

Conflict in Yemen: Save the Children Preparing for Fighting in Hodeidah, Maintaining Lifeline to Children and Families

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"The battle for Hodeidah will almost certainly result in a huge loss of civilian life and damage to vital infrastructure. Save the Children has consistently called for a diplomatic rather than military solution to this brutal conflict, now in its fourth year, and we feel despair for the children of Hodeidah who didn't ask for this war. Time and again, the world has failed the children of Yemen, despite international efforts discouraging the warring parties from escalating a military confrontation."

-- Tamer Kirolos, Yemen Country Director for Save the Children

The Emergency

Since early May, the frontline of Yemen's civil war has edged closer to Hodeidah, the main port city on Yemen's west coast and the country's primary entry point for goods and humanitarian aid. There are grave fears that if fighting overwhelms the heavily populated city, civilians will be caught in the crossfire and killed, up to 400,000 people could be displaced into the surrounding area with nothing, and disrupted aid shipments will further exacerbate dangerously acute levels of need.

The situation in Yemen is already extremely dire, and the needs of conflict-affected children are huge even without fighting in and around Hodeidah. The population's ability to withstand continued shocks such as the anticipated displacement is lower than ever. Children and families who are able to flee will have to cross lines of active fighting to reach host communities struggling to survive the crisis



Safwan*, 2, has his upper arm measured at a Save the Children-supported health clinic in Hudaydah, Yemen, to determine the extent of his malnutrition. The doctor diagnosed Safwan with severe acute malnutrition, and we provided the therapeutic food and medicine the boy needed. To help Safwan maintain his health, his mother attended awareness sessions on breastfeeding, cholera and hygiene conducted by our staff.

Photo: Ali Ashwall/Save the Children

*name changed to protect identity

themselves. An estimated 100,000 people have already been displaced from the area in recent months, most of whom have headed south to neighboring Aden.

The port's closure would trigger greater hunger among millions of people in northern governorates. Further reductions in food imports would speed the onset of famine in a country that is already experiencing the world's largest humanitarian crisis. Some 8.4 million people are severely food insecure

and at risk of starvation; this is a 24 percent increase since 2017.

With further deprivations expected, Save the Children is urgently seeking additional support for our responses in Yemen. Your pooled funding will strengthen our critically important work in and around Hodeidah and elsewhere in the country. It will also support our expert staff, logistics, work with partners and other key operational needs.

Our Humanitarian Mission

Save the Children's courageous national staff are working in governorates in the north, center and south of Yemen – including in Hodeidah Governorate – to alleviate the urgent needs of children and their families. They work nonstop and often amid extreme insecurity to deliver aid and support.

Our relief in Hodeidah now includes treating children for life-threatening conditions such as malaria and diarrhea. We've rehabilitated health centers and hospitals and provided equipment, medicines, and support to help keep the health system functioning.

We screen and treat children and pregnant women for malnutrition; distribute food and vouchers families use to purchase food and other supplies; rehabilitate water points and distribute hygiene supplies; and provide psychological and emotional support to children who are traumatized by the fighting.

As the conflict nears the city of Hodeidah, our national staff has developed contingency plans to ensure that our programs will continue as security permits. We have a team on standby to respond to any displacements from the city, pre-positioned medicines and nutrition supplies at health facilities to meet increased needs over a three-month period, and provided families with additional food rations above what we normally distribute.

Our staff are also maintaining daily coordination with the United Nations and other agencies and closely monitoring the situation for signs of further deterioration.

Elsewhere in Yemen, our vital work continues to reach children and families in dire need. Here are summaries of our priority programs:

Emergency Health

Only half of health facilities in 16 governorates are open, and some 16.4 million people need help accessing health care.

We support health facilities, mobile health and nutrition teams, diarrhea treatment centers and oral rehydration treatment corners in 9 governorates. In recent months, over 265,500 people received treatment at facilities we support.

Nutrition

An estimated 2.9 million children and pregnant and lactating women are acutely malnourished.

We treat children under age 5 for malnutrition with micronutrients and other therapeutic food, and admitted nearly 2,000 children for treatment of severe malnutrition in the past eight months.

Food Security

Some 8.4 million people are reported to be severely food insecure and at risk of starvation.

We provide families electronic vouchers redeemable for food. In one recent month, 17,000 children and adults benefited from these vouchers.

Water and Sanitation

In a country where clean water was already scarce before the conflict, over 16 million people need assistance to access clean water and basic sanitation. Cholera and other water-borne diseases are a constant threat to children.

We rehabilitate critical water and sanitation infrastructure, raise awareness of good hygiene and sanitary practices and distribute hygiene supplies to thousands of families.

Child Protection

Millions of children are in need of protection. They are exposed to fighting and run the risk of recruitment into armed units and detention.

We run child-friendly spaces across the country that provide children with access to safe spaces, structured activities and psychosocial support from trained adult facilitators. Over 17,500 girls and boys have benefited.

Education

About 2 million girls and boys are out of school.

Our education response includes training teachers, and running “catch-up” classes for children who were forced out of school due to the conflict. We also educate children on the dangers of handling unexploded munitions and landmines.

Why Save the Children?

Save the Children has addressed the needs of children in Yemen since 1963. In 2017 alone, our humanitarian relief reached 1.5 million Yemenis.

Our national staff are supported by our international experts in health, nutrition, food security, water and sanitation, education and child protection. We are coordinating responses with key partners and co-lead the health and education “clusters” of aid agencies which are conducting similar work.

We are also urgently calling for all parties in the fighting to protect children and their families and civilian infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals, from the impact of hostilities; ensure that civilians can safely escape; and that humanitarian access can be maintained.

Nobody knows when the next crisis will strike. That's why 10 percent of your generous gift goes to helping our emergency teams prepare for and provide critical assistance when and where children need us the most.