Yemen

The conflict-driven humanitarian crisis in Yemen has been described as the largest emergency in the world, with more than 22 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. Conflict has led to the internal displacement of 2.2 million people, left over 1 million public sector workers without pay for two years and undermined humanitarian access. An estimated 12 million Yemenis, including 2 million children, will be dependent on food assistance in 2019. The economy continues to deteriorate, with the rial losing nearly 50 per cent of its value, and affected families struggling to purchase food as a result. The recent escalation of violence in Al Hudaydah has threatened the delivery of essential food and medicine to other parts of the country. Nearly 394,000 children under 5 years are suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and require treatment. Only 10 per cent of children under 6 months are exclusively breastfed and the majority of children are deprived of a healthy diet. Only 15 per cent of children are eating the minimum acceptable diet for survival, growth and development. Rising food insecurity, coupled with poor sanitation and lack of safe water has increased the spread of preventable diseases. The caseload of acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) and cholera outbreaks has reached more than 1 million, and a diphtheria outbreak in 2018 affected at least 2,200 people. Children are the primary victims of the crisis. The Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting grave child rights verified that more than 6,700 children have been killed or maimed since the start of the conflict and more than 2,700 boys have been recruited into armed forces and groups. The actual figures are likely to be higher. Children remain under extreme risk of death or injury from unexploded ordnances or remnants of war. The damage and closure of schools and hospitals are threatening children’s access to education and health services, rendering them vulnerable to serious protection concerns. At least 2 million children in Yemen are out of school.

Humanitarian strategy

UNICEF’s strategy in Yemen is informed by the humanitarian needs overview, the humanitarian response plan, cluster strategies and programme priorities. UNICEF’s humanitarian operations are decentralized, with five field offices managing interventions locally with partners. With the collapse of public services, UNICEF will focus on improving access to primary health care by providing supplies and responding to communicable disease outbreaks. Community prevention and management of malnutrition will remain essential components of the response. The water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programme will support the rehabilitation and sustainability of local water management systems to increase access to safe water. AWD/cholera prevention and response will focus on high-risk areas, including through the provision of oral cholera vaccines. Vulnerable children will be targeted with victim assistance, education on mines/explosive remnants of war and resilience building. UNICEF will continue to rehabilitate damaged schools, establish temporary safe learning spaces and provide learning/pedagogical kits for conducive learning environments for children. School-based staff will receive incentives to ensure education for children. The shifting humanitarian context requires a flexible response strategy aimed at reaching people in need regardless of their location. The multisectoral Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) will be leveraged to assist newly displaced families and respond to immediate needs.

Results from 2018

As of 31 October 2018, UNICEF had US$479.7 million available against the revised appeal of US$423.9 million (100 per cent funded). This enabled UNICEF to immediately respond to the AWD/cholera outbreak through an integrated nutrition, health, WASH and communication for development plan. Some 4.9 million people accessed safe drinking water and 9.5 million people engaged in awareness and behaviour change activities. Health facilities received supplies and operational support. More than 4.1 million children
were vaccinated against polio with UNICEF support, and over 1 million children under 5 years received primary health care. In addition, more than 229,000 children with SAM received treatment. UNICEF’s child protection programme reached more than 625,000 children with psychosocial support in child-friendly spaces, and some 1.3 million children and adults with risk education on mines/explosive remnants of war. Ninety-one per cent of reported incidents of grave violations against children were verified and documented through the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism. With UNICEF support, 41,700 school bags were distributed to schoolchildren, and some 157,400 children accessed education services in safe learning spaces. Psychosocial support services in schools benefited more than 133,000 students. UNICEF has been mobilizing resources for teacher incentives in order to resume the school year nationwide.