



Boys stand outside their newly rehabilitated school in Sa'ada Governorate, part of the GPE programme

UNICEF Yemen Situation Report

June 2014

Key focus:

Muhammasheen: Reaching Marginalized Communities

Highlights:

- **3,500 children are now learning in 10 newly constructed schools as part of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) programme in Sa'ada.**
- **Vulnerable and IDP communities are at heightened risk of consuming unsafe water as continued fuel shortages impact on the operation of rural water supply systems.**

Situation Overview

With the start of the holy fasting month of Ramadan, the situation in Amran became calmer and the fourth ceasefire during the month of June was called into effect on 30th June. However, tensions remain heightened with sporadic fighting between the armed groups. Numbers of people displaced (IDPs) since October 2013 are still unconfirmed but estimates are of over 20,000, in addition to the 42,000 displaced in previous conflicts.

As a result of the continued tension communities are less likely to come to health facilities for nutrition services, so nutrition delivery and uptake from static health facilities might be compromised. Damage to infrastructure such as the rural water-supply scheme has also been reported south of Amran city due to the recent intensification of fighting and is now out of service to around 4,000 people.

Children continued to be victims of grave child rights violations due to the localized conflicts. Verifying incidents especially in Amran continues to be challenging but at least nine children have been reported as recruited and used by armed forces and groups. During the month of June, 17 incidents were reported and verified in Abyan, Al Dhale'e, Amran and Sana'a. This includes three incidents of killing and maiming where one boy was killed, seven boys and one girl were maimed, eight out of these children were either killed or maimed by UXOs. Furthermore, 11 incidents of attacks on schools (10) and hospitals (1) were verified in Amran and four attacks were reported on schools in Sana'a and Al Dhale'e (two each).

Local education offices ensured that students in conflict affected areas were able to complete their exams successfully, by moving to alternative exam centres. This includes 181 students who were sitting their exam when their exam centre was attacked by a gunman. A teacher was killed and the head of the centre was left heavily injured before the gunman was also killed. In total, 9,069 children sat their exams in Amran out of 10,844, the remainder were absent.

Key focus: Muhammasheen

Issue

As one of the poorest countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, almost half of Yemen's population lives in poverty. There are vast disparities between the poorest and richest quintiles, especially in access to basic social services: Even when a service is available, the cost of reaching it by public transport can be restrictive. The poorest, who are under-immunized are likely to be exposed to increased risks such as inadequate water, sanitation and nutritional intake, as well as to lack access to other essential preventive interventions, making them more susceptible to disease. Another dimension of these inequities however is the presence of marginalized groups in Yemen, with the most socially excluded group being the Muhammasheen, known in local language as Al-Akhdam. The Muhammasheen is a group historically known to be of African descent, distinguished from the general population with their dark skin. There is a dearth of information on this excluded population. However anecdotal evidence has highlighted huge inequities between Muhammasheen communities and the average poor within Yemen. These communities are even less likely to access basic social services; and usually live in slum areas.

Action

Because information on this marginalized group is scarce, a comprehensive mapping of Muhammasheen communities was conducted in April-May 2014, to better plan, design and implement social protection programmes that address their needs. Taiz Governorate was selected as a starting point given the known density of Muhammasheen communities both in rural and urban areas. As a result, all the existing Muhammasheen communities in the nine targeted districts have been mapped, which totaled around 9,200 households. The survey aims to provide key characteristics of Muhammasheen households and children as well as the geographic locations at district level.

While the survey results are being collated and analysed, UNICEF has begun working to improve the situation for some of the groups of Muhammasheen in the country. The out of school programme, now in its second year, includes some Muhammasheen children in its catchment. In addition, Yemen is one of six countries selected to prioritize an equity approach to health services, aiming to provide integrated health care services specifically for marginalized groups.

Impact

The mapping was a pre-requisite step to start an integrated package of social inclusion interventions, mainly in the form of child-sensitive financial inclusion of Muhammasheen communities. This means linking households to basic social services, as well as social protection, especially Social Welfare Fund (SWF) cash transfers. Key implementers are the SWF Office in Taiz Governorate as well as Alamal Microfinance Bank (AMB), a non-profit organization established to provide financial services to the poorest communities. The partnerships will focus on child-sensitive education and inclusion interventions; financial education and savings accounts for mothers and children aged 10-17; empowerment to demand and access basic social and protection services. SWF will distribute school kits and uniforms to all children and will advocate with schools to ensure their enrolment. In addition, birth registration cards will be issued to all children in the targeted Muhammasheen communities. The mapping serves as a baseline, and will be repeated after two years to assess the impact of these interventions.

