

Alert

Djibouti

Refugees Influx from Yemen to Djibouti

Geneva, 9 June 2015

1. Brief description of the emergency and impact

Yemen is facing its worse crisis in many years due to forces competing over control of the country. The country is divided between split affiliations which has created a severe situation where neighboring states have interfered. A coalition of about 10 nations headed by Saudi Arabia is conducting air strikes over Yemen in support of the sitting president Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. There have also been air strikes against rebel forces being conducted in rebel strongholds in north-western Yemen but also over the capital of Sanaa. The fighting conducted by the rebel forces and the air strikes managed by the coalition has created a dire situation for the people of Yemen. The country has for many years been on the verge of conflict and now the situation is more severe than ever. The situation in Yemen will have a major impact on both the situation in the Middle East and also in Africa, especially the Horn of Africa, an already unstable area. The political crisis and subsequent conflict has continued unabated since the first alert was issued, after a brief pause during a short ceasefire window agreed in order to allow humanitarian access. The conflict continues to cause mass internal displacement as well as refugees and asylum seekers into neighbouring countries, mainly Djibouti. 11'183 persons of mixed nationalities arrived in Djibouti as of 12 May since the onset of the crisis. 4'265 of those are Yemeni nationals.

2. Why is an ACT response needed?

In order to respond to the needs of the people of Yemen at this time, when thousands have fled and many been absorb by the host community or continued elsewhere, the situation has slowly developed into an urgent crisis. A quick response is at this point needed to avoid further deterioration and to prepare for a continued influx. As one of Yemen's neighbouring countries, Djibouti will face a continued influx of refugees fleeing across the Strait of Aden. Djibouti is a small country with about 900'000 citizens in total, a small economy and with little international support. Some international NGOs are present, though not many have capacity or interest in responding to the needs in Djibouti. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is one of the very few with an established presence.

- (1) There is no partner currently actively responding to the cases of Persons with Specific Needs; elderly, People Living with Disability, lactating women, or the chronically ill, amongst others. There is a lack of clear or comprehensive information and data regarding these categories. A rapid vulnerability assessment and documentation is thus urgently needed to determine cases that may require care, protection and psychosocial support.
- (2) So far, only 450 children under the age of 18 have arrived, but more are expected as the conflict continues. Despite the low number, Best Interest Assessments (BIAs) are needed.

- (3) There is a need to establish education facilities/centres as one of the protection means to support children. Most of the youth from Yemen were going to school and thus the need to seek ways of continuity.

3. National and international response

A number of national and international NGOs, as well as UNHCR, are present in Yemen assisting refugees and internally displaced people. However, due to instability in the country, those who can will still continue to seek refuge outside of Yemeni borders, including in Djibouti. UNHCR is currently coordinating assistance efforts with the Djiboutian government. The response is organized per sector working groups/clusters (protection, shelter, water, food security, nutrition, education and health). These sector activities are included in the contingency/response plan to ensure a harmonized approach between all cooperating NGOs (NRC/DRC, AHA and the LWF). In order to respond to the humanitarian situation of Yemeni refugees and asylum seekers in Djibouti, the Government of Djibouti allowed UNHCR to establish a new camp at Markazi, in Obock region, 4km from Obock town. As of 21 May, 1'340 refugees were registered in Obock, of which 1'283 are Yemenis. There are now 125 tents, 38 latrines and water trucking by UNHCR.

4. ACT Alliance response

LWF have conducted an assessment on 2nd May of the situation in Obock and a follow up monitoring of the situation on the 27th of May. There are specific sectors that immediately need support. The LWF is the only ACT member present in Djibouti. LWF is currently working in the two refugee camps in Djibouti: Ali Addeh and Hol Hol. LWF World Service is implementing Pre-Primary and Primary Education in several schools and also working with Child Rights and Child Protection within the camps.

5. Planned activities

LWF in Djibouti plan to respond to meet protection needs (child protection, support to new arrivals and education in emergencies) of the refugees from Yemen after discussions and coordination with other actors in Djibouti. A Preliminary Appeal is currently being prepared. Further discussions have taken place between all actors to best assess the help needed, and the strong coordination continues.

6. Constraints

Due to low interest from donors about the situation in Djibouti the lack of funding is the largest constraints, however also the uncertainty of the development of the situation in Yemen is problematic. Furthermore if the situation in Somalia worsens the problems for the Djibouti refugee response will increase. The Yemen response has been slow due to budgetary financial constraints with UNHCR and its partners including LWF. Most of the partners are using already minimal resources for the existing Ali-Addeh and Holl-Holl camp operations to intervene in the Yemeni refugee response.

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to the Head of Finance and Administration, Line Hempel (Line.Hempel@actalliance.org).

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