18 September 2014

YEMEN

Resolving displacement essential for long-term peace and stability

Intermittent armed conflict and violence have mainly taken place on three fronts in Yemen in recent years. The Shia al-Houthi movement has led a violent insurgency in the north, there has been civil unrest in central and southern regions, and government forces have clashed in the south with militants associated with the Southern Separatist Movement and Ansar al-Sharia, an offshoot of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). The fighting has caused ongoing and often repeated internal displacement, which has taken place in the context of a growing socio-economic and humanitarian crisis. Political instability has left the government struggling to provide basic services, contributing to increased needs among vulnerable groups.

Internally displaced boys living in Al Madab settlement, Hajja, Yemen, fetch water from a well while using a donkey to transport the water to their home 100km away.
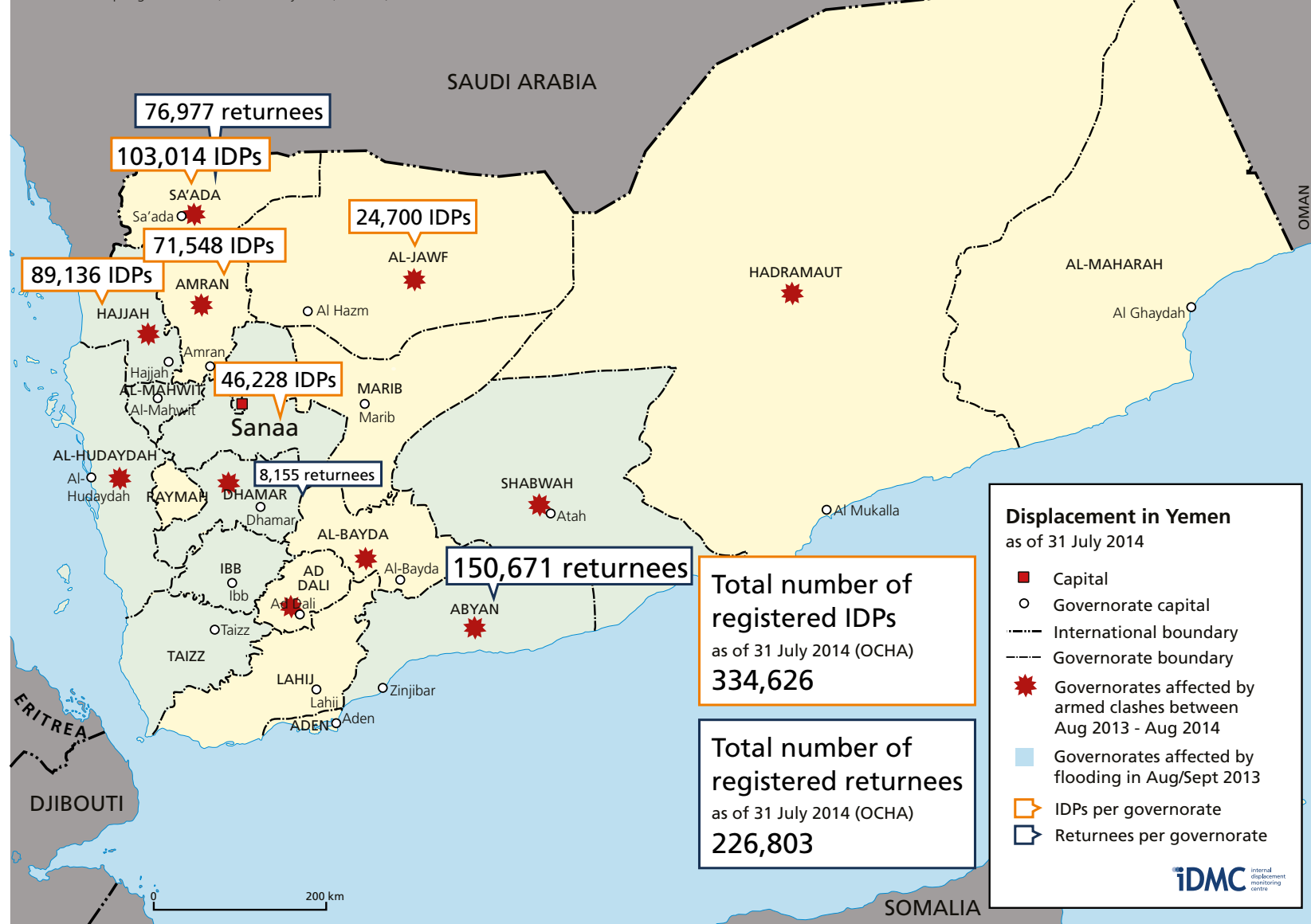Photo: NRC/Nashon Tado, June 2013

As of July 2014, there were 334,626 internally displaced people (IDPs) registered by the government's Executive Unit and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), most of whom had fled conflict and violence. Disasters including flash floods and drought have also caused displacement, but there are few reliable estimates of its scale.

IDPs and their host communities face many protection risks, including threats to their physical security and a lack of access to adequate shelter and basic services. Food insecurity and malnutrition rates are also particularly high among displaced communities, and IDPs face a heightened risk of serious human rights abuses. Local traditions such as early marriage for girls increase the risk of gender-based violence. Many IDPs from minority clans also suffer pervasive discrimination. Insecurity is fuelled by weak rule of law and the prevalence of small arms, particularly outside urban areas. It also hampers humanitarian access, data collection and protection monitoring.

