



# State of Food Insecurity in **YEMEN**

*based on the Emergency Food Security and Nutrition Assessment (EFSNA)*

**April 2017**



**YEMEN**  
**FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE CLUSTER**  
Strengthening Humanitarian Response



**Food and Agriculture**  
**Organization of the**  
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## Yemen is facing the largest food insecurity emergency in the world.

(UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, February 2017)



*The conflict in Yemen has led to a multitude of consequences that include the destruction of basic infrastructure, disruption of social services, mass displacement and loss of lives and livelihoods. The widespread violence has caused major loss of life, almost 2.2 million internally displaced persons, nearly half of them children. The conflict is rapidly pushing the country towards social, economic and institutional collapse. The food and nutrition situation has rapidly deteriorated leaving the country on the brink of famine. Fighting along the Red Sea coast in recent months, which has caused extensive damage to Yemen's largest port in Al-Hodaidah, in addition to import restrictions imposed by one of the warring parties and serious funding constraints have greatly undermined the provision of humanitarian assistance. Despite the fact that the United Nations classified Yemen as a Level 3 emergency in 2015, it remained for long a largely forgotten humanitarian crisis. Even prior to the current conflict, Yemen has been one of the poorest countries in the world and the poorest country in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.*



The **EFSNA** has been the first nation-wide household survey conducted in Yemen since the escalation of conflict in 2015. It is the main data source of the latest Yemen Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) released in March 2017 and was jointly conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Yemen Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC), in close partnership with the Yemeni authorities. The assessment represents 95 percent of the entire population. A total of 6,711 households were interviewed in November 2016, out of which 66 percent resided in rural and 34 percent in urban areas.

The **IPC** is an evidence-based approach using international standards that allow comparability of food security situations across countries and over time. Previous data and trend analysis were used to estimate the food security situation in the governorates not covered by the EFSNA.

## Sixty percent of Yemen's population facing food crisis and emergency

An estimated **17 million Yemenis are food insecure and require urgent humanitarian assistance to save lives and protect livelihoods** according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), which is largely based on data from the Emergency Food Security and Nutrition Assessment (EFSNA). Approximately 10.2 million people are in crisis and 6.8 million in the emergency phase. At national level, **the population falling into the Emergency and Crisis phase has increased by 20 percent** since the previous IPC analysis in June 2016.

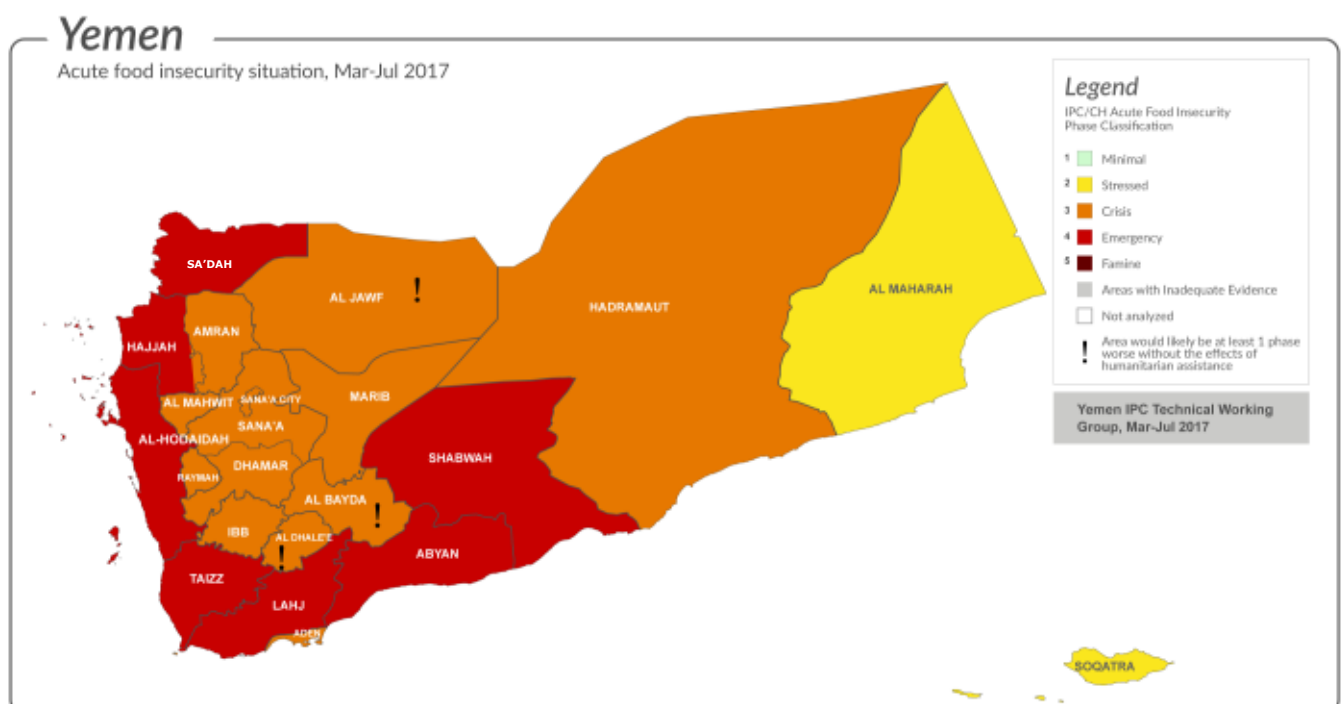
Table 1: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)		Share	Number of people
<b>Phase 1</b>	Minimal	18%	5,128,620
<b>Phase 2</b>	Stressed	22%	6,139,700
<b>Phase 3</b>	Crisis	36%	10,187,750
<b>Phase 4</b>	Emergency	24%	6,778,930
Total population (est. 2017)			28,235,000
<b>Source:</b> Yemen IPC Technical Working Group, March to July 2017			



