Food Insecurity in Yemen

Current Status ... Driving Factors ... Priorities

**INTRODUCTION**

On the special occasion of Eid Al-Fitr, we would like to extend our warmest wishes and congratulations to the readership of the YSEU Issues and all people of the Arab and Islamic nations. May this occasion brings peace, security and stability throughout Yemen.

This Issue highlights food security, as one of the most important humanitarian priorities related to human life, health, productivity and well-being. Food insecurity and malnutrition is a chronic problem in Yemen, but today it has become a critical threat endangering the lives of millions of Yemenis, as 1 in every 2 people are severely food insecure. For the first time, 63,500 people have been classified as IPC phase 5 (disaster), despite the presence of humanitarian food assistance (HFA)(1).

Without the mitigating effects of HFA, nearly 7 in every 10 Yemenis would become severely food insecure, with a rise in the number of people in IPC disaster phase to approximately a quarter of a million people(1). On the other hand, about 360,000 children facing severe acute malnutrition(2). These high and critical figures placed Yemen on top of the global food crises map in 2018(3). Several factors have led to this situation, mainly the repercussions of conflict, economic crises, and climate change.

Despite the miserable situation, 2019 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan (YHRP) has received only 20% of the funding requirements until 14 May 2019(4). While food security and malnutrition clusters received only 20.7% and 2.7% of their funding requirements respectively during the same period(4). These high and critical figures placed Yemen on top of the global food crises map in 2018(3). Several factors have led to this situation, mainly the repercussions of conflict, economic crises, and climate change.

In the hypothetical case of a complete absence of HFA, the number of severely food-insecure population would have gone up to 20.1 million people (about 7 in every 10 Yemenis). This includes 9.65 million people classified in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency); that is nearly double the actual number. In the same vein, the number in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) would have quadrupled to 238,000 people had HFA not been delivered.

First: Current Status:

Food security is a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life.

Food insecurity has been a chronic problem in Yemen, but it deteriorated to unprecedented levels over the past few years. According to the latest Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) analysis, during December 2018 - January 2019, a total of 15.9 million people, i.e. 53% of the population, are severely food insecure (IPC Phase 3+), despite the presence of the ongoing humanitarian food assistance (Figures 1&2). Of greatest concern are the 63,500 people in IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe), thereby reflecting the very high severity of food insecurity for some population groups experiencing extreme food gaps and/or unable to meet basic food needs (Figure 2).

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**FACTS AND INDICATORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YER 550/ USD</th>
<th>2.8%</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24.1 million</td>
<td>110.4% Cumulative inflation rate in December 2018 compared to December 2014</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$ 49.8 billion Cumulative losses in real GDP during 2015-2018</td>
<td>46.1% Cumulative decline in real GDP during 2015-2018</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.3 million ** 90% of the population lack access to public electricity</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:**
* UN Agencies.
** WB, June 2016.

**In this Edition:**

» First: Current Status.
» Second: Yemen on the Global Food Crises Map.
» Third: 2019 Funding Gap.
» Fourth: Food Insecurity Driving Factors.
» Fifth: Matrix of Priorities.

First: Current Status:

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Geographically, food insecurity levels varied from one area to another. In terms of severity (areas in IPC Phase 3 and above), the worst affected areas are located in Hudaydah, Amran, Hajjah, Taiz and Sa’ada governorates. In terms of magnitude, each of the governorates of Hudaydah, Amanat Al Asimah, Dhamar, Hajjah, Ibb and Taiz have more than one million people in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) and above.

In the presence of the current HFA, 49 districts out of 333 districts are classified in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency), and 25 districts in 8 governorates have populations in IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe)\(^1\). In the absence of HFA, it is estimated that 190 districts would be classified in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency), and 45 districts in 13 governorates (Abyan, Aden, Al Bayda, Al Dhalea, Hudaydah, Al Mahwit, Amran, Hadramout, Hajjah, Ibb, Lahj, Sa’ada and Taiz) would have populations in IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe), experiencing extreme food gaps\(^1\). This indicates that, without the mitigating effects of HFA, more than two thirds of all the districts in Yemen would have been classified as pre-famine or famine phases (See annex).

