

Yemen Briefing

24.3 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, 80% of the population¹; this includes 12 million children, whose lives are a waking nightmare.² Women and girls are likely to be disproportionately affected, given Yemen scores worst in the world for women's wellbeing. One million pregnant women are malnourished, and 120,000 women and girls are at risk of violence.³

Sir Mark Lowcock, Head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs told the Security Council said "About 400,000 children under the age of five are severely malnourished across the country. These are the children with distended bellies, emaciated limbs and blank stares - starving to death," adding that, "across Yemen, more than 16 million people are going hungry, including 5 million who are just one step away from famine."⁴

The UN, facing an unprecedented funding crisis, hoped to raise \$3.85bn (£2.76bn) from governments at a pledging conference in March 2021 to avert widespread famine; yet it only received \$1.7bn – less than half.

Britain pledged just £87m - 54% of last year's donation of £160m, and only 40% of the total funding the UK provided in 2020.

As a result of funding cuts, 75% of U.N. funded programs, from food to health care and nutrition, have shut their doors or reduced operations. The World Food Program has cut rations in half and Save the Children has been forced to cut services for children suffering from severe acute malnutrition to just 20% of its normal levels as funding dries up. The number of people the UN agencies are able to feed has dropped from 13 million to eight million.

"It's an impossible situation," said Lise Grande, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen "This is the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, yet we don't have the resources we need to save the people who are suffering and will die if we don't help. The consequences of under-funding are immediate, enormous and devastating," she added. "Nearly every humanitarian worker has had to tell a hungry family or someone who is ill that we can't help them because we don't have funding."⁵

The Houthis have launched a major offensive to take the gas-rich region of Marib. "An assault on the city would put two million civilians at risk, with hundreds of thousands potentially forced to flee – with unimaginable humanitarian consequences," said U.N aid chief Mark Lowcock.

The Saudis are maintaining a fuel blockade of Houthi ports which is having a disastrous impact on fuel for hospitals, aid transportation, water and sanitation and is pushing up food prices. The Saudis have made two ceasefire offers, which have been rejected by the Houthis because they want the blockade lifted first. The UK must do more and use its influence in the region to help broker a ceasefire.

¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-unhcr-operational-update-18-december-2020>

² <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/life-waking-nightmare-12-million-children-yemen>

³ <https://www.rescue.org/article/crisis-yemen-unrelenting-conflict-and-risk-famine>

⁴ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1086042>

⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-humanitarian-update-issue-9-september-2020-enar>