In the meantime, priority districts were selected for the health interventions based on the high numbers of marginalized communities, and teams were trained to provide integrated services including immunization, nutrition and reproductive health. The first district selected was in Sa'ada, where there is a high proportion of Muhammasheen and more than 5,000 children aged under 1. Results so far show that over half the children aged under 1 had not been immunized before and a quarter of those between age 1 and 2 received Penta vaccine for the first time. In Sa'ada, 2 water filters and one water tank have been fixed in health units serving over 600 Muhammasheen. In the out of school programme, 153 Muhammasheen children in Al-Mohka District have now finished their preparatory classes and are ready to join mainstream school in the next academic year.



Muhamasheen children take part in preparatory lessons in Al Mokha District, Taiz Governorate

Interagency Collaboration

A rapid response team for child protection has been established and trained for the central governorates such as Amran, Sana'a, Hajjah, and Al Mahwit. The team will provide timely needs assessments and adequate use of resources to people in emergency affected areas.

UNICEF Yemen Nationwide Response



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Hygiene Promotion Activities in Shabwa

WASH:

41,344 IDPs and schoolchildren continued to receive daily water supply in Amran and Hajja, while 45,681 IDPs were supported with adequate sanitation and hygiene promotion activities.
6,525 IDPs received monthly consumable hygiene kits.
6,000 IDPs and 2,500 host community are now connected to Al Mazraq water project, which means that water trucking can now be discontinued. Additionally, 145 storm damaged temporary metallic latrines have been rehabilitated for 1,008 IDPs in Haradh District.

Child Protection:

29,218 individuals including 16,176 children (6,830 girls, 9,346 boys) and 13,042 adults (2,404 women, 10,638 men) received mine risk education under the leadership of YEMAC and in partnership with wide range of local NGOs as well as by DRC and Intersos in six governorates.
2,980 children (1,559 girls and 1,421 boys) received psychosocial support services (PSS) through community based child friendly spaces (CFS) in Abyan Governorate. 100 community volunteers were trained on child protection in emergencies, psychosocial support, how to run child friendly spaces, detect vulnerable children and refer them to suitable services.
84 unaccompanied Yemeni boys were identified and provided with interim care at the Child Protection Centre in Haradh. 76 of these have been reunited with their families and returned safely to their community of origin.
37 unaccompanied migrant children, all boys, were assisted with safe voluntary return to Ethiopia in June thanks to a joint collaborative effort between UNICEF, DRC and IOM. An additional 59 unaccompanied migrant/Ethiopian boys were identified in Sana'a, Aden and Haradh making a total of 110 unaccompanied migrant boys waiting for their safe return back to Ethiopia. The interview process for facilitating their family tracing, safe return back to Ethiopia and family reunification will follow as soon as the Government of Yemen and the Ethiopian Embassy issues the travel documents.

Education:

3,419 children are currently enrolled in the out of school programme in Al Mohkha and Mawza'a Districts: 170 boys and 993 girls are in the second year, while 730 boys and 1,526 girls have joined for the first year of study.

18 schools in Taiz and Ibb Governorates have received their first instalment (\$500 per school) of the school improvement grants.

19,500 children at 39 schools are set to benefit from conducive and child friendly learning environments as 300 people have been trained on child friendly schools concepts in Hodeidah Governorate.

Nutrition:

777 community volunteers (623) and health workers (154) have been trained in community management of acute malnutrition (CMAM) and have gone on to screen 25,643 children (12,681 girls).

The Sa'ada SMART survey has revealed significant improvement in the level of Severely Acute Malnourished (SAM) children: Although Global Acute Malnutrition is at 10.5% in the lowlands and 9.2% in the highlands, SAM is just 2% in both lowlands and highlands. The prevalence of stunting was at 57.6% in lowlands while it reached up to 68.5% in highlands.

652 community health volunteers were trained in the integrated package and 503 health workers were trained on the integrated management of malnutrition in eight governorates, while 20 volunteers were trained on infant and young child feeding in Muhamasheen areas.



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Children receive integrated services through the mobile clinics in Lahj

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