**Source:** FAO and et al, Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, December 2018.

Figure (2): IPC PHASES IN YEMEN IN THE PRESENCE AND ABSENCE OF HFA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>15.9 M</strong></td>
<td><strong>20.1 M</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53% of the population</td>
<td>67% of the population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People facing severe acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3+)</td>
<td>People facing severe acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3+)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phase 5</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phase 4</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Phase 3</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Phase 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phase 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phase 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>People in Catastrophe</strong></td>
<td><strong>People in Catastrophe</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 957 000</strong></td>
<td><strong>9 647 000</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>People in Emergency</strong></td>
<td><strong>People in Emergency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 109 000</strong></td>
<td><strong>10 239 000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>People in Crisis</strong></td>
<td><strong>People in Stress</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 437 000</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 437 000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>People minimally food insecure</strong></td>
<td><strong>People minimally food insecure</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>691 000</strong></td>
<td><strong>598 000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** FAO and et al, Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, December 2018.

**Figure (3) Map of IPC CLASSIFICATION IN THE PRESENCE AND ABSENCE OF THE MITIGATING EFFECTS OF HFA IN Yemen BY GOVERNORATE**

**Source:** FAO and et al, Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, December 2018.
On the other hand, Yemen has one of the highest rates of malnutrition in the world, but now it has become a critical threat endangering the lives of millions of children and mothers and threatening the future of human and economic development. According to Yemen humanitarian needs overview 2019, an estimated 7.4 million people require services to treat or prevent malnutrition, including 4.4 million who are in acute need\(^5\). This includes 3.2 million people who require treatment for acute malnutrition: 2 million children under 5 and 1.14 million Pregnant and lactating women (PLW).

Based on findings from SMART surveys conducted in 2018 in 15 governorates and 2017 survey results for the remaining 7 governorates, the nutrition situation in Yemen was classified as either serious or critical in about 44% of the total 333 districts in the country (Figure 4). Most of the districts exceeding the emergency threshold are located in Hudaydah, Hajjah and Taiz, the worst affected governorates by the conflict.

Five governorates (Hudaydah, Lahj, Taiz, Aden and Hadramaut) continued to be classified with critical levels of acute malnutrition prevalence above 15 per cent - the WHO emergency threshold in two years in a row; 2017 and 2018\(^6\). Malnutrition blunts children growth and intellect, thus reflecting negatively on their productivity and income in the future. Children suffering from moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) are three times more likely to die than their healthy peers and children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM), about 360,000 children, are nine times more likely to die. Therefore, an urgent action is required to provide emergency assistance to the worst affected groups and areas.

Globally, the worst food crises in 2018 were, in order of severity, Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Syria, Sudan, South Sudan and northern Nigeria respectively\(^3\). These eight countries accounted for two thirds of the total number of people facing acute food insecurity – amounting to nearly 72 million people\(^3\).

Yemen remained the world’s gravest food insecurity crisis in 2018, with 20.1 million people severely food insecure (in the absence of HFA) and 15.9 million people (in the presence of HFA), followed by the Democratic Republic of Congo (Figure 6). In terms of the food insecure people as % of total population analyzed, Yemen had the first percentage of food insecurity (in the absence of HFA) and ranked second (in the presence of HFA) following South Sudan (Figure 5).
The humanitarian situation in Yemen reached a critical point owing to the ongoing conflict, and it further exacerbated when the local currency depreciated sharply in September and October 2018. The gravity of the situation alerted regional and international stakeholders to the importance of taking prompt actions to mitigate the crisis. Also, International organizations paid significant attention. However, despite the importance of the implemented interventions to alleviate the currency crisis, including the application of a preferential exchange rate for importing basic food commodities, the precarious living conditions in the country persist especially against the backdrop of non-payment of salaries to a sizeable number of public employees for more than two years.

Third: 2019 Funding Gap:

Availability of funding is a key factor in the success of the efforts exerted to mitigate the humanitarian and food crisis, to stem the threat of famine and to prevent the outbreak of diseases and epipemics like cholera. Recognizing the importance of funding to respond to the tragic crisis in Yemen, the coverage percentage of funding requirements in 2018 amounted to 86.9% in YHRP, 88.8% in food security and agriculture cluster, and 67.3% in nutrition cluster(7). These percentages are encouraging in comparison to what was given to other countries afflicted by similar conflicts and crises.

It was expected that the momentum of donor support would be sustained during the current year 2019. However, as we approach mid-2019, the 2019 YHRP has received only $840 million of the $ 2.6 billion pledged in February 2019; that is 32% of the total pledges and 20% of the funding requirements for YHRP(4). Therefore, rapid disbursement of the pledged funds is required in addition to mobilizing more donor support to alleviate the humanitarian crisis engulfing the country.