The government has made significant efforts to address displacement and promote political transition. From March 2013 to January 2014, it held an inclusive national dialogue consultation, which set out a detailed roadmap for democratic reform and the establishment of a new federal state. In June 2013, it

SAUDI ARABIA

76,977 returnees

103,014 IDPs

SA'ADA

Sa'ada

24,700 IDPs

71,548 IDPs

AL-JAWF

89,136 IDPs

AMRAN

HAJJAH

Al Hazm

HADRAMAUT

AL-MAHARAH

Al Ghaydah

OMAN

Amran

Hajjah

AL-MAHWIT

46,228 IDPs

MARIB

Al-Mahwit

Marib

Sanaa

AL-HUDAYDAH

8,155 returnees

SHABWAH

Al-
Hudaydah

RAYMAH

DHAMAR

Atah

Al Mukalla

Dhamar

AL-BAYDA

IBB

AD
DALI

150,671 returnees

Ibb

Al-Bayda

Ad Dali

ABYAN

Taizz

TAIZZ

LAHIJ

Zinjibar

Lahij

Aden

ADEN

ERITREA

DJIBOUTI

SOMALIA

0   200 km

Total number of registered IDPs

as of 31 July 2014 (OCHA)

334,626

Total number of registered returnees

as of 31 July 2014 (OCHA)

226,803

Displacement in Yemen

as of 31 July 2014

■ Capital

○ Governorate capital

— · · · International boundary

— · Governorate boundary

✴ Governorates affected by armed clashes between Aug 2013 - Aug 2014

Governorates affected by flooding in Aug/Sept 2013

IDPs per governorate

Returnees per governorate

iDMC internal displacement monitoring centre

Map by: IDMC
More maps are available at www.internal-displacement.org/search?Type=Map

adopted a national policy on internal displacement, which addresses all causes and provides a comprehensive framework for response. The success of these initiatives will depend on implementation, improvements on the political and security fronts and continued donor support. Weak state capacity and scarcity of resources pose significant obstacles.

In the long-term, the achievement of durable solutions for Yemen's IDPs is vital to ensure peace and stability, but in the absence of broader solutions to the country's political, humanitarian and socio-economic crises, the prospects of this happening are likely to remain low.

Background and causes of displacement

Internal displacement in Yemen has taken place in the context and as a result of a growing socio-economic and humanitarian crisis. The country is the poorest in the Arab world, with 54 per cent of the population of 24.4 million living below the poverty line and 10.6 million suffering food insecurity (World Bank, last accessed on 3 July 2014; UNICEF, 17 June 2014; UNFPA, 30 October 2013). Nearly 15 million people require humanitarian assistance (OCHA, 10 August 2014).

This situation is made worse by high levels of unemployment, particularly among young people, rapidly declining water resources, poor basic services, fuel shortages and volatile food and commodity prices that often spike because of insecurity along transport routes (OCHA, 20 June 2014; UNICEF, 17 June 2014; World Bank, January 2014). An influx of vulnerable people from the Horn of Africa and the expulsion of around 685,000 Yemenis from Saudi Arabia between January 2013 and July 2014 have made the dire humanitarian situation even worse (OCHA, 3 September 2014; UNICEF, 17 June 2014).

Political instability and a scarcity of livelihood assets are significant drivers of violence. Land and water disputes cause an estimated 75 to 80 per cent of tribal clashes, and there is an underlying threat of sectarian violence increasing. Parts of the country are under the control of non-state armed groups, which have taken advantage of the weak rule of law and overstretched security forces. Rising levels of drug smuggling and substance abuse in a country flooded with small arms add further to the insecurity (IISS, last accessed on 31 July 2014; IRIN, 30 June 2014; UNICEF, 17 June 2014; the Guardian, 9 June 2014; HPN, May 2014; OCHA, 4 April 2014).

Despite these many obstacles, Yemen has embarked on a process of a political transition (World Bank, last accessed on 3 July 2014; HPN, May 2014). From March 2013 to January 2014, the government held an inclusive national dialogue consultation, which set out a detailed roadmap for democratic reform and the establishment of a new federal state, including the drafting of a constitution followed by parliamentary and presidential elections in 2015. The success of these initiatives will depend on implementation, improvements on the political and security fronts and continued donor support (World Bank, last accessed on 3 July 2014; ICG, 10 June 2014).

Displacement caused by conflict
Displacement in Yemen is mainly a result of three crises. The Shia al-Houthi movement has led a violent insurgency in the north, there has been civil unrest in central and southern regions, and government forces have clashed in the south with militants associated with the Southern Separatist Movement and Ansar al-Sharia, an offshoot of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

Fighting between the al-Houthi movement and the Yemeni army and government-backed tribes in Sa'ada governorate has forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes in the north of the country. The conflict began in 2004

with isolated clashes in Sa'ada, but over the years it spread to other northern governorates and reached the south-western Saudi border province of Jizan in 2010 (USAID, 30 June 2014; The Economist, 10 June 2014; the Guardian, 9 June 2014; Rand Corporation, 3 May 2010; HRW, 7 April 2010). By April 2011, the movement had taken over Sa'ada city and large parts of al-Jawf, Amran and Hajjah governorates (ACAPS, 11 October 2011). With the backing of local tribes, it has continued to fight government, tribal and Islamist forces, despite a number of ceasefires and its participation in peace talks. On 8 July 2014, it seized control of Amran city (OCHA, 12 May, 4 April and 6 February 2014; USAID, 30 June 2014; The Economist, 10 June 2014).

The al-Houthi movement has expanded its support network and its control over northern territory, filling the void left by the state's weakness. It has won public backing by advocating on behalf of the poor and delivering justice for abuses committed by some tribal leaders. In some areas the movement has become "a virtual state within a state", controlling local government, running checkpoints and collecting taxes (ICG, 10 June 2014). Human rights organisations accuse all parties to the conflict of perpetrating violations, including indiscriminate shelling, the recruitment of children and forced disappearances (OCHA, 10 August 2014; AI, 2 December 2009; HRW, 19 November 2008; HRW, October 2008).