## Where do the food insecure people live?

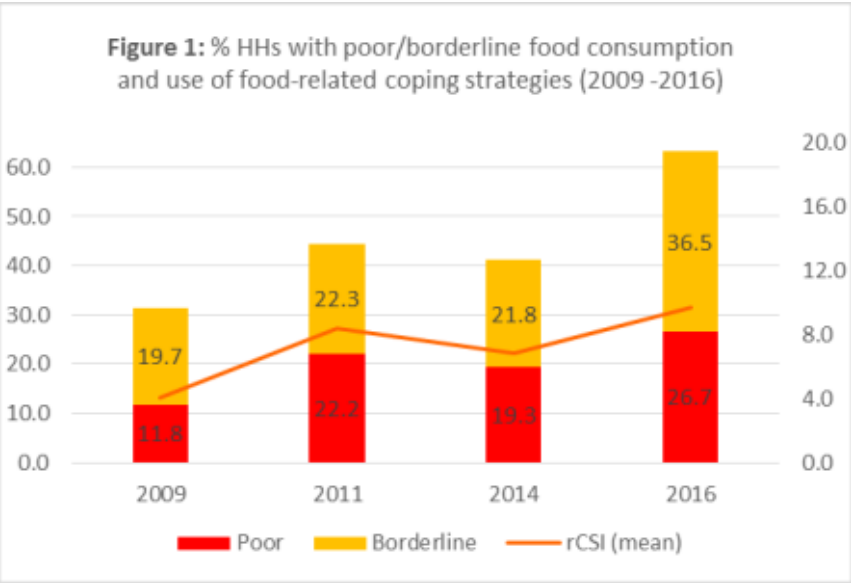
The food crisis is particularly prevalent in the governorates bordering the country's coastline and in Sada'a. Out of the 22 governorates in Yemen, the following seven fall into "Emergency" ('IPC Phase 4'): Lahj, Taizz, Abyan, Sa'ada, Hajjah, Al-Hodaidah and Shabwa. In addition, three governorates fall into 'IPC Phase 3!': Al-Jawf, Al-Dale'e and Al-Bayda. This means that without the presence of humanitarian assistance, these governorates would likely fall under 'IPC Phase 4'.

Seven governorates have been categorized to be in crisis (IPC Phase 3), including Aden, Amran, Dhamar, Sana'a Governorate, Sana'a City, Ibb, Marib, Raymah, Al-Mahwit, Hadramout, Al-Jawf, Al-Dale'e and Al-Bayda. Taizz and Al-Hodaidah, the two most populous governorates accounting for 22 percent of Yemen's entire population and most exposed to the ongoing conflict, are hosting the largest shares of food insecure people, with 2.4 million and 1.8 million respectively.



# Yemen’s food insecurity mirrored in key outcome indicators

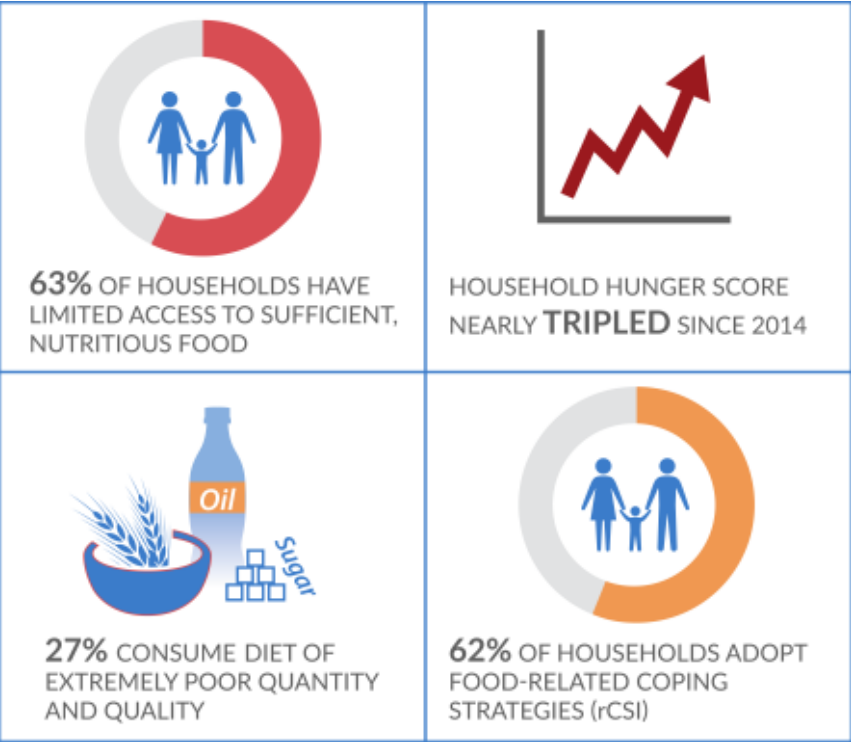
All key food security indicators used for the IPC analysis (see Annex 1), point to a drastic deterioration of Yemen’s overall food security situation over the past two years.



