UNOG Bi-weekly press briefing: COVID-19 Yemen WFP - UNHCR

26-05-2020 | Edited NewsCOVID-19

Shotlist

2. SOUNDBITE (EN) - Elisabeth Byrs, Senior Spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP): “WFP needs $870 million to continue to deliver life-saving assistance to millions in Yemen in need of humanitarian assistance to survive. This is from June to December.”
4. SOUNDBITE (FR) - Elisabeth Byrs, Senior Spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP): « Nous sommes particulièrement inquiets pour les 20 millions de Yemenis qui souffrent d’insécurité alimentaire et dont 10 millions d’entre eux de ces 20 millions sont - souffrent - d’insécurité alimentaire sévère. Il y a également des enfants qui posent problème, il y avait deux millions d’enfants au Yemen qui souffrent de malnutrition aigue. Nous pensons que ce chiffre va malheureusement continuer d’augmenter. »
6. SOUNDBITE (EN) - Elisabeth Byrs, Senior Spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP): “Over 20 million Yemenis are food insecure, of which nearly 10 million are acutely food insecure. WFP expects coronavirus to push many more children in Yemen into acute malnutrition. Over two million children in Yemen are already acutely malnourished, and it’s a figure that WFP fears will increase.”
8. **SOUNDBITE (EN) - Charlie Yaxley, spokesperson, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR):** “We’re seeing a growing number of families resorting to harmful coping mechanisms, such as begging, child labour and marrying of children to survive. And we’re reaching a potential breaking point **in our programmes.**”

Yemen aid lifeline nears breaking point as UN food agency appeals for $870 million

More than $870 million is needed to sustain lifesaving aid to war-torn Yemen over the next six months, the World Food Programme (WFP) said on Tuesday, as UN humanitarians also warned that some projects were nearing “breaking point”.

“WFP needs $870 million to continue to deliver life-saving assistance to millions in Yemen in need of humanitarian assistance to survive. This is from June to December,” said Elisabeth Byrs, WFP senior spokesperson, speaking via videoconference.

The appeal comes after more than five years of fighting in the Arabian peninsula country, between the Government of Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi now based in the south – supported by a Saudi-led international coalition - and the mainly Houthi-led opposition, which occupies the capital, Sana’a, in the north.

According to the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, four in five Yemenis need humanitarian assistance.

Yemen was already one of the poorest countries in the world before violence escalated in March 2015, and today millions of people lack access to sufficient food, fuel and medicine, almost all of which is imported. The WFP spokesperson noted the UN agency’s particular concern for “over 20 million Yemenis are food insecure, of which nearly 10 million are acutely food insecure”.

Ms. Byrs added that the agency “expects coronavirus to push many more children in Yemen into acute malnutrition. Over two million children in Yemen are already acutely malnourished, and it’s a figure that WFP fears will increase.”

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As of Monday evening, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported nearly 50 confirmed deaths from COVID-19 in Yemen.

But there are widespread concerns that the situation is much worse.

It is also widely feared that with around half of the country’s health facilities shut, Yemen lacks the means to prevent this latest threat to an already weakened population that faces the ever-present threat of cholera and ongoing conflict that has displaced more than four million people.

UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, echoed concerns that the aid situation in Yemen threatens to spin out of control, describing it as the world’s worst humanitarian crisis with unparalleled protection concerns.

“We’re seeing a growing number of families resorting to harmful coping mechanisms, such as begging, child labour and marrying of children to survive. And we’re reaching a potential breaking point in our programmes,” said Charlie Yaxley, UNHCR spokesperson, via videoconference.

Among the projects most at risk are the agency’s cash-assistance programmes for internally displaced and impoverished host communities.

Up to one million people will be exposed if the projects stop unless funding is found, Mr. Yaxley noted.
Under the scheme, each eligible family receives around $170 in instalments over six months to help pay for rent, buy food, extra clothes and fuel, along with medicine and other urgent concerns.

The development comes ahead of a UN pledging conference for Yemen planned for next Tuesday.