

OVERVIEW

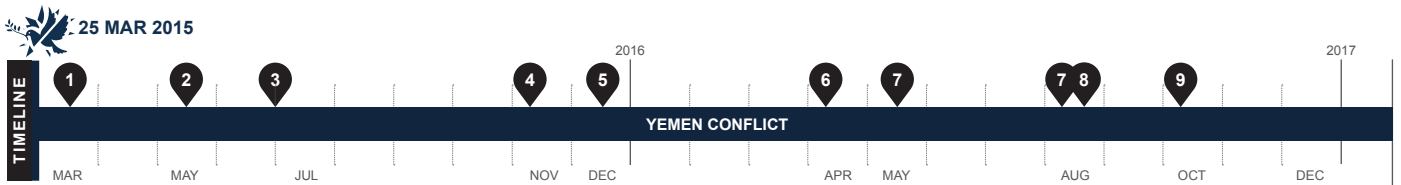
YEMEN 2015-2016 / CONFLICT

CRISIS	Yemen conflict March 2015-onwards.
PEOPLE AFFECTED	18.8 million people with humanitarian needs, as of September 2016 ¹ . 4.5 million people with shelter or NFI needs. 2 million IDPs.
RESPONSE OUTPUTS² (2015-2016)	81,953 households (Shelter assistance). 211,199 households (NFIs).



SUMMARY OF THE RESPONSE

Working in an extremely insecure environment, with international and national armed actors and enormous needs, the shelter response in Yemen struggled under enormous access and funding constraints. Programmes primarily provided non-food items and emergency shelter materials. At a smaller scale, shelter programmes rehabilitated collective centres and provided conditional cash transfers for rental assistance or non-food items.



- 1** 19-26 Mar 2015: Suicide bombings target two mosques in Sana'a. Houthi/Saleh forces advance south. Saudi-led military coalition begins air strikes. Fighting and air strikes escalate quickly across the country.
- 2** 12 May 2015: Five-day humanitarian pause begins. Frequent violations are reported.
- 3** 1 Jul 2015: UN designates Yemen a "Level-three" emergency.
- 4** 10 Nov 2015: Two consecutive cyclones batter the southern coast and Socotra Island.

- 5** 15 Dec 2015: Ceasefire comes into force during peace talks. Frequent ceasefire violations are reported. Ceasefire ends in early January.
- 6** 10 Apr 2016: A renewed cessation of hostilities comes into force.
- 7** May and Aug 2016: Heavy rains in May and August cause flooding in seven governorates.
- 8** 6 Aug 2016: Peace talks in Kuwait adjourn without agreement. Clashes and air strikes intensify immediately afterwards.
- 9** 6 Oct 2016: The Ministry of Health announces a cholera outbreak.

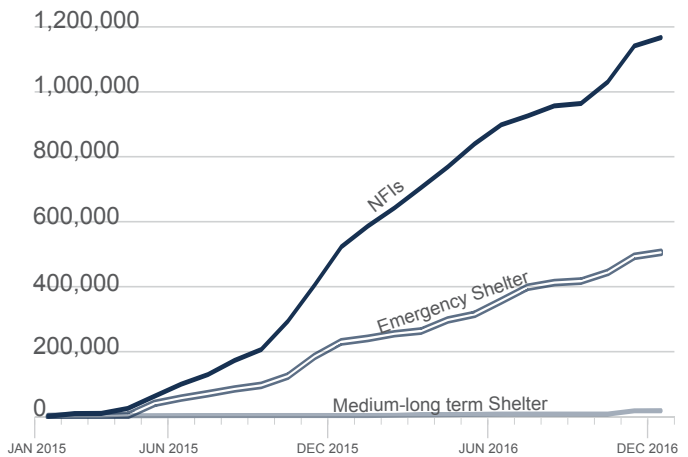
BACKGROUND TO THE CRISIS

Yemen is dry, with very low rainfall. It is very hot in the summer and cold in the winter, particularly at night. It has a conservative society and a population of 26 million people.

Even before the conflict escalated, the country faced enormous levels of humanitarian need (15.9 million people in late 2014). These needs stemmed from years of poverty, under-development, environmental decline, intermittent conflict and widespread violations of human rights.

In March 2015, the conflict in Yemen developed from intermittent clashes, to a full-fledged military conflict, involving several foreign countries. Access to food, clean water, fuel and medical supplies became increasingly difficult throughout the country, and many families remained trapped in their places of origin, struggling to access basic services.

As the conflict dragged on, economic conditions deteriorated, worsening the humanitarian situation. The commercial sector was unable to easily import and export goods, as the air and sea space was controlled by conflicting parties.



Cumulative number of people reached per intervention type in Yemen in 2015-2016². Emergency shelter included provision of tents, emergency shelter kits or individual items (including cash/voucher for these items), and cash for rent.

