



©UNICEF Djibouti / Eva Saadallah

unicef 
for every child

UNICEF Djibouti Flash Update #1

Refugee influx from Yemen
15 September 2026

HIGHLIGHTS

- As of 12 September 2026, more than 2,350 people, at least half of them children, have arrived in Djibouti after fleeing escalating hostilities in Yemen. They have landed at various points along Djibouti's northern coast near Obock. It is anticipated that these numbers will increase as fighting intensifies with an estimated number of 5,000 to 10,000 people arriving in country.
- Water, sanitation, shelter and health services at Markazi refugee village are already under acute strain. With overcrowding and weak water and sanitation systems, the risk of an acute watery disease resurgence is high, weeks after the last outbreak was brought under control.
- UNICEF is supporting the national response led by the Government of Djibouti and has deployed a multisectoral team to Obock and mobilized 7,500 litres of drinking water at entry points. Emergency latrines and water bladders are being installed at Markazi in collaboration with the Djiboutian Red Crescent (CRD).
- No unaccompanied or separated children have been reported to date. Identification and registration services remain ongoing as arrivals continue to increase.
- **UNICEF requires USD 3 million to respond to the needs of up to 10,000 people over 6 months.**

SITUATION UPDATE

Escalating fighting on the Yemeni side of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait has triggered a rapid, spontaneous influx of Yemeni civilians into northern Djibouti, mainly through Obock town, Khor Angar, Godoria and Moulhoule. Since the night of 11 to 12 September, arrivals have accelerated sharply, reaching 2,352 people, at least half of them children, as of the 14 September, including 1,063 on the 13th alone.

New arrivals, at least half of them children, are being progressively transferred to Markazi refugee village for registration and reception, while others have been taken in by host families in Obock town. Given the pace of arrivals, partners are now planning against a scenario of 5,000 to 10,000 people entering the country. Separately, the authorities have closed the migration corridor at Tadjourah, where informal sites of migrants are reportedly forming, including in Balho (an estimated 800 people). The closure may result in increasing numbers of migrants becoming stranded in Djibouti, creating additional humanitarian needs alongside the refugee influx.

The Government of Djibouti has been at the forefront of the response since the outset of the arrivals, coordinating the response and providing life-saving assistance.

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

Rapid assessments identify the following priorities: safe drinking water and emergency latrines at the entry points and in Markazi village; food and hot meals; shelter and non-food items, with only 79 tents available so far; health and nutrition care, in particular for pregnant women and young children; and child protection, starting with the identification and registration of unaccompanied and separated children and the rapid opening of child-friendly spaces for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS).

Markazi village was already fragile before this influx, with major gaps in safe water, shelter and health services. The arrival of over 2,000 people in three days is placing further strain on already limited resources and services. The health post in Markazi, closed before the crisis, needs to reopen; in the meantime, the regional hospital (CMH) in Obock is receiving patients. Djibouti's recent acute watery disease outbreak has only just been brought under control, and overcrowding combined with weak water and sanitation systems raises the risk of resurgence. The influx also comes amid El Niño-linked drought and a forecast of heavier rains, with a flood risk in the coming weeks that could further damage fragile infrastructure.

UNICEF RESPONSE

A multisectoral team deployed from Djibouti City to Obock on 13 September to reinforce the Tadjourah field office and complete rapid assessments. With WASH as the confirmed top priority, UNICEF has mobilised 7,500 liters of drinking water for distribution at the entry points and is working with the Djiboutian Red Crescent (CRD) to set up emergency latrines.

- **WASH** – Immediate response included the distribution of 7,500 liters of safe water at entry points. Activities under way comprise installation of emergency latrines by CRD with UNICEF technical support, in line with UNHCR site planning; water bladders provided to CRD to increase water access at Markazi; distribution of hygiene kits, menstrual hygiene items and household water treatment supplies to new arrivals.
- **Child Protection** - Under the leadership of the local authorities, UNICEF is working with IOM to identify vulnerable children. No unaccompanied or separated children are reported to date. Children who arrived on different boats from their parents have been reunited with their families. Identification and registration continue as arrivals increase. Child-friendly spaces are being established to provide psychosocial support, with recreational and early childhood development kits assembled for immediate use. Community engagement on MHPSS, gender-based violence (GBV) and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) will be organized for women and adolescent girls.
- **Health** - UNICEF has engaged with the Ministry of Health to support the Markazi health post and is ready to assist with supply provision, while supporting the regional hospital (CMH) in Obock. Activities include rapid health screening at Markazi, referral of emergency cases, strengthened acute watery disease and disease surveillance, and the provision of essential medicines and maternal, newborn and child health supplies.
- **Nutrition** - UNICEF's nutrition response covers active screening for acute malnutrition among newly arrived children, immediate therapeutic treatment for identified cases and referral of complicated cases, micronutrient supplementation for children, iron and folic acid supplementation for pregnant women, and infant and young child feeding counselling, including breastfeeding support.
- **Education** - One of the village's schools is being used for registration. UNICEF is working with education authorities to plan for the integration of newly arrived children into the national education system.
- **Social and Behaviour Change** - UNICEF and partners are developing life-saving messages in Arabic for new arrivals, setting up community feedback and safe complaint channels, and helping families find available services.

HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

The Government of Djibouti leads the response at national and local level, including through the Prefecture of Obock, which chairs the daily inter-partner coordination meeting, with the National Office for Assistance to Refugees and Disaster Victims (ONARS) coordinating within Markazi village.

As part of the UN inter-agency response, UNICEF is working closely with UNHCR and IOM, and with CRD. UNICEF coordinates the WASH, child protection, nutrition and education components and participates in the national humanitarian coordination meetings to keep the response aligned with broader structures.

FUNDING OVERVIEW AND PARTNERSHIP

UNICEF Djibouti has repurposed initial resources to start delivering life-saving assistance. Without additional funding, life-saving services for children, including access to healthcare, nutrition, WASH and protection risks being reduced or suspended as needs grow. Requirements cover the needs of up to 10,000 people for 6 months.

Sector	Requirements (US\$)	%
WASH	1,300,000	43%
Health	300,000	10%
Nutrition	500,000	17%
Education	300,000	10%
Child Protection	600,000	20%
Total	3,000,000	100%

Who to contact for further information: **Ramatou Touré**
Representative
UNICEF Djibouti
Tel: +253 77 16 71 06
Email: rtoure@unicef.org

Papa Gorgui Samba NDIAYE
Partnerships Specialist
UNICEF Djibouti
Tel: +253 77 71 05 24
Email: pandiaye@unicef.org

Sibylle Catherine Desjardins
Communication Specialist
UNICEF Djibouti
Tel: +253 77 27 33 78
Email: sdesjardins@unicef.org