In central and southern Yemen, civil protests against the 32-year rule of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, particularly in and around Sana'a, led to intense fighting in 2011 between rival factions and forced around 10,000 people to flee their homes during the second half of the year (OHCHR, 31 May 2011; IRIN, 27 May 2011; Al-Jazeera, 25 May 2011; ADRA, June 2011, on file with IDMC). Tensions eased after Saleh signed an agreement brokered by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in November 2011, under which he stepped down three months later. Virtually all those displaced in

the violence are thought to have returned to their homes (UNHCR, email exchange, 17 August 2014; World Bank, last accessed on 3 July 2014; HPN, May 2014). Weak rule in Sana'a, Taiz, Aden and other cities, however, means that insecurity has persisted (USDOS, 27 February 2014).

In the south, fighting between the security forces and Ansar al-Sharia displaced more than 200,000 people between May 2011 and June 2012, as the group took advantage of the secessionist turmoil following the country's popular uprising. Security improved when the conflict wound down, and the majority of those displaced returned to their areas of origin (IISS, last accessed on 31 July 2014; USAID, 30 June 2014). That said, clashes between government forces and a variety of militant and tribal groups, including Ansar al-Sharia and the Southern Separatist Movement have continued to displace people, particularly in Abyan and Shabwah governorates (USAID, 30 June 2014; the Guardian, 9 June 2014; UNHCR, 1 January 2014; Yemen Times, 31 December 2013).

Some areas of the south are still under Ansar al-Sharia's control, and others are controlled by so-called popular committees, which are made up of diverse groups of local militiamen. The committees impose day-to-day law and order, but they are also sometimes involved in clashes with other tribes and each other (UNHCR, 1 January 2014; IRIN, 7 October 2013). Targeted assassinations have become a popular tactic among all militants (Yemen Post, 20 January 2014). AQAP has carried out a series of complex attacks throughout the country (UN News Centre, 20 June 2014; TLWJ, 13 February 2014).

Disasters
Disasters brought on by both slow and sudden-onset natural hazards cause displacement in Yemen, but there are few reliable estimates of its scale. They also pose further protection risks for people already displaced by conflict and violence, and sometimes lead to secondary displacement

(USAID, 30 June 2014; UNICEF, 17 June 2014; WFP, 16 January 2014; OCHA, 11 October 2013). The country's arid climate, mountainous terrain in the east and large areas of low-lying coastal plains make it highly susceptible to drought, desertification, floods and landslides. It is also prone to earthquakes.

Despite being one of the most water-stressed countries in the world, short-lived but intense monsoon rains regularly trigger flash floods. Between August and September 2013, floods affected more than 52,500 people in nine governorates, including a significant number of around 12,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) living in camps in Hajjah governorate (OCHA, 11 October and 4 September 2013). People living in informal urban settlements on marginal land, who often include IDPs, are also vulnerable to landslides.

Only 2.6 per cent of Yemen's land is arable, and the short rainy season is frequently followed by long dry spells, which increases the risk of drought, desertification and degradation (World Bank, last accessed on 3 July 2014; ICRC, 21 March 2014; FIC, January 2012). Climate change is expected to aggravate such hazards, with the potential to fuel disputes over diminishing resources and to trigger displacement (Terra Nullius, last accessed on 29 July 2014; World Bank, last accessed on 3 July 2014).

Internal displacement data

The government began collecting data on IDPs and their living conditions in late 2009, and with technical support from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) it launched a national registration system in February 2010. The process, however, has been underfunded and has not led to reliable and inclusive data collection (LSE-Brookings, November 2011). The registration process has also been significantly hampered by the presence of non-state armed groups and general insecurity.

IDPs' loss of documents during their flight and their lack of visibility among refugees and other migrants have proved further obstacles (UNICEF, 17 June 2014; LSE-Brookings, November 2011).

The government, UNHCR and the Danish Refugee Council undertook comprehensive profiling exercises of IDPs in 2010 and 2011/12 (OCHA, 12 February 2014; JIPS, 2010). Another one was planned for the first quarter of 2014 in the northern governorates of Hajjah, Amran and Sa'ada, but had to be postponed because of escalating violence (OCHA, November 2013). Smaller-scale assessments have, however, been conducted (UNHCR, email exchange, 17 August 2014).

In the peak year of 2012, 545,000 people were registered as IDPs (UNHCR, 20 August 2012), with most of the displacement taking place in the north of the country (IISS, last accessed on 31 July 2014; Islamic Relief, 4 June 2014). As of July 2014, the figure stood at 334,626, a significant fall. The number does not, however, include IDPs who returned to their areas of origin, who are counted as returnees whether or not they have achieved a durable solution. The overall proportion of displaced men and women is nearly equal, but varies significantly from context to context.

Most IDPs were living in five northern and central governorates. Sa'ada was hosting the largest number with 103,014, followed by Hajjah with 89,136, Amran with 71,548, Sana'a with 46,228 and Al Jawf with around 24,700 (OCHA, 3 September and 13 May 2014; OCHA, August 2014 - on file with IDMC). The worst affected district of Al Jawf as of 25 August 2014 was Al-Ghayl, where fighting between government-affiliated and al-Houthi forces had reportedly displaced 90 per cent of its residents or more than 8,100 people, most of them women (Islamic Help, 25 August 2014).