The EFSNA found that more than 63 percent of Yemen’s households have to cope with limited access to sufficient, nutritious food and eating less than the minimum required to live a healthy life – compared to 41 percent in 2014 (Figure 1). In addition, poor food consumption has increased by 44 percent over the past two years, affecting now more than one in four households.

Poor food consumption reflects a diet of poor quality and quantity. It mainly consists of consumption of bread, sugar and fats with no or very rare consumption of pulses, vegetables and fruits.

Yemenis are facing hardship due to the ongoing widespread conflict and its devastating impact on people’s lives and overall well-being. In response to this stress, they are forced to alter some of their behaviors and actions in order to make ends meet. Sixty-two percent of households are forced to adopt food-related coping strategies (rCSI) such as reducing number of meals and limiting portion sizes, compared to only 48 percent in 2014.

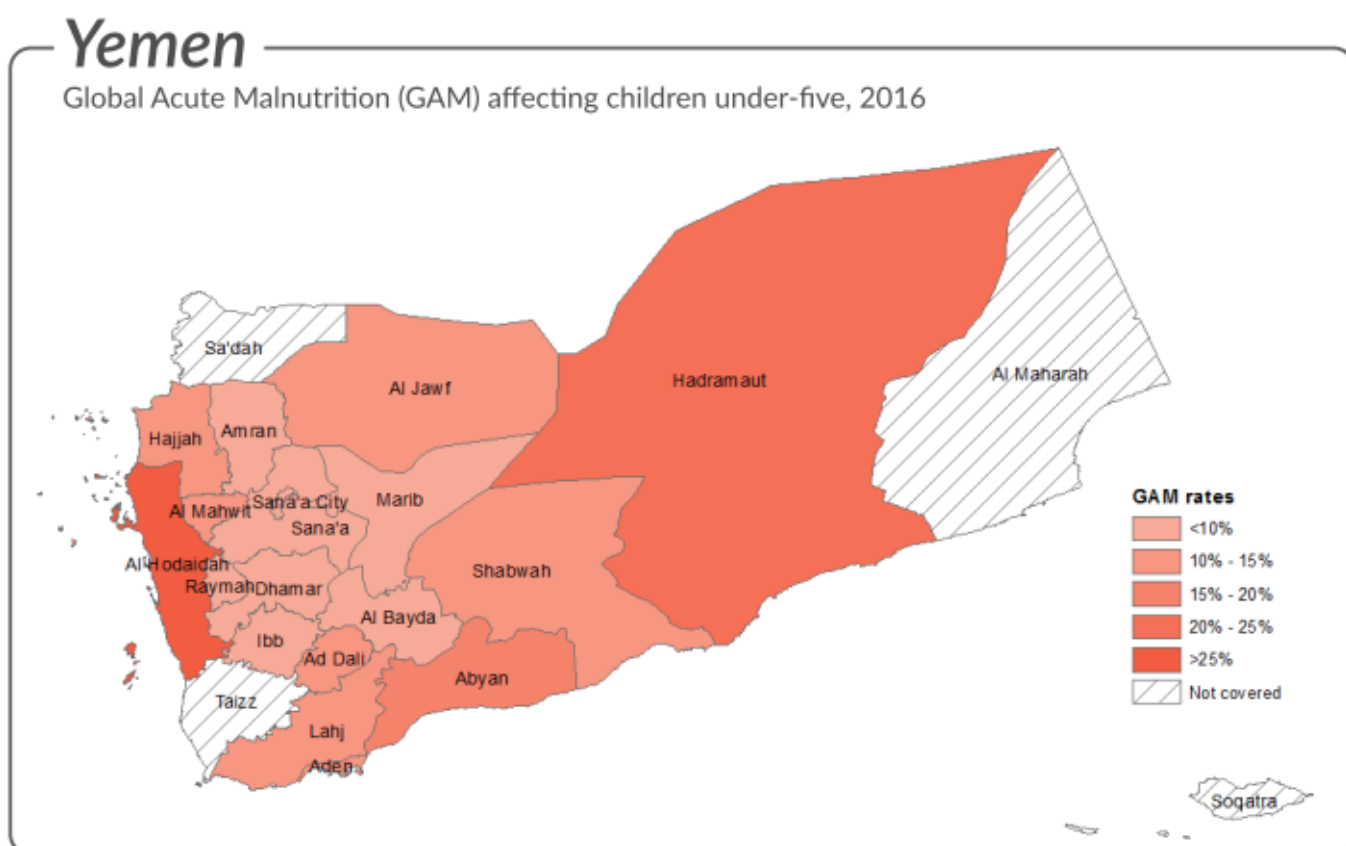


The food deprivation that Yemeni households face is mirrored in people’s own perception of their situation, which is measured by the Household Hunger Score (HHS).<sup>1</sup> Half of the households had been confronted with insufficient quantities of food to eat because of lack of resources, over two-fifth had gone to sleep hungry and almost one-fourth reported to have gone one day and night without eating. This represents a dramatic increase compared to 2014.

<sup>1</sup> The Household Hunger Score (HHS) is a proxy indicator to measure household’s exposure to extreme food deprivation and hunger over the previous 30 days.

