heat and strong winds.



Photo: © UNICEF/NYHQ2015-0868/Hamoud

On 2 April two boys sit amid their belongings on the roof of a vehicle fleeing Sana'a.

Jwareh, 7 years old, is one of 120 refugee children hosted with their families at Al Rahma temporary transit centre in Obock region in Djibouti.

"I was playing and I saw a plane that left fire behind. Then I heard the bombs. I was so scared that I went running to my mother and we all went out of the house."

Nada, 7 years old

"Bombs were falling everywhere and fighting was going on. The house was shaking and we were so scared. We were so afraid that our father wouldn't get back home from work but luckily he did."

First the children went by bus to their uncle's house, in Mokha, but they didn't feel safe as the house was near a military camp. And so they took the boat and started a two-day journey to Djibouti.

"It was very hard, we were vomiting in the boat and we couldn't sleep," says Nada.

"We sleep outside, in the open air. Inside the tent is too hot. I dream of being in our house and feel upset when I wake up only to realize that it's not true. I want to go back home and live a normal life."

Sabah, 10 years old

In March Sabah and her family were returning to Yemen after a visit to Somalia, where her mother originally comes from. The war was already raging. They managed to make it to their house, but it was no longer there. It had been flattened by rockets.

"We managed to escape on my uncle's boat," says Sabah. *"With the strong waves one woman fell into the sea and died. I was so tired and afraid."*

UNICEF'S response to the Yemen crisis

Against this daunting backdrop, an international humanitarian response is underway, involving UNICEF and other agencies.



Nutrition:

Over the past six months, the children's agency has treated over 67,000 children under five suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Over 200,000 have been provided with Vitamin A as an essential supplement to their diet.



Health:

UNICEF and partners vaccinated 414,000 children under five years against measles and polio. More than 15,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women were provided with antenatal, delivery and postnatal care to prevent maternal and newborn deaths.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene:

UNICEF helped 1.9 million people access safe drinking water. The support included providing fuel to several cities (Aden, Zinjibar and Al Hawta City) to enable them to continue pumping water to residents. Water was also trucked into Al Hawt and Turban Districts in Lahj Governorate, as well as Amran City and Sana'a City. Community water tanks are being installed in areas with internally displaced families. In addition, 179,000 people received hygiene kits to prevent disease outbreaks.



Child protection:

UNICEF-supported psychosocial activities such as sports, art and other recreational and therapeutic interventions have been provided to more than 151,000 girls and boys who use child-friendly spaces set up in areas sheltering internally displaced families. 279,000 adults and children were reached with information on how to protect themselves from the dangers of mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO). UNICEF documented over 600 cases of grave child rights violations, including deaths, denial of humanitarian aid and school attacks.



Education:

UNICEF is supporting the design and delivery of catch-up classes, together with the Yemen's Ministry of Education. So far, around 75,000 children in the governorates of Amanat Al Asimah, Amran, Hajjah Almahwit, Hodeidah and Ibb have taken part in these classes.



Communication for Development (C4D):

UNICEF C4D interventions reached 214,000 internally displaced people and community members with an integrated package of life-saving, care and child protection messages. The messages focused on disease prevention and management, essential nutrition, immunization, hygiene promotion, avoiding child separation and mine and UXO awareness.



Djibouti:

UNICEF is working with the Djibouti Government and partners so that sick and malnourished Yemeni children can access adequate healthcare and treatment. It is also distributing safe drinking water to the whole refugee population in the Markazi refugee camp. UNICEF is supporting a back-to-school campaign so that Yemeni refugee children can continue their studies and regain a sense of normalcy in their lives, which is critical to help them cope with stress and trauma. A logistics hub has been established in the country, from which UNICEF has been continuously sending critical supplies by boat to Yemen, including medicines and medical supplies, nutritional products, and water, hygiene and sanitation supplies.



Photo: © UNICEF/NYHQ2015-0805/Hamoud

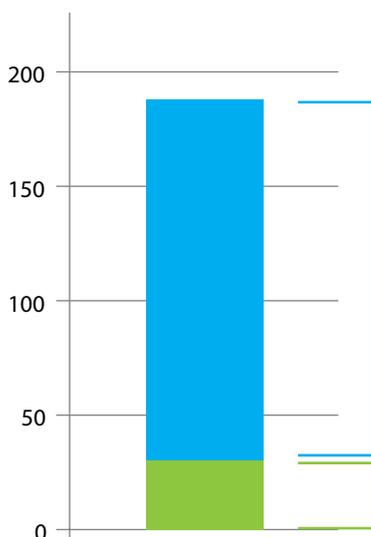
On 10 April 2015, the first airlift of urgent medical and other supplies from UNICEF is unloaded on the tarmac at Sana'a International Airport, as the conflict in Yemen continues to exact a heavy toll on children and their families. The cargo of antibiotics, bandages, syringes, IV sets and other medical supplies for up to 80,000 people, micronutrients for up to 20,000 children and water storage materials was airlifted from UNICEF's Supply Centre in Denmark.

More is needed

Though UNICEF has been able to support children and women caught in the deadliest conflict in Yemen in recent history, much more needs to be done to reach greater numbers of affected families. Out of the total humanitarian appeal for 2015 of US\$183 million, UNICEF has received US\$30 million to date, leaving a funding gap of 84 per cent.



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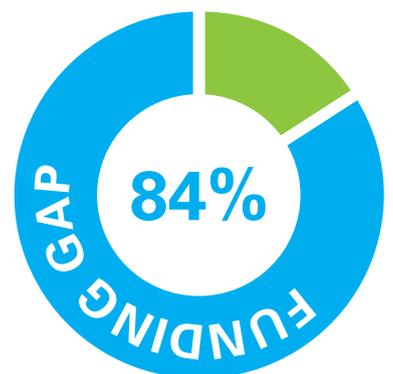


US\$183 MILLION

Out of the total humanitarian appeal for 2015

US\$30 MILLION

Received to date





UNICEF IS CALLING FOR:

- All parties to the conflict to abide by international humanitarian law, and to avoid targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure including schools, and water and health facilities;
- All parties to the conflict to provide humanitarian agencies with guaranteed safe access so that all children can be reached wherever they are in the country;
- International donors to rapidly step up their support for humanitarian programmes in Yemen at this critical time.



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Cover photo: © UNICEF/UNI187326/Yasin
A mother on her way to see a doctor, seeking medical treatment
for her child at Al-Sabeen Hospital in Sana'a. June 4, 2015.