Concurrently, the food security and agriculture cluster has received only $459.7 million until 14 May 2019, accounting for 20.7% of the $2.2 billion funding requirements for this cluster, i.e. $1.75 billion funding gap. The situation is even worse in the nutrition cluster which remains seriously under-funded at $8.7 million, i.e. 2.7% of the $320 million funding requirements for this cluster. This reflects the slow and inadequate response to the growing needs for food insecurity and malnutrition in Yemen. Without humanitarian food assistance, millions of Yemeni people would be vulnerable to food insecurity risks (Figure 2).

Food insecurity and malnutrition is a cross-sectoral issue which requires integrated and comprehensive interventions, as well as mobilizing substantial resources beyond the requirements contained in the YHRP. The emphasis should be placed particularly on alleviating the currency crisis, regular payments to all public employees and pensioners, social welfare transfers in addition to addressing the fuel and electricity crisis in a sustained manner.
There are many interrelated factors and challenges that directly or indirectly contribute to aggravating food insecurity crisis; mainly the following:

1- Repercussions of Conflict:

The 2019 Global Report on Food Crises revealed a significant correlation between conflict and hunger, as 133 million people were severely food insecure in 53 countries or territories worldwide in 2018, 65.5% of whom are located in 21 conflict-affected countries while the rest are in countries struck by economic and climate shocks. Food insecurity in Yemen is a chronic problem that has its roots in the fragility of the state and its economy, as well as climate change. However, the situation further exacerbated during the conflict (Figure 1). Among the countries most affected by the conflict, Yemen had the highest number of food-insecure people (Figure 10).

Food insecurity becomes more severe in the most conflict-affected areas; among families that lost their income and livelihood, affected IDPs and host families, marginalized groups. The conflict forced millions of citizens to flee their areas, led to closure of main roads between governorates and trade roads with the outside world, in addition to the destruction of infrastructure, basic social services, and people’s homes and livelihoods. Moreover, there is a lack of secure roads to deliver humanitarian food assistance.

In addition, the ongoing conflict forced about 4.93 million people to flee their homes. 1.28 million of those IDPs returned to their homes while 3.65 million were still in displacement until November 2018. With respect to the period of displacement, over 80% of IDPs have been forced to live away from their homes for more than a year, and about 190,352 people fled outside the country until October 2017. IDPs face many difficulties and challenges; including loss of livelihoods and lack of basic social services; and are more vulnerable to epidemics, food insecurity and malnutrition.

**Fourth: Food Insecurity Driving Factors:**

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**DISPLACEMENT**

- **2M** people were internally displaced, and over (80%) for more than a year.
- **190,352** people fled Yemen to the region until October 2017.
- **1.28M** former IDPs have returned to their area of origin.

2- Economic Factors:

- The deep economic contraction resulted in $49.8 billion cumulative losses in GDP during 2015-2018\(^{(11)}\). The GDP of agriculture and fishery sector dropped by 32.8% in 2017 compared to 2014 due to many factors including high fuel prices, limited access to fishing areas, and high costs of agricultural production inputs\(^{(12)}\). This led to loss of income and livelihood and shrinking job opportunities for a significant segment of the population. The GDP per capita at current prices has declined from $1247 in 2014 to $364 in 2018, at 70.8% cumulative change rate\(^{(11&12)}\). Since 96% of Yemenis are purely food consumers, spending about half of their income on food, low-income or loss of income would directly diminish their purchasing power of food and non-food commodities.

- The collapse of export has deteriorated the overall food security which measured by dividing the export values to the food import values. Despite very little data on foreign trade, the overall food security has deteriorated dramatically owing to the collapse of exports of oil, gas and other agricultural and fishery exports, with 80% decline in gross exports in 2018 in comparison with 2014\(^{(13)}\). This has reflected on the livelihood of farmers and fishermen, restricted flow of foreign currency into the country. Consequently, it contributed to depreciation of the currency against the dollar, and thereby doubling the preferential exchange rate for importing basic food commodities.

- The division in public finance management has worsened public expenditure as the public budget ceased to finance not only investment programs but also cash transfers for social welfare fund cases since the beginning of 2015, and salaries of public employees for more than two years as well as operational expenses of basic social services like health, education, water and electricity in many areas of the country. As a result, the population were left dependent on limited and unsustainable foreign assistance as a large percentage of the population were deprived of their main source of income, particularly the 32% of public employees suffering from food insecurity even before the crisis\(^{(14)}\). It has also adversely impacted on the aggregate demand in the economy, contributed to high unemployment rates, worsened food insecurity and malnutrition, and deepened poverty gap leaving 80% of Yemeni people in desperate need of some form of humanitarian assistance and protection\(^{(15)}\).