# Yemen's malnutrition rates remain one of the highest in the world<sup>2</sup>

The food crisis is also manifested in the nutrition status of Yemeni children between 6 to 59 months. An estimated two million children under the age of five are acutely malnourished and are facing an increased risk of morbidity and death.<sup>3</sup> According to data analysed by UNICEF, in four governorates covered by the IPC **wasting (acute) levels** are surpassing the emergency threshold of 15 percent, with the highest rates recorded in Al-Hodaidah (25 percent). Acute malnutrition is a lagging indicator: with the observed deterioration in key food security indicators, acute malnutrition is likely to further increase if no immediate actions are taken.



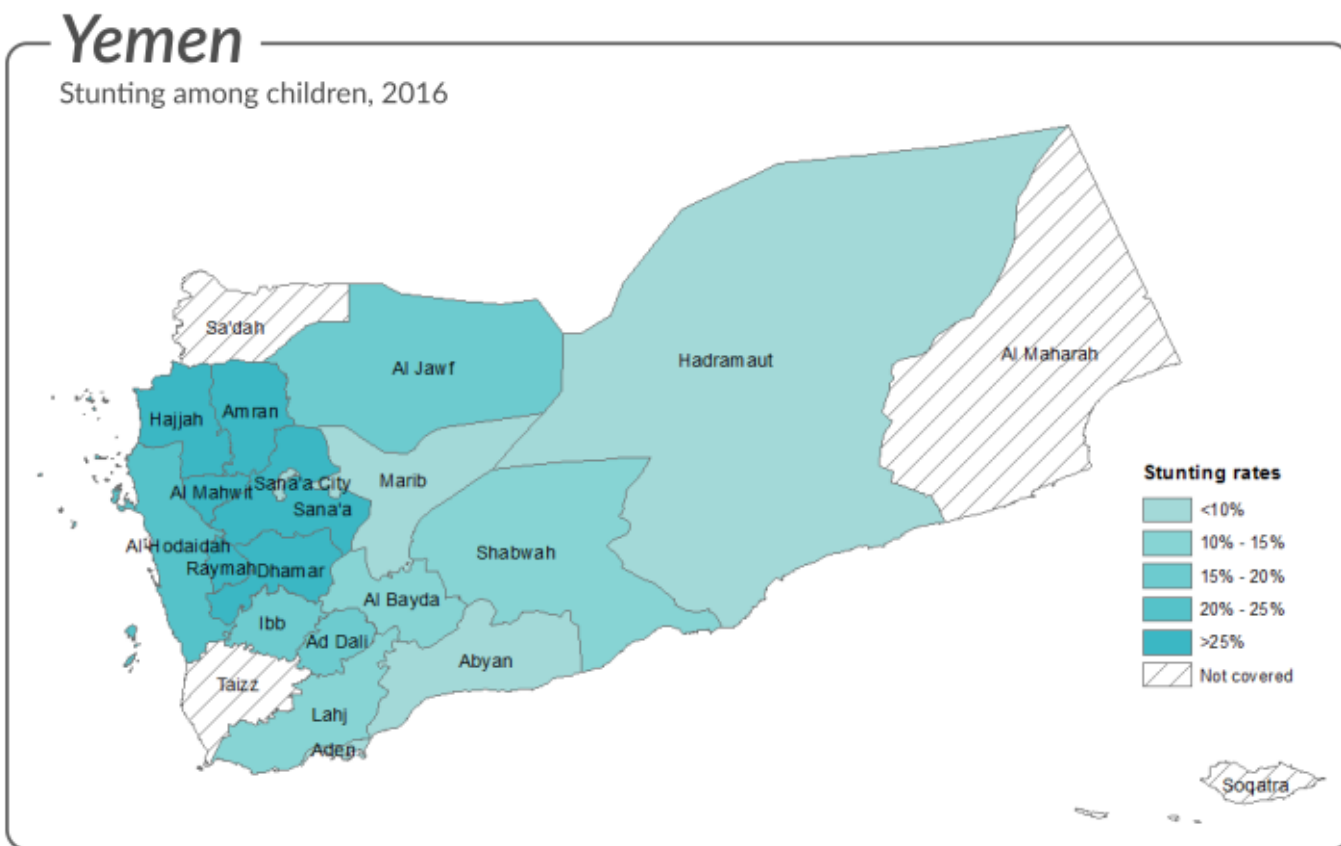
The level of **chronic malnutrition (stunting)** among under-five children in Yemen remains one of the highest in the world, affecting every second Yemeni child. Stunting was found to be "critical" or "serious" in all except two governorates assessed. Children in Raymah, Al-Mahwit, Hajjah and Dhamar are the most affected with over 60 percent of children too short for their age (stunted) with long-term implications for their mental development and productivity. With rates of chronic malnutrition this high, Yemeni children are bearing the long-term effects of this crisis. They will not be able to recover if no assistance is provided within the first 1,000 days window of their lives.

In addition to food insecurity, there are many additional factors aggravating the nutrition status of Yemen's children. They range from the dramatic breakdown of the health care system and its infrastructure, poor

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF, The State of the World's Children, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Yemen IPC Technical Working Group: IPC analysis – Summary of findings, March 2017. Results from nutrition surveys conducted between August and December 2016 by UNICEF, MOPHP, nutrition partners and multi-sectoral EFSNA indicate that an estimated 2,030,000 children (1,035,000 boys and 995,000 girls) under the age of five are acutely malnourished.