In Amran, recurrent fighting and tensions have caused multiple and at times protracted waves of displacement over the last ten years, includ-

ing some pre-emptive movements. At their height, the latest round of clashes in July 2014 were thought to have displaced around 45,000 people, but humanitarian agencies did not have the access they needed to verify the figure. As of August, nearly all of the IDPs were thought to have returned to their homes (OCHA, 3 September and 10 August 2014).

Fighting in Sa'ada and Hajjah displaced thousands of families in 2013 (Islamic Relief, 4 June 2014). Clashes in Dammaj, Sa'ada, displaced around 10,000 people to Sana'a and Al Hudaydah governorates in August (OCHA, 7 February 2014), and renewed conflict in the same area in late October and November forced at least another 1,000 people to flee (OCHA, 12 February 2014). Around 15,000 non-local Salafis, conservative Sunni Muslims, were reportedly expelled from Dammaj to Sana'a in January 2014, leaving around 10,000 of them homeless (ACAPS, February 2014; Yemen Times, 20 January 2014).

In the south of the country, the government's Executive Unit for IDPs and UNHCR estimate that military operations displaced around 20,000 people in Abyan and Shabwa governorates in May 2014 (OCHA, 5 June and 21 May 2014). By the end of the month, however, the vast majority had managed to return to their homes (OCHA, 9 July and 5 June 2014; UNICEF, 31 May 2014). Intensified violence in Al Dhale governorate temporarily displaced about 3,150 people in November 2013, mainly from Al Dhale city and the surrounding villages of Sanah and Jalilah (OCHA, 12 May and 16 February 2014). Around 8,000 people were displaced in Al-Baidha and Dhamar governorates in February 2013 (UNHCR, last accessed on 23 July 2014). Sunnis make up the majority both of IDPs and the general population in the south (ACAPS, February 2012).

In contrast to the protracted displacement in the north of the country, that related to Yemen's popular uprising and general insecurity in Sana'a,

Taiz, Aden and other cities has for the most part been temporary. It has also taken place primarily within urban areas (USDOS, 27 February 2014; Yemen Times, 1 March 2012).

As of March 2014, around 90 per cent of the country's IDPs were thought to be living outside camps. Many choose to avoid them because of cultural and religious beliefs that dictate that women are not allowed to be seen by men other than their close relatives. Others flee with their livestock and want to keep their animals nearby, which is difficult to do in camps (Global CCCM Cluster, 27 March 2014; DRC, December 2010; CARE and OCHA, 20 December 2009; IRIN, 12 November 2009).

Yemen continues to experience significant new and multiple displacements, including of refugees and asylum seekers (IRIN, 31 July 2014; FEWSNET, 30 June 2014; OCHA, 12 February 2014).

Protection issues

Internal displacement is a major factor in Yemen's crisis, and IDPs often face greater difficulty meeting their basic needs and protecting their rights than the general population. Those needs vary from context to context, but they have been identified as cross-sectoral for both new IDPs and those living in protracted displacement. Conflict and insecurity often hamper humanitarian agencies' ability to monitor and respond (OCHA, 9 July, 30 and 5 June, 21 May, 30 April and 27 February 2014; Islamic Relief, 4 June 2014; The National, 2 November 2013).

Threats to physical security and wellbeing
Many IDPs continue to suffer the effects of fighting and insecurity in their areas of refuge (OCHA, 5 March, 7 and 6 February 2014). Spontaneous settlements are sometimes established near conflict zones and tend to be unprotected from exploitation and attacks. The widespread prevalence

of small arms and the presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) pose further protection risks (Al Akhbar, 2 July 2014; UNICEF, 17 June 2014; OCHA, 7 February 2014).

IDPs are highly vulnerable to human rights abuses perpetrated by those in positions of authority, and they sometimes face hostility from host communities over scarce resources (UNICEF, 17 June 2014; Islamic Relief, 4 June 2014; IRIN, 9 September 2013). Many in both the north and south of country are vulnerable members of poor and marginalised communities. Discrimination on the basis of their perceived association with different parties to the conflict has also been reported, whether by tribe, kinship or sectarian identity (ECOSOC, 25 June 2014; OHCHR, 7 November 2013; IRIN, 9 September 2013). In Amran governorate, displaced members of the Muhamasheen community have complained about their exclusion from humanitarian assistance and harassment based on their ethnic affiliation (IRIN, 31 July 2014).

IDPs' generally poor living conditions, and disregard for international humanitarian law on all sides, exposes some to life-threatening situations and puts them at high risk of extreme forms of exploitation. Women and children are particularly vulnerable (OCHA, 3 September and 9 July 2014; UNICEF, 17 June 2014; Islamic Relief, 4 June 2014; OCHA, 13 November 2013 - on file with IDMC). Many parties to the country's various conflicts, including the security forces, pro-government militias, al-Houthi and Ansar al-Sharia, have been accused of systematically recruiting children (OCHA, 10 August 2014; UNICEF, 17 June and 31 May 2014). Those born in displacement often face difficulties in exercising their basic rights because they tend not to have birth certificates and other documents (UNICEF, 17 June 2014; Islamic Relief, 4 June 2014).

The loss of belongings, community structures and protection mechanisms that often accompanies displacement puts additional stress on families

and communities, exposing displaced women and children to an increased risk of domestic and gender-based violence (GBV). It also reduces victims' access to services and support. GBV includes, but is not limited to, abduction, sexual slavery, marital rape and forced marriage, and it is aggravated by the presence of armed groups. Genital mutilation and child marriages are widespread, with the latter often considered a coping mechanism by families during times of crisis. Between January and May 2014, the GBV sub-cluster in Aden registered 285 cases among displaced, returnee and host communities in Lahj, Al Dhale, Aden, Shabwah and Abyan governorates, with women and girls accounting for 85 per cent of the victims. Many more cases are likely to go unreported because of the fear of stigma and widespread impunity for perpetrators (OCHA, 3 September, 10 August, 9 July, 5 June and 5 March 2014; IASC Gen Cap, 1 August 2014; UNICEF, 17 June 2014; HPN, May 2014; IJSD, 14 May 2013).