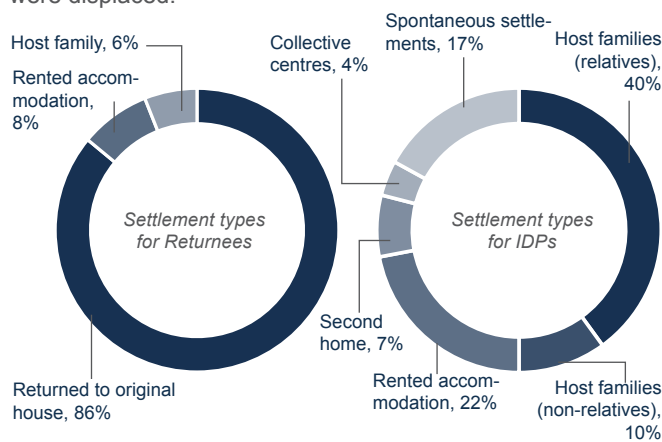
¹ Yemen Humanitarian Needs overview 2017, <http://bit.ly/2jzVbjB>.
² Data reported to the Global Shelter Cluster, as of 31 Dec 2016.

DISPLACEMENT

Damage to houses and fear caused by airstrikes and combat, often in residential areas, led thousands of families to flee their houses. Displaced people were mainly hosted by relatives, often in crowded conditions. Some families hosted up to seven households. Displaced people were also living in collective centres, mainly schools and health facilities, or in open air spaces, or makeshift shelters, in dispersed self-settled sites.

The government did not allow formal camps to be established, and access to many areas for humanitarian workers was severely restricted throughout the conflict.

By the end of 2016, more than 4.5 million people required assistance with shelter, non-food items (NFIs), or management of collective centres in which they were living. Of these people, 3.9 million were in areas of acute need, and over 2 million were displaced.



CHALLENGES DURING THE CRISIS

LACK OF FUEL. With the entire country’s oil production at a complete halt due to the conflict, Yemen witnessed a severe shortage of fuel in the markets. Prices skyrocketed from USD 0.7 per litre, to nearly USD 7 in some areas. The black market in fuel thrived, making it extremely difficult to locate transporters; who, if located, asked for extremely high prices.

BLOCKADES. Unavailability of items in the local markets, due to imposed blockades, represented a major procurement challenge for implementing organizations. Supply options meant that international procurement was often required, with careful routing of supplies to ensure that they could arrive in Yemen.

SECURITY AND ACCESSIBILITY CHALLENGES. Due to ongoing security incidents, including assassinations and bombings near agency offices, staff were often advised not to report to work. In order to overcome this challenge, the teams often worked from home and in the field, whenever the situation warranted it. Since many roads leading to target areas of assistance were either blocked, or witnessed clashes, longer routes to reach target areas were often used. The challenges in accessing areas also made it harder to effectively monitor interventions.

NATIONAL SHELTER STRATEGY

The Shelter-NFI Cluster was merged with CCCM. Its response strategy prioritized the delivery of assistance to all affected populations, including provision of cash assistance as a rental subsidy. Rehabilitation of a limited number of damaged houses, construction of transitional shelters and rehabilitation of collective centres, were also considered in the strategy.



Though the majority of the displaced population in Yemen has found shelter in host settings or rented accommodation, there were also a high number of spontaneous displacement sites. Here, about 200 families, displaced from Sa’ada by fighting, live in a site in Khamer, Amran Governorate.

The Shelter/CCCM/NFI Cluster was only 36% funded in 2016. As of December 2016, the Cluster had reached 81,953 households with shelter assistance since the start of the conflict, and 211,199 households with NFIs. The Cluster had 40 active members, including UN, INGOs, local civil society partners, and government authorities (including the IDPs Executive Unit). A key advantage of the Cluster in Yemen has been its robust linkage with national NGOs, which ensured effective coverage, capacity and better access nationwide.

MAJOR CHALLENGES IN THE RESPONSE

Given the context, there were several challenges encountered. Areas for particular engagement in shelter were:

- Insufficient funding.
- Finding alternative shelter solutions for IDPs currently living in schools (or other public buildings) and facing high pressure from the host community to vacate the premises. If the set-up of camps continued to be excluded, the question would remain as to where people could be moved to, the potential establishment of transitional shelters, and how the displaced population could integrate in the host community.

LOOKING FORWARD

The Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster strategy for 2017-2018 envisioned a comprehensive response package, tailored to each governorate, targeting the most vulnerable families, working with other clusters, and with protection mainstreaming as its core.

As the conflict continued in early 2017, additional challenges such as depleted savings and lack of access to financial resources, and/or saturation of available housing capacity, meant that all viable alternative shelter options needed to be pursued. CCCM approaches had to be developed, working with affected populations, and emergency relief items had to be prepositioned. The use of cash and vouchers, and working through multifunctional mobile teams in areas requiring such approaches, also needed to be considered.

To face the large influx of returnees to areas that were destroyed, assistance should include emergency support on return, as well as fuller support for housing rehabilitation. There also had to be increased focus on capacity-building of national stakeholders, to support shelter design and programming and camp management approaches, based on a strong understanding of local needs.