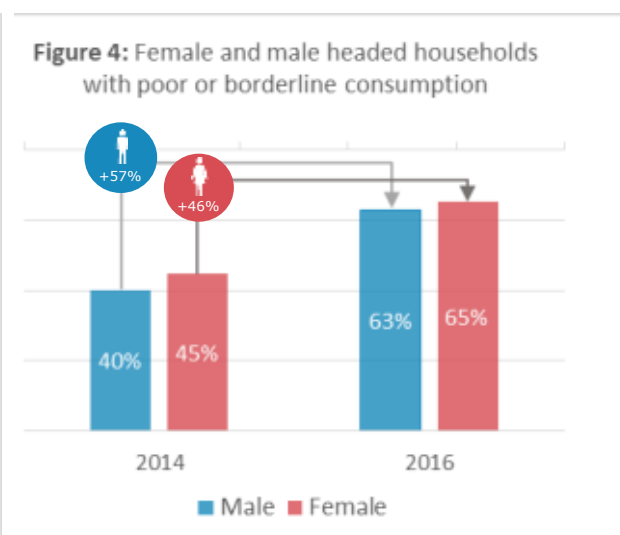
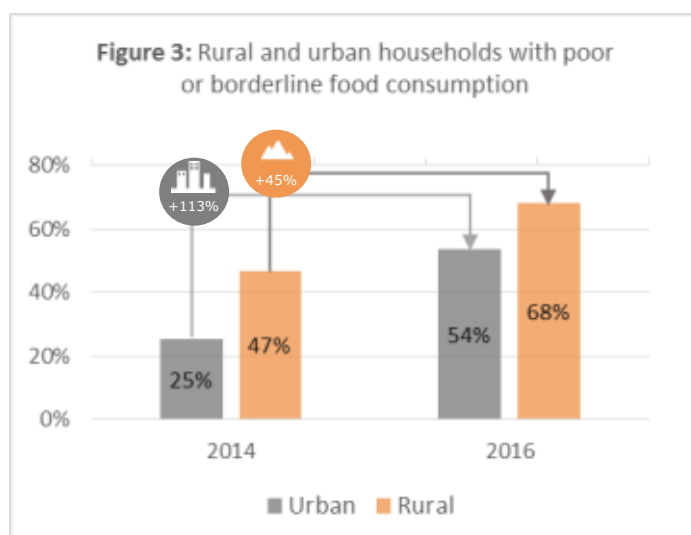
Increasingly more households were found to access their drinking water from unsafe sources, with 46 percent in 2016 compared to 38 percent in 2014. A number of preventable diseases, such as diarrhea and cholera, are associated with insufficient water quality and quantity. In fact, water-borne cholera remains a serious health issue in the country.<sup>4</sup> The EFSNA found that 43 percent of children have suffered from diarrhea during the two weeks prior to the assessment.



## *A growing spectrum of the population affected*

Food insecurity is affecting more and more population groups. In other words, characteristics of a “typical” food insecure household are no longer as clear and pronounced as they used to be. To illustrate this point: while a larger share of all households consuming a poor, inadequate diet live in rural areas, the rural-urban divide appears to have become smaller since 2014, with significantly more urban households being confronted with food insecurity. Yemenis’ perception further highlight this trend: more urban than rural households had experienced a complete lack of food because of lack of resources, had gone to sleep hungry and reported not to have eaten a whole day and night. Similarly, the prevalence of food insecure male-headed households has increased substantially between 2014 and 2016, reaching similar levels as those of food insecure households headed by women (65 percent).

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF, Situation Report, December 2016



## Livelihoods and food insecurity in war-torn Yemen

In November/December 2016, more than three-fourth of households considered their overall economic situation to have worsened compared to prior to the current crisis. Livelihoods have been heavily impacted by the conflict affecting all sectors as well as formal and informal safety nets in rural and urban areas.

The agricultural sector – despite its relatively minor contribution to the country's GDP – provides a livelihood to many rural households. The sector which is already heavily constrained by structural challenges, such as dwindling water resources, has been further inflicted by the conflict due to substantial increase in prices of necessary agricultural inputs and fuel, transportation costs, as well as increasingly restricted access to markets due to insecurity and reduced overall demand due to the diminishing purchasing power. The entire country has been heavily impacted by a reduction in trade and commerce related activities due to access constraints, trade barriers and reduced demand.