Access to shelter
Most IDPs live with poor host communities or in informal settlements, in makeshift shelters, public buildings such as schools and health facilities or in rented houses. Others have occupied abandoned buildings at risk of collapse (OCHA, 13 November 2013 - on file with IDMC). Some displaced families number as many as 15 members, putting a heavy burden on their hosts, and overcrowding causes significant privacy issues for women and girls (OCHA, 10 August, 27 and 12 February 2014; UNICEF, 17 June 2014; Yemen Times, 21 and 15 May 2014). IDPs living in camps are often exposed to harsh weather conditions (UNICEF, 17 June 2014; OCHA, 27 February 2014).

As of February 2014, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that around 38,000 families were in urgent need of shelter (OCHA, 12 February 2014). Some fleeing from Amran without identification papers reportedly face difficulties renting accommodation in Sana'a (OCHA, 9 July 2014). People living in

protracted displacement are in need of transitional shelter, and returnees require help in rebuilding their homes (OCHA, 13 May 2013). Natural hazards sometimes damage or destroy IDPs' shelters, as flash floods did in Al Mazraq Camp 1 and the Al Hagouf area of Hayran district in Hajjah governorate in May 2014 (OCHA, 5 June 2014).

Access to food, water, sanitation and health care
Yemen suffers chronic food insecurity, and conflict and violence often make the situation acute. Fighting in Amran, for example, led to delays in the delivery of IDPs' food aid (OCHA, 9 July 2014; UNICEF, 17 June 2014; FEWSNET, 31 October 2013; OCHA, 5 March 2014). Malnutrition rates are high. Around 41 per cent of children under the age of five are stunted, with IDPs and other vulnerable groups particularly affected (WFP, 15 August 2014; UNICEF, 17 June 2014; USDOS, 27 February 2014). Global acute malnutrition (GAM) rates among IDPs in the Al Mazraq camps in Hajjah governorate rose to 21.9 per cent in 2014 (OCHA, 9 July 2014).

Malnutrition is made worse by the widespread cultivation of khat, a mild narcotic used extensively throughout the country, which uses land and already scarce water supplies that could be used for growing food. The substance also works as an appetite suppressant (OCHA, 9 July 2014; the Guardian, 9 June 2014; ICRC, 21 March 2014). Destroyed and damaged infrastructure and a lack of fuel to operate pumps further hamper access to potable water for IDPs and other vulnerable populations (OCHA, 9 July, 5 June and 30 April 2014; UNICEF, 17 June 2014).

Health facilities in conflict zones are often overstretched, and sometimes out of reach of displaced communities (USAID, 30 June 2014; OCHA, 13 November 2013 - on file with IDMC). Fighting in Amran led to delays in the delivery of urgently needed medical supplies in July 2014 (OCHA, 9 July 2014). Women face additional constraints in accessing health services because of the lack of female staff in most facilities (UNICEF, 17 June 2014).

These restrictions, combined with a lack of adequate sanitary facilities, increase the risk of outbreaks of disease in areas affected by conflict and displacement (UNICEF, 17 June 2014; Yemen Times, 15 May 2014; JUNFSTY 2012-2014, 30 March 2012). Many IDPs and others exposed to conflict and violence also suffer psychological trauma and other mental health issues, particularly displaced children (Yemen Times, July 2014; ECOSOC, 25 June 2014; UNICEF, 17 June 2014; IRIN, 27 May 2013).

Access to education
According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), at least 23 per cent of displaced children are thought to be out of school across the country as a whole, but in some areas the percentage is much higher. In Lahj governorate, the figure is more like 65 per cent. Both combatants and IDPs often occupy schools, facilities are damaged in the conflict, as has happened Amran and Al Dhale governorates, or they are simply closed because of the fighting (OCHA, 9 July and 4 April 2014; Oxfam, 24 June 2014; UNICEF, 17 June 2014; Yemen Times, 29 May 2014). Poor hygiene and sanitation facilities in many schools also pose health risks.

Girls are less likely to be in education, particularly in rural areas (UNICEF, 17 June 2014). Some displaced children in Amran were unable to enrol because they did not have the required documentation (OCHA, 5 March 2014), and others do not attend because of ethnic discrimination (OCHA, 7 February 2014; IRIN, 7 September 2013).

Access to land and livelihoods
The desperate situation of many vulnerable populations, including IDPs, is often made worse by the absence of vital infrastructure and livelihood opportunities (UNICEF, 17 June 2014). The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that 80 per cent of IDPs are farmers, sharecroppers or agricultural labourers, which highlights their specific needs in terms of livelihood support. Those living in protracted displacement in the north of

the country are particularly affected (FAO, 25 July 2014; OCHA, 13 May 2013). Women also struggle to access land and have fewer inheritance rights than men. They often transfer their land rights to their husband or other male family members (Terra Nullius, last accessed on 29 July 2014; LANDac/KIT, 2012).

In Abyan governorate, many returnees have faced difficulties in re-establishing their agricultural livelihoods because of the presence of landmines and UXO (OCHA, 12 May 2014). Fighting also often closes roads and markets (OCHA, 21 May 2014). Some IDPs in Amran governorate and in Dammaj in Sa'ada governorate have borrowed food or money, and others have sold their livestock as means of getting by, raising concerns about them exhausting their capacity to cope (OCHA, 5 March 2014; OCHA, 13 November 2014 - on file with IDMC).

