

The sample below illustrates the final product. If you wish to see the original Word document with edits in tracked changes, please email [alice@crealitygroup.org](mailto:alice@crealitygroup.org).

## YEMEN 2020: FIVE KEY DEVELOPMENTS THAT AFFECTED THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

**Civilians and civilian infrastructure:** Armed violence resulted in several mass casualty events, and conflict continued to impact critical civilian infrastructure – particularly healthcare infrastructure.

Civilians and critical civilian infrastructure continued to be affected by conflict expanding into new areas. In 2020, active frontlines began to move closer to the inhabited areas of Al Jawf and Marib governorates. Nearly 800,000 displaced people continue to live in Marib governorate, which was previously seen as a place of relative peace and safety. At least 20 incidents of more than ten civilians being injured or killed were reported across Yemen in 2020, and over 18 health facilities were hit by either an airstrike or shelling (an increase of 50% from 2019), restricting access to critical healthcare for 200,000 households.

**Displacement:** People in Yemen continued to experience displacement as a result of the war and other factors, such as flash floods and COVID-19; the number of displaced people rose dramatically in Marib and Al Jawf, and overall challenges are increasing for IDPs.

Peace negotiations and decreased conflict resulted in the reduced movement of people in governorates such as Hajjah. Other governorates, such as Al Jawf and Marib, saw increased displacement as a result of expanding conflict. Many households have been displaced multiple times throughout the conflict, which resulted in a dramatic reduction of income opportunities and depletion of savings for them and their host communities.

**Protection and vulnerability:** Health workers and people dependent on remittances have emerged as new vulnerable groups.

The protection risks present in previous years have been aggravated by continuous conflict, increased challenges for humanitarian operations, and reduced funding. The COVID-19 pandemic further complicated the situation. Health workers, people dependent on remittances, people

with underlying health conditions, and daily wage workers emerged as new groups considered 'vulnerable'.

**Humanitarian access:** COVID-19 and other factors have increased access constraints, affecting the quality of services provided.

While progress was made with authorities concerning programme approval in 2020, the overall operating environment remained extremely challenging. Access was impeded for security, physical, and bureaucratic reasons. Humanitarian operations faced increased restrictions and costs related to reduced funding. An estimated nine million people experienced access constraints in meeting their needs.

**Economy:** Deteriorating economic conditions continued to affect people's purchasing power.

Economic conditions worsened for the Yemeni population because of the conflict and varying macroeconomic trends. The situation has further decreased people's purchasing power, making it harder for households to pay for their needs.

## SIX HUMANITARIAN DEVELOPMENTS TO WATCH IN 2021

**Houthis advancement towards Marib city:** In early February 2021, the de-facto authority (DFA) in the north of Yemen (also known as the Houthis) announced a new offensive towards Marib city. This offensive has escalated the conflict in several districts, particularly Sirwah. The frontlines have progressed towards Marib city. Between early February and 12 April, further displacement and over 74 civilian casualties were reported. In the Sirwah district, six IDP sites were affected by shelling and two by airstrikes. These events have displaced over 11,800 people. IDPs are either moving to areas away from the conflict or relocating to Marib city or Marib Al Wadi. Some people have also moved to Al Jawf governorate, while others have fled to Amran and Sana'a governorates. This situation will likely continue during 2021, further straining civilian communities across the frontlines, especially IDP sites ([CIMP 28/04/2021](#); [UNHCR 29/4/2021](#)).

**Amplified US efforts for peace in Yemen:** Since the beginning of 2021, the US has increased its involvement in Yemen and shifted its strategy by strengthening peace negotiations, indicating its intention to see an end to the conflict. After revoking the designation of the Houthis as a 'terrorist group', the US announced a complete halt to offensive support for the war, as well as a temporary freeze of arms sales to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. President Biden also appointed a US special envoy to support the UN special envoy in mediation efforts. Saudi Arabia proposed an initiative to open the Sana'a airport and allow fuel ships to enter Al Hodeidah. Despite these efforts, fighting has intensified across the frontlines in Marib, Taiz, Al Hodeidah, and Ad Dali, and achieving a middle ground between the Houthis and the Internationally Recognized Government of Yemen (IRG) remains a challenge ([The White House 04/02/2021](#)).