Table 2: Households engaging in various income activities	Urban			Rural		
	2016	2014	Trend	2016	2014	Trend
<b>Agriculture-based activities</b>						
Sale of crops (food and cash crops)	1%	7%	↓	16%	25%	↓
Sale of livestock or livestock products	1%	2%	↔	8%	11%	↓
Sale of fish/sea food	1%	1%	↔	0%	2%	↓
Agricultural casual labour	4%	2%	↑	18%	10%	↑
<b>Non-agricultural-based activities</b>						
Trade/commerce	20%	27%	↓	11%	21%	↓
Regular salary from private sector	24%	23%	↔	8%	10%	↓
Regular salary from government	31%	33%	↓	22%	22%	↔
Casual labour (non-agriculture)	23%	16%	↑	28%	20%	↑
<b>Formal and informal safety nets</b>						
Social Welfare Fund	0%	6%	↓	0%	10%	↓
Support from family, friends and relatives	2%	6%	↓	2%	9%	↓
Pension	5%	7%	↓	3%	4%	↔
Remittances from abroad	8%	7%	↔	13%	10%	↑
Begging	2%	0%	↑	1%	1%	↔
Humanitarian assistance	4%			4%		

The public sector is highly important: every third urban household and more than 20 percent in rural areas have at least one government employee. However, due to the economic meltdown, an ever-increasing public budget deficit and the resulting liquidity crisis, monthly salary payments for public sector employees have been suspended since September 2016, affecting more than 7 million people.<sup>5</sup>

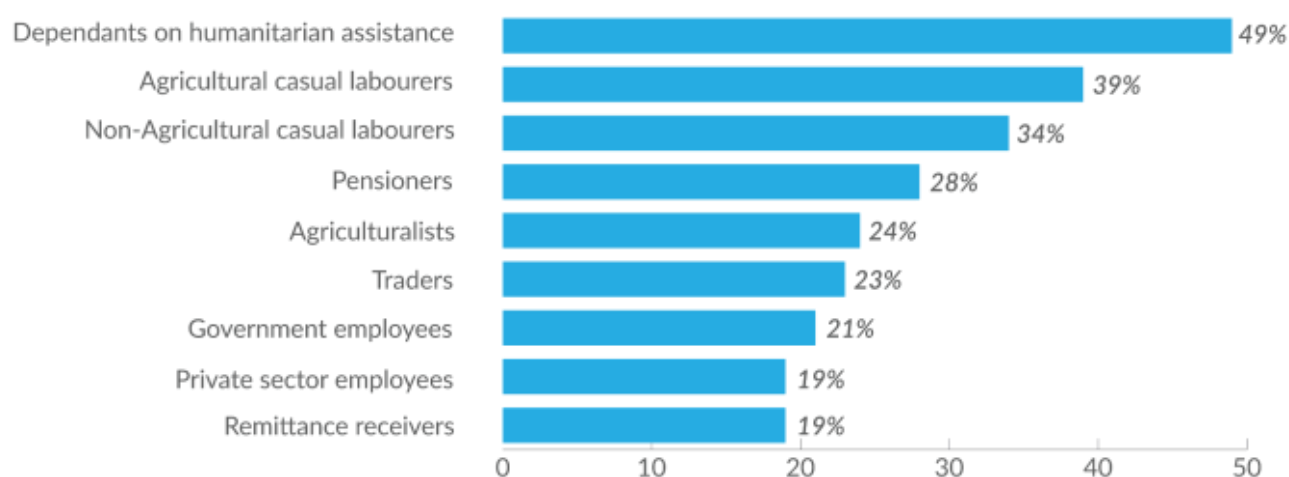
<sup>5</sup> <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp289936.pdf?iframe>

Comparatively speaking, public sector employees are generally better off (see Figure 5), but those recent developments are undermining crucial means and resources that have helped them to cope until now.

The entire social protection system has collapsed which has resulted in the suspension of the country's safety net and public works programs that used to reach roughly 2.5 million people in both rural and urban areas. Also informal safety nets have been affected with households less able to support their relatives and friends – with the exception of international remittance from the Yemeni diaspora. Overall, there has been a move towards more instable income sources, in particular casual labour. In urban areas there has been a remarkable increase of people who are forced to depend on begging.

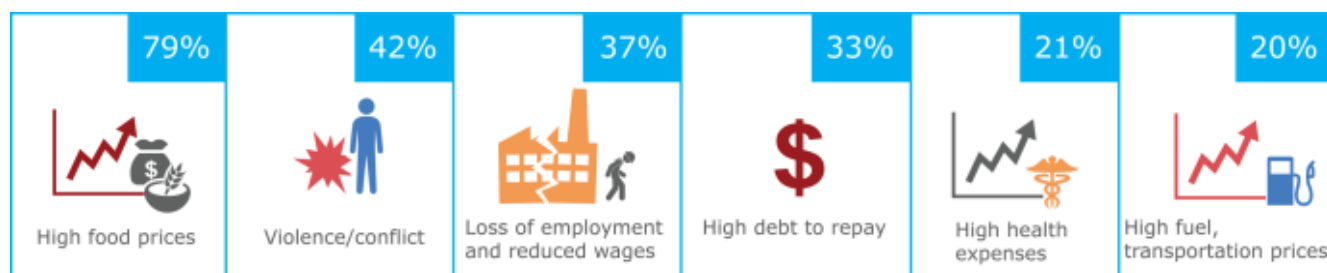
Households depending on assistance and begging as their main income source are the worst off groups, followed by households mainly relying on casual labour and the support from relatives and friends. Households with businesses, regular employment and remittance are relatively better off.

**Figure 5: Poor food consumption by livelihood profile**



## *How are vulnerable Yemenis coping?*

The main shock that has been affecting Yemenis' lives and livelihoods has been the conflict – either directly or indirectly through increased prices of food, fuel, health expenditure, loss of employment, and associated increased indebtedness. In fact, every second Yemeni household is indebted for food, a 53 percent increase since 2014.