Urban IDPs and other migrants who settle in informal settlements on the outskirts of cities such as Sana'a, Aden and Taiz, have no tenure security and are vulnerable to evictions.

Durable solutions

IDPs face major obstacles to achieving durable solutions. As of August, more than 1,100 families living in the Al Mazraq camps in Hajjah governorate have opted to return, mainly to the Al Dhaher and Haydan districts in Sa'ada governorate. Their doing so, however, would require substantive and long-term support and concerted efforts by all stakeholders given that most lost everything as a result of their displacement. Local integration is also unlikely as the camps are on private land, which makes the construction of more permanent shelters more difficult. IDPs living outside camps in Hajjah appear to be at least somewhat self-settled, and may be able to achieve a durable solution through gradual local integration. A recent survey by UNHCR and its partners identified 103 such families who had expressed their intention

to integrate locally in Al Mazraq village. The provision of semi-permanent shelters with leaseholds of at least five years could facilitate the broader process (OCHA, 9 and 3 September 2014; UNHCR, email exchange, 17 August 2014).

In the south of the country, the government revoked the traditional land tenure system after unification with the north in 1990, leading to land and property disputes. Many are still unresolved and pose significant problems. A commission to consider and address land issues in the southern governorates was created by presidential decree in January 2013, and it was thought to have more than 200,000 cases pending as of July 2014 (HLRN, July 2014; Terra Nullius, last accessed on 29 July 2014; OHCHR, 25 July 2013; Al Jazeera, 13 April 2013). Ansar al-Sharia and the popular committees also continue to pose a significant security risk (IRIN, 31 July 2014).

As of 31 July 2014, 226,803 people were registered as having returned to their homes, the majority in the south of country. Abyan governorate accounted for 150,671 returnees, and Al-Bayda and Dhamar 8,155. In the north, 67,977 returnees were registered in Sa'ada governorate (OCHA, 3 September 2014; OCHA, August 2014 – on file with IDMC). The fact that people are registered as returnees, however, does not necessarily mean they have achieved a durable solution. Many are still likely to have assistance and protection needs, or to suffer discrimination as result of their displacement (IASC, April 2010). Some returnees in Sada'a travel back to their places of refuge to access basic services (Islamic Relief, 4 June 2014; OCHA, 22 January 2014).

Around 300,000 IDPs continue to live in protracted displacement in Hajjah, Amran and Sa'ada governorates in the north of Yemen (OCHA, 3 September 2014). Many wish to return, but insecurity caused by conflict, the absence of government forces and the presence of non-state armed groups, landmines and UXO prevent

them from doing so (UNICEF, 17 June 2014; IRIN, 7 October 2013; UNHCR, 8 July 2012). Damaged and destroyed housing and other infrastructure, disrupted livelihoods and a lack of services in return areas constitute further obstacles (UNICEF, 17 June 2014; IRIN, 31 July 2014; OCHA, 9 July and 5 June 2014; UNICEF, 31 May 2014). In the north, those perceived as opposing the al-Houthi movement face difficulties in returning to areas where the group maintains a presence, such as Amran city (IRIN, 31 July 2014).

The government has been promoting voluntary returns as its preferred settlement option. Without prior reconciliation, however, the sustainability of returns in the north is questionable. Throughout the country, a series of issues need to be addressed if IDPs are to achieve durable solutions. They include the restoration of the rule of law, the provision of livelihood support, reconstruction in return areas, the addressing of longer-term social and psychological needs linked to displacement and the resolution of housing, land and property issues (OCHA, 3 September 2014; HLRN, July 2014; Terra Nullius, last accessed on 29 July 2014; UNHCR, March 2013).

The humanitarian community has stressed the need to ensure adequate conditions in IDPs' places of origin, with particular reference to reported cases of involuntary returns. Some IDPs in Aden reported harassment by local authorities and the withdrawal of humanitarian aid in their places of refuge being used to pressure them into returning, despite their concerns about insecurity and a lack of resources to rebuild their lives (UNICEF, 17 June 2014; IRIN, 11 October 2013; UNHCR, March 2013). Premature returns involve the risk of secondary displacement, which would make IDPs' vulnerabilities worse (LSE-Brookings, November 2011).

IDPs have the right to make a voluntary and informed choice about their preferred durable solution, including access to information on conditions in areas of return or resettlement. The emphasis on return should not be at the expense of local integration or settlement elsewhere for those who wish to pursue those options. Information available from the 2011/12 profiling exercise shows that as many as 68 per cent of IDPs from Sana'a governorate would prefer to integrate locally, but the government has been reluctant to facilitate alternatives to return (UNHCR, March 2013 and 8 July 2012).

The resolution of displacement and the achievement of durable solutions are important elements in establishing lasting peace. To do so will require the gradual reduction of IDPs' needs and the protection of their human rights. IDPs, including women and young people, are important stakeholders in the peace process and should be consulted and informed in a meaningful way. Addressing IDPs' needs and those of communities in both refuge and return areas helps not only to avoid new tensions, but may also contribute to resolving the causes of conflict and violence (OCHA, 7 February 2014; UNHCR, March 2013). If long-term livelihood opportunities are not put in place and state security forces are unable to reinforce the rule of law, armed groups such as Ansar al-Sharia are likely to continue filling the void (IRIN, 7 October 2013).