The interventions that were implemented to mitigate the humanitarian and food crisis in Yemen include the resumption of payment for all petitioners throughout the country from November 2018 as well as payment of salaries recently to workers in health sector. UNICEF, with World Bank funding, implemented the fourth round of payments to Social Welfare Fund (SWF) beneficiaries during January - February 2019, covering approximately 1.5 million cases (approximately 9 million people)\(^{(16)}\). It was found that 9 in every 10 beneficiaries spent the cash on food, half of them spent it on medicine, and a quarter of them paid off their debts\(^{(16)}\).

- The sharp depreciation of Yemeni Rial between mid-September and mid-November 2018 has further exacerbated food insecurity crisis in the country. Despite relatively lower exchange rates afterwards, it is still higher than it was in early 2015. At the end of April 2019, the parallel exchange rate was 147% higher while the preferential exchange rate for importing basic food commodities was 107% higher in comparison to the pre-war rates. This leads to higher consumer inflation rate, thereby diminishing purchasing power of the national currency, reducing real income and savings. As a result, the reduction in real consumption level would spiral more of the population into the circle of food insecurity and malnutrition particularly because Yemen depends on importing its needs of clothes, fuel and medical supplies, and it imports about 75% of the population food consumption\(^{(17)}\).

- The cumulative inflation rate of consumer prices rose by 114% in December 2018 compared to December 2014\(^{(18)}\), resulting in high prices of basic commodities like food, housing, clothing, medicine, transport and fuel. According to Food Security Technical Secretariat, prices of basic food commodities in March 2019 were higher than February 2015; with a percentage of 112.4% for wheat, 108.3% for wheat flour, 67.9% for sugar, 97% for non-basmati rice and 110.1% for locally produced cooking oil\(^{(19)}\). Consequently, the cost of the minimum food basket increased by about 125% during the same period (Figure12). This, among other factors, explains the deteriorating living standards and the high level of food insecurity in the country.
3- Climate change:

Climate change is one of the main factors that took a heavy toll on local food production and food security status in the country such as the devastating consequences of the floods and cyclones that hit Yemen during 2010-2018 (Table 1)\(^\text{(20)}\). Additionally, other natural conditions include rainfall shortage in the growing seasons, drought, deforestation and high prices of fuel for pumping irrigation water, which have constrained the level of domestic crop production and limited sources of livelihood for rural residents. As a consequence, food insecurity and malnutrition crisis are further exacerbated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Climate Shocks</th>
<th>Floods</th>
<th>Floods</th>
<th>Tropical Cyclone Chapala</th>
<th>Tropical Cyclone Megh</th>
<th>Floods</th>
<th>Tropical Cyclone Sagar</th>
<th>Tropical Cyclone Mekunu</th>
<th>Tropical Cyclone Luban</th>
<th>Flash Floods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Source: https://reliefweb.int/disasters?country=255#content

Importance of Synchronizing Emergency Humanitarian Interventions with Livelihoods Programs

The provision and recovery of livelihoods is of paramount significance and it becomes more essential in times of crises and prolonged conflicts so as to make people less vulnerable and more resilient to economic shocks, to enable them to shift from consumers dependent on temporary humanitarian food aid to self-reliant producers, and to sow the seeds of transition towards stability and recovery when peace is restored.

Grants and foreign assistance are the most important pillars supporting the economic and humanitarian situation in the country. However, they serve as temporary palliative measures as the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance is growing day by day. Consequently, an increasing number of severely food insecure households in Yemen have been forced to adopt negative coping mechanisms such as reducing food consumption and selling homes, lands, productive assets, livestock and furniture.

To ensure increasing the sustainability of foreign support in preventing the sliding of more people into food insecurity and malnutrition, and avoiding the loss of people’s remaining assets, if any; development programs should work in parallel with emergency humanitarian interventions with the emphasis on sustainable livelihoods programs such as expanding cash-for-work program and labour-intensive works for rehabilitation and maintenance of infrastructure and community assets like schools, roads and irrigation systems. This also includes supporting small and micro enterprises as well as income-generating activities related to food production, supporting the poor and low-income people to own productive assets and providing solar energy systems for basic services in water, health and education facilities particularly in rural and peri-urban areas.
Fifth: Matrix of Priorities:

Food insecurity is an inter-sectoral issue which requires integrated and comprehensive development programs, the following is a package of urgent measures to mitigate food insecurity crisis in Yemen:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Issues</th>
<th>Priorities to mitigate food insecurity and malnutrition</th>
<th>Concerned Bodies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restoration of Peace</strong></td>
<td>• Reaching a comprehensive and sustainable political settlement, as the most effective and efficient remedy for overcoming the evolving economic, food, and humanitarian crises in Yemen.</td>
<td>Political Stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensuring secure access of humanitarian food assistance to areas under active fighting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funding Requirements</strong></td>
<td>Direct • Bridging the funding gap for food security and nutrition in the humanitarian response plan for Yemen 2019, which amounts to $1.75 billion and $311.6 million until 14 May 2019.</td>
<td>Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC), Donors, Humanitarian Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensuring regular payments to public employees, petitioners, and cash transfers to all Social Welfare Fund beneficiaries throughout the country, an amount of YR 1.055 billion per annum, equivalent to $160 million monthly.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mobilizing more donor support, cash and in kind, to alleviate currency crisis and ensure sustainable funding for basic food commodities at a preferential exchange rate, including activating the proposal of the World Bank regarding the allocation of $ 500 million by donors as credit facilities for imports of basic food commodities and medicine at a preferential exchange rate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To Prevent more population in IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe)</strong></td>
<td>• Giving high priority to assisting population classified in IPC Phases 4 and 5 as well as IDPs and hosting communities, in the form of food, cash or vouchers.</td>
<td>Donors, security and nutrition groups, UNICEF, WHO, WFP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Providing assistance to families in the most affected areas, particularly in Hudaydah, Hajjah, Taiz, Sa’ada, Al Bayda, Al Dhalea and Al Jawf governorates.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Providing humanitarian assistance to state employees with lower income.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Supporting livelihood and income-generating activities linked to the food production with the focus on severely food insecure families and rural women; including providing agricultural and fishing equipment, stimulating the use of solar energy to operate water pumps, drip irrigation systems and distribution of beekeeping tools.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Providing more support to the Public Works Projects for youth employment such as rehabilitation of infrastructure and community assets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Main Issues</td>
<td>Priorities to mitigate food insecurity and malnutrition</td>
<td>Concerned Bodies</td>
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| Mitigate acute malnutrition among highly vulnerable populations | • Increasing the number of mobile teams’ campaigns that provide integrated package of health and nutrition services to the hard-to-reach population and IDPs, in addition to providing vitamin A supplements to children and iron-folic acid supplements to PLW.  
• Providing supplementary food to PLW and children under two years of age and providing nutrition supplies and medicines in the 165 priority districts.  
• Reopening the closed health facilities to treat the acutely malnourished children, and expand the coverage of the existing nutrition programs, giving priority to areas of high malnutrition rates in Tihama.  
• Identifying and referring children and PLW with acute malnutrition to treatment programs.  
• Providing a sectoral integrated package of interventions (including WASH, education, health and proper child nutrition practices) with focus on Tihama areas that have been the worst affected by malnutrition.  
• Mobilizing support and advocacy by constantly giving adequate space in media for critical humanitarian and economic issues and raising awareness about proper infant and young feeding practices | Donors, security and nutrition groups, UNICEF, WHO, WFP                                                                                                     |
| Additional Economic Issues               | • Selling the stored quantity of oil in Ras Isa to pay public employees’ wages.  
• Settling disputes over import mechanisms of fuel and other commercial commodities.  
• Lifting restrictions on internal and external trade, and re-opening closed roads and customs points.  
• Resuming oil and LNG exports, and facilitating export mechanisms for agriculture and fishery commodities in order to increase the flow of foreign currency and sustain the import of basic goods at preferential exchange rate as well as to reduce the devaluation of the national currency.  
• Encouraging competition, fighting monopoly and monitoring the prices of basic commodities.  
• Developing institutional frameworks for the mobilization, development and use of endowments and zakat resources.  
• Raising awareness about social solidarity.  
• Adopting a future strategy for development sensitive to food security and nutrition. | Political Stakeholders, CBY, MOPIC, Ministry of Finance, and Media outlets |
Key Sources:

4. OCHA, Financial Track Services: https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/675/summary
   https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/yemen/nutrition
   https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/yemen/nutrition
7. OCHA, Funding Status of Humanitarian Response Plan 2018:
   https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/yemen
20. https://reliefweb.int/disasters?country=255#content
Annex:

Map of IPC Classification in the presence and absence of the mitigating effects of HFA in Yemen at district level

In the Presence of HFA

In the Absence of HFA