<sup>6</sup> <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp288497.pdf>

Livelihood-based coping strategies in response to stress factors are leading to a depletion of assets with long-term and often irreversible consequences such as reducing expenditure on health, withdrawing children from school and begging. Most households in Yemen were forced to adopt livelihood coping strategies to avert food shortages. Table 4 illustrates the type of strategies applied and indicates the severity level through the cross-tabulation with other key food security outcome indicators.

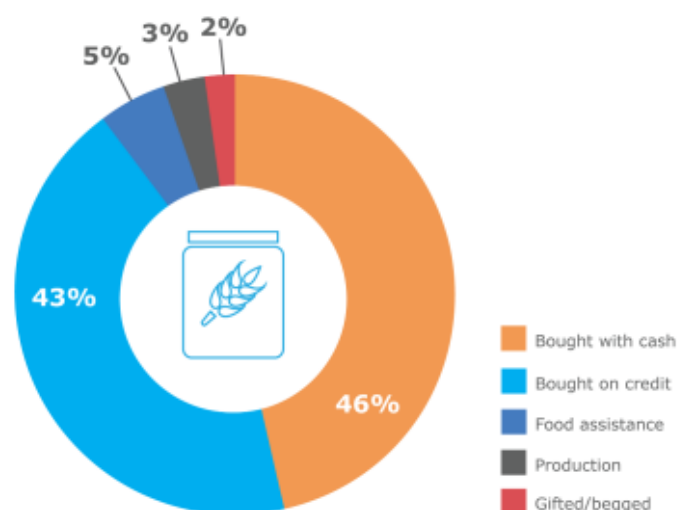
Table 4: Adoption of livelihood coping strategies in response to food shortages	% of households adopting strategies	Food security outcomes of households adopting various livelihood coping strategies		
		Poor food consumption	High hunger score (4-6)	High use of food coping strategies (score >20)
<b>Begging</b>	<b>2%</b>	57%	28%	70%
<b>Send household members to eat elsewhere</b>	<b>7%</b>	42%	21%	49%
<b>Sold last female animal</b>	<b>5%</b>	41%	5%	16%
<b>Gather wild food, hunt, or harvest immature crops</b>	<b>2%</b>	37%	16%	44%
<b>Withdrew children from school</b>	<b>2%</b>	33%	15%	41%
<b>Reduced health and education expenditure</b>	<b>27%</b>	32%	13%	32%
<b>Purchase food on credit</b>	<b>59%</b>	30%	9%	23%
<b>Borrowed money</b>	<b>51%</b>	28%	10%	23%
<b>Sold household asset</b>	<b>17%</b>	27%	12%	25%
<b>Spent savings</b>	<b>15%</b>	26%	10%	20%

## Markets in Yemen: main source of food greatly impaired

The impact of the ongoing conflict has been devastating for the country, aggravating an already deteriorating poor pre-conflict economic performance, with serious impacts on imports, transportation network and market supply. Since November 2016, the liquidity crisis and the restricted access to the Al-Hodaidah port further worsened the scarcity of essential commodities, such as foods and fuel, in Yemenis markets. The port accounts for 80 percent of imports to Yemen.

Thus, further damage to the port or continuation of import restrictions, will greatly limit the food availability in local markets and thereby trigger further price increases. The functioning of markets is particularly critical for the food security and livelihoods in Yemen. Around 95 percent of the national requirements of wheat, the main staple food is imported. The large majority of families are relying on markets as their main source of food both in the urban and rural context: overall, 90 percent of households indicated that they buy bread/wheat from markets, only three percent depend on own production.

Figure 6: Main source of bread



# What needs to be done?

*Yemen has been affected by a serious deterioration in the food security and nutrition situation leaving sixty percent of the population in food crisis or emergency. The potential inaccessibility of the import dependent country's main port could further worsen the humanitarian crisis. Without the appropriate response, lives in the most affected areas will be lost and the development gains made in previous years will be set back indefinitely. The EFSNA findings call for the entire humanitarian community to step up and act now:*