National frameworks and response

Institutional framework
In 2009, the government established the Executive Unit for IDPs as the national institutional focal point for internal displacement. Its mandate and responsibilities are defined in prime ministerial decree no. 454 and 455 (2009) and the council of ministers' resolution no. 38 (2012). With UNHCR's support and international funding, several branches around the country collect data on IDPs, address their situations and promote and facilitate returns. The unit reports to the council of ministers, and is mandated to work with a number of ministries and local authorities. This has raised

concerns about its independence and possible encroachment into humanitarian space (LSE-Brookings, November 2011).

The lack of access to IDPs in areas outside government control and a shortage of funding have hampered the unit's work. This, combined with weak institutional capacity, has meant the government has been largely limited to facilitating international agencies' work (USDOS, 27 February 2014). In the absence of a comprehensive national response, ordinary citizens also provide IDPs with aid directly through family and community networks (ECHO, 27 October 2013).

National policy on internal displacement
The government has taken significant steps towards establishing the conditions for IDPs to achieve durable solutions at the policy level. Following a UN recommendation and with the support of the international community, it developed the National Policy for Addressing Internal Displacement in Yemen, which was adopted on 25 June 2013. The policy aims to prevent displacement, including that caused by natural hazards and disasters, to protect and support IDPs and other affected communities and to facilitate durable solutions.

With a view to raising awareness and informing the development of the policy, the government and UNHCR co-organised a series of consultations with stakeholders from governorates affected by displacement. In keeping with its spirit, the process was largely participatory and included civil society organisations and IDPs themselves (UNHCR, November and December 2012 - on file with IDMC).

Under the policy, the Executive Unit was to have developed an implementation plan within three months of its adoption. At the time of writing, however, no concrete steps had been taken, leaving protection gaps and serious shortcomings in terms of achieving sustainable solutions, including the failure to establish early warning systems and preparedness measures. The government is said to be unable to afford implementation, and the dire humanitarian situation in the country has hampered the process further (ECOSOC, 25 June 2014; OCHA, 4 September 2013).

Transitional process
The government has made efforts to tackle the underlying causes of conflict and displacement, which are developmental and political, by advancing the country's broader transitional process. In order to deal with the ongoing humanitarian crisis and promote stability and peace, it developed the Transitional Programme for Stabilisation and Development 2012–2014. The document explicitly recognises IDPs, particularly those living outside camps, as a vulnerable group and acknowledges the urgency of addressing their humanitarian needs (UNICEF, 17 June 2014; OHCHR, 8 November 2013; Republic of Yemen, September 2012).

With international support, the government has also adopted action plans to address issues such as the armed forces' recruitment of children and the high level of youth unemployment (UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, 14 May 2014; Government of Yemen, 19 December 2013; Yemen Post, 18 October 2013). Observers, however, have described the implementation of the plans as patchy at best (The Atlantic Council, 2 September 2014).

In an effort to bring IDPs a step closer to being able to return home, reconstruction is ongoing, particularly in the south, and landmines and UXO are being cleared (OHCHR, 8 November 2013). A lack of funding, however, has impeded progress (OCHA, 3 September 2014). Through the Abyan Reconstruction Fund the government also distributed cash to residents of the governorate affected conflict, including returnees, but the initiative was marred by accusations of underfunding, corruption and unfairness. Overall, reconstruction efforts have yielded some positive results, but

the affected communities and others deem them insufficient (IRIN, 11 and 7 October 2013).

In order to advance necessary structural and institutional reforms and to end hostilities with non-state armed groups, Yemen began a national dialogue conference in March 2013, bringing together a wide range of participants, including the Southern Separatist Movement, the al-Houthi movement, civil society organisations, marginalised groups and IDPs. Before the start of the process, UNHCR organised a series of focus group discussions and workshops with more than 3,600 IDPs in Aden, Amran, Haradh and Sana'a from in an effort to brief them on the purpose of the conference and gather key messages for inclusion (UNHCR, March 2013).

By the end of the conference in January 2014 significant progress had been made, including a rapprochement between the various parties and a decision to establish a federal state. It failed, however, to produce a workable peace plan or a consensus on key political issues such as power-sharing (ICG, 10 June 2014).

Overall, the government has made significant efforts to address displacement, but its capacity and resources currently fall far short of being able to meet the needs of all concerned. In order to sustain the gains made in the political process, it will have to address significant humanitarian and protection needs and tackle the underlying causes of the current crises (ECOSOC, 25 June 2014; HPN, May 2014; OCHA, 5 March and 12 February 2014; UN News Service, 15 May 2014). Expanding its social safety net would be an important part of establishing a much-needed framework on resilience (ECHO, 27 October 2013; Oxfam, 24 June 2014).

International response

The international humanitarian community has coordinated assistance through the cluster system since 2009, working closely with the government and NGOs. Other humanitarian coordination mechanisms include national and international NGO forums and an OCHA-led humanitarian communication network (HPN, May 2014; OCHA, June 2013 and no date). The humanitarian country team (HCT), which is made up of UN agencies and three international NGOs, focuses on strategic and policy direction. It has operational hubs in Sana'a Aden, Haradh and Sa'ada (OCHA, last accessed on 25 July 2014; OCHA, no date).

In an effort to respond better to the needs of those living outside camps, UNHCR initiated a community centre project for IDPs in 2008, in cooperation with national government and civil society partners. NGO partners run six centres in Sana'a, Hajjah, Amran and Sa'ada governorates, where specialised staff provide protection monitoring, GBV counselling and legal support and community services. When necessary, users are referred to other service providers. The project also includes mobile outreach activities to increase access to remote areas, and overall serves as an information conduit for IDPs on a wide range of topics (UNHCR, email exchange, 17 August 2014; Global CCCM Cluster, 27 March 2014).