**Fragile peace agreement:** In response to escalating hostilities by the Houthis in Marib, Tareq Saleh – the commander of the National Resistance forces for Yemen's Red Sea coast – called on the IRG to withdraw from the UN-brokered 2018 Stockholm Agreement. The Agreement has been credited with reducing violence in Al Hodeidah and decreasing civilian casualties and displacement. Saleh also

appealed to the IRG to escalate the war on major static frontlines in order to stretch the Houthis more thinly and stop the push towards Marib city. In March, clashes were reported in Al Hodeidah, Hajjah, Ad Dali, and Taiz. **Progress relating to the Riyadh Agreement has stalled**, mainly because of details related to the military aspects of the Agreement. In early April, tension and clashes were reported between the Southern Transitional Council (STC) and the IRG in Abyan. Since the beginning of 2021, the south has experienced daily protests related to deteriorating public services and unpaid salaries. There is a high risk of the Stockholm and Riyadh Agreements failing because of increased tensions. Their failure would aggravate conflict and reduce humanitarian access and imports, leading to increased shortages in basic needs commodities ([Crisis Group 23/02/2021](#)).

**Renewed conflict triggering secondary or onward displacement:** Increased fighting between January and March has displaced over 27,000 people, mainly from Marib, Taiz, Al Hodeidah, and Ad Dali governorates. Marib faces a particularly high risk of increased displacement, as it hosts the highest number of IDPs countrywide and has witnessed continuously expanding levels of fighting since 2020. People who have been displaced multiple times are likely to experience acute shelter, protection, food, and WASH needs. Repeatedly displaced IDPs will likely remain one of the key vulnerable groups in 2021 ([IOM accessed 04/05/2021](#)).

**Increased food prices as a result of the continuous depreciation of the Yemeni riyal (YER):** The Houthis and the IRG are highly reliant on external funding to maintain fragile monetary, fiscal, and economic stability. Yemen relies on foreign currency inflows from Saudi support, aid funding, and remittances. In 2021, these funding sources will continue to face serious downward risks, pushing food and basic commodity prices beyond the reach of the majority of the Yemeni population.

**Deteriorating humanitarian access:** Humanitarian access in Yemen faces extreme constraints. While access in Houthi-controlled areas improved in 2020, it is unknown if this will be sustained as the DFA continues to impose new regulations. **The IRG has also increasingly**

**constrained access** to areas under its control – specifically Aden and the west coast – by enforcing new administrative requirements and demands, making it hard for humanitarian responders to deliver timely assistance.

## Executive summary

In the past six years, the war between the Houthis and the IRG has killed over 18,400 civilians in Yemen. Nearly 2,000 of these deaths occurred in 2020. In the same year, there were several attempts at peaceful solutions or ceasefires. While these attempts contributed to decreased civilian casualties and resulted in smaller pockets of conflict, the agreements were usually bilateral and focused on a specific location and/or issue, making them fragile and often brief.

In 2020, thousands of people were displaced each month, often multiple times. Such displacement strained their resources, interfering with their ability to meet their own needs and/or requiring them to engage in risky behaviours to do so. The influx of large numbers of IDPs to new locations placed an additional burden on resources and infrastructure in hosting communities. These communities are often conflict-affected and already have significant unmet needs. COVID-19 had a direct impact on existing vulnerable groups and was the main cause of newly emerged vulnerable groups.

Economic conditions in 2020 worsened because of the depreciation of the Yemeni rial, exchange rate diversion between the north and the south, drop in foreign currency inflows, continued depletion of the Saudi deposit – which had not been renewed as at early May 2021 – and reduced overseas aid and humanitarian funding to Yemen. These

factors led to increased prices, making many items unaffordable for the majority of households.

The number of civilians killed as a direct result of the conflict was lower in 2020 than in 2019. Despite periods of decreased hostilities in major centres, the conflict is continuing and evolving.

The overall humanitarian operating environment remains extremely challenging because of continuous restrictions imposed on humanitarian operations, as well as complications from the COVID-19 pandemic. The conflict has made humanitarian needs even harder to address, as people's coping strategies and resources are stretched or depleted.

## Purpose of the report

This report aims to inform humanitarian decisions and planning by summarising key developments that affected the humanitarian situation in Yemen in 2020 and highlighting issues to watch in 2021.

## Methodology

ACAPS developed this product through:

- daily monitoring of media and social media sources in Arabic and English throughout 2020 and in early 2021
- secondary data review of key documents in Arabic and English
- analysis of key data on conflict, the economy, displacement, prices, imports, and humanitarian access
- joint analysis and key informant interviews with experts in humanitarian organisations to shape and test the findings.