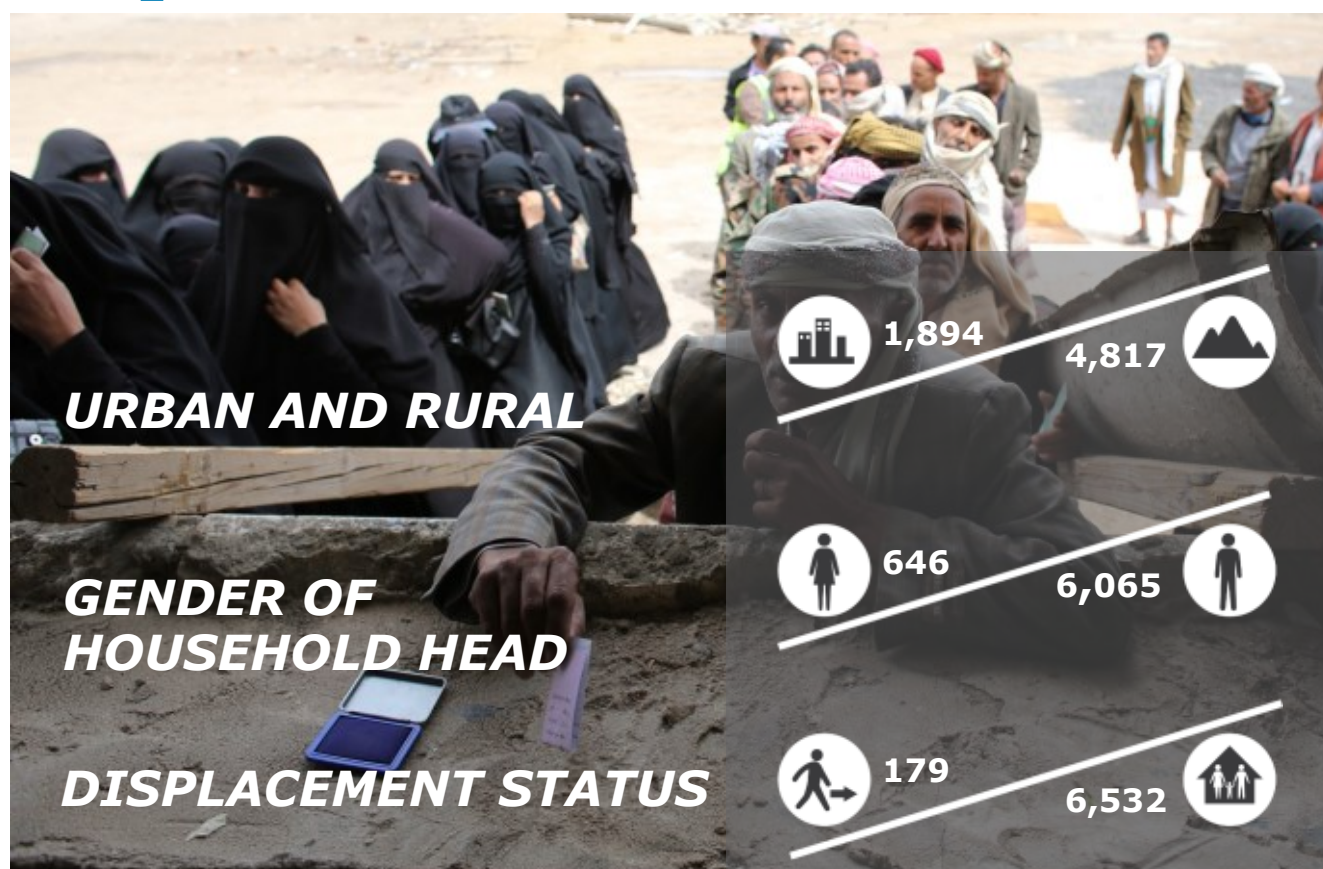
## ACTION POINTS

- Provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the food insecure population, including IDPs, to save lives and livelihoods. Special advocacy and lobbying for humanitarian access and support to those inaccessible districts is urgently required.
- Target humanitarian assistance in governorates with high severe food insecurity prevalence (above 20 percent in IPC Phase 4) and GAM rates above the emergency threshold (15 percent), followed by governorates with severe food insecurity prevalence and GAM rates at serious levels (10 to 15 percent). Support should also be provided in governorates with high food insecurity levels (in IPC Phase 3) that are at risk of deteriorating into emergency levels.
- Give special attention to certain districts and IDPs within the governorates where pockets of more severe food insecure populations may be present and masked by governorate level analysis.
- Prioritize the most vulnerable, i.e. children and women through preventive nutrition activities during the first 1,000 days “window of opportunity” to reduce long-term negative impacts of the crisis. In addition, strengthen treatment of moderate and severe acute malnutrition.
- Develop a prioritization strategy of assistance in case of funding shortfalls, accompanied with close monitoring of those in need but who had to be left out. Findings should be reported to all relevant stakeholders and used for advocacy campaigns.
- Monitor regularly food security and nutrition through the expansion of remote monitoring tools coupled with face-to-face surveys in hot spots and nutrition surveillance systems.
- Continue advocating for and implement the twin-track approach that consists in providing humanitarian assistance together with the implementation of activities that enhance resilience of livelihoods.

## Annex 1: Overview of food security trends (based on EFSNA Nov/Dec 2016 and CFSS March 2014)

Theme	Indicator		2016	2014	% change
<b>Food consumption and dietary diversity</b>	Food consumption	Poor	27%	19%	44%
		Borderline	37%	22%	67%
		Acceptable	37%	60%	-38%
	Application of food coping strategies	No coping (0)	38%	53%	-29%
		Low (1 to <5)	10%	8%	24%
		Medium (5 to 20)	35%	28%	25%
		High (>20)	17%	11%	55%
	% of households using various food coping strategies	Relied on less preferred/expensive food	55%	44%	24%
		Borrow food and rely on help	38%	25%	49%
		Limit portion size	43%	34%	28%
		Restrict consumption by adults	28%	22%	23%
		Reduce number of meals	26%	21%	21%
<b>Debt</b>	% of households indebted		83%	76%	9%
	% of households indebted for food		52%	34%	53%
<b>Hunger and perceived trends</b>	Household hunger over past 30 days	No food to eat because of lack of resources	49%	13%	278%
		Gone to sleep hungry	43%	14%	219%
		A whole day and night without eating	17%	6%	171%
	Household Hunger Score	No or little hunger in the household (0)	37%	79%	-53%
		Slight hunger in the household (1)	27%	8%	225%
		Moderate hunger in the household (2-3)	27%	10%	165%
		Severe hunger in the household (4-6)	9%	3%	240%

## People interviewed





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food security analysis



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