The humanitarian response plan for 2014 to 2015 is the primary framework for the government's interventions and those of its humanitarian partners. Its strategic objectives include IDPs' protection and the facilitation of durable solutions for both IDPs and other vulnerable populations, and it focuses on livelihood protection and restoration, and capacity building. It is also intended to support the government in implementing the national policy on displacement, and to improve protection monitoring and response through community centres and outreach workers. It aims to build resilience by ensuring IDPs' rights to durable solutions and reducing gender-based vulnerability (OCHA, 12 and 7 February 2014).

It provisions complement those of the joint UN framework to support the transition in Yemen for 2012 to 2014, which calls on international organisations to provide material, technical and capacity-building support for the national response, particularly for IDPs and other vulnerable groups. The capacity-building component is key to national authorities' gradual takeover of the role currently played by international aid organisations (the Guardian, 9 June 2014; HPN, May 2014; OCHA, 12 February 2014; JUNFSTY, 30 March 2012). Most UN agencies and international NGOs also have their own plans to guide their response in Yemen, which often include provisions on IDPs.

Restrictions affecting humanitarian response
Lack of humanitarian access is a significant obstacle to addressing IDPs' needs and helping them achieve durable solutions. International organisations such as UN agencies and the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement provide much of the assistance they receive (IRIN, 6 May 2014 and 23 July 2013; USAID, 30 June 2014; OCHA, 5 June 2014; ICRC, 9 April 2014), but their work is impeded by fighting, bombings and other attacks, crime, civil unrest, the presence of landmines and UXO, natural hazards and obstructions put in place by non-state armed groups (USAID, 30 June 2014; the Guardian, 9 June 2014; OCHA, 5 June and 7 February 2014; ACLED, 21 January 2014). In Hajjah governorate, a roadblock lasting for over a month from the end of 2013 to early 2014 hampered aid workers' access to around 14,500 IDPs in the Al Mazraq camps (OCHA, 7 January 2014). The siege of the city of Dammaj in Sa'ada governorate from August 2013 to January 2014 also blocked humanitarian access (OCHA, 7 February 2014).

Apart from the constant threat of AQAP attacks and continued clashes, negotiating access in the south of the country is aggravated by humanitarian workers' difficulties in distinguishing between the armed popular committees and other criminal and insurgent groups (IRIN, 7 October 2013). In the north, insecurity and fighting often limit

access to areas under al-Houthi control, and the fragmentation of the conflict has made it more difficult still (HPN, May 2014; OCHA, 7 January 2014; IRIN, 31 July 2014 and 6 November 2013). Assassinations and attacks on aid workers, particularly in urban areas, contribute to the general climate of insecurity (OCHA, 10 August 2014; IRIN, 7 October 2013). Yemen was among the 10 countries with the most attacks on aid workers in 2013 (Humanitarian Outcomes, 19 August 2014).

The looting and destruction of humanitarian assets and facilities also hamper the humanitarian response, as do movement restrictions imposed or recommended by the UN Department of Safety and Security, the INGO Safety Advisory Office and aid agencies themselves. Myriad communication and logistical obstacles complicate the situation still further (OCHA, 10 August, 9 July 2014 and 4 September 2013; HPN, May 2014; Samuel Hall, 2013).

These issues, and the restrictions foreign staff face in obtaining visas and permits, leave many international organisations to rely on local NGOs. Only a few, however, have the capacity to deliver principled humanitarian aid in a coordinated and reliable way, and many have tribal, religious or political affiliations (OCHA, 9 July 2014; the Guardian, 9 June 2014; HPN, May 2014). A general lack of understanding of the difference between impartial, needs-based humanitarian assistance and more political development work means that international organisations working in this way face being drawn further into politics, which in turn increases security risks for aid workers (HPN, May 2014). The focus of humanitarian operations on more easily accessible areas has also contributed to the perception that the distribution of aid is not solely needs-based (OCHA, 7 January 2014).

Funding
The $592 million response plan launched by UN and its partners in February 2014 remains severely underfunded, with only 42.2 per cent covered

as of 3 September 2014 (OCHA, 3 September 2014). The plan for 2013 was 56 per cent funded (OCHA, last accessed on 28 July 2014). The Yemen Emergency Response Fund provided $3.2 million and raised $1.2 million in contributions from implementing partners between April and June 2014, of which thirty-five per cent was disbursed to national NGOs (OCHA, 10 August 2014). Some donors, such as the UK's Department for International Development, have increased multi-year funding, which is a positive development because it enables better planning, more efficient procurement, more space to build relationships at the local level and a focus on delivery (Devex, 12 June 2014).

About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement. For the millions of people worldwide displaced within their own country, IDMC plays a unique role as a global monitor and evidence-based advocate to influence policy and action by governments, UN agencies, donors, international organisations and NGOs.

IDMC was established in 1998 at the request of the Interagency Standing Committee on humanitarian assistance. Since then, IDMC's unique global function has been recognised and reiterated in annual UN General Assembly resolutions.

IDMC is part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), an independent, non-governmental humanitarian organisation.

Contact:

Sebastián Albuja
Head of Africas and Americas Department
Tel: +41 22 799 07 08
Mobile: +41 78 806 83 08
E-mail: sebastian.albuja@nrc.ch

Johanna Klos
Acting regional Analyst for eastern Africa and Yemen
Tel: +41 22 795 07 46
Email: johanna.klos@nrc.ch

IDMC
Norwegian Refugee Council
Chemin de Balexert 7-9
1219 Geneva, Switzerland
www.internal-displacement.org
Tel: +41 (0)22 799 0700
Fax: +41 (0)22 799 0701