

YEMEN RESPONSE: MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

QUARTERLY UPDATE: OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2020

COVID-19 Amplifies Vulnerabilities of Yemenis

COVID-19 is seen to continue amplifying underlying vulnerabilities in Yemen. Though the extent of COVID-19 in Yemen remains unknown, research has highlighted the potential socio-economic impact of the virus, which has added to the country's existing challenges of conflict, economic collapse, hunger, disease, and displacement.¹

The humanitarian situation in Yemen continues to deteriorate and fighting continues to evolve in growing number of frontlines across the country. An estimated 24.1 million people out of the 29 million population of Yemen require some form of assistance. Among them 19.7 million person require some sort of health assistance, including mental health and psychosocial support.²



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In Yemen, an estimated one in five people suffer from mental health disorders, according to a 2017 study conducted by the Family Counselling and Development Foundation.³

In order to improve mental health and psychosocial well-being of the most vulnerable persons and reduce the ways in which they experience pain, distress or hardship, UNFPA supports a network of local organizations that operates at all levels of the IASC Intervention Pyramid for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergencies.

In the last quarter of 2020, such services remained active and accessible, while compliant with COVID-19 global prevention guidelines and best practices.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS OCT. - DEC. 2020

Specialized Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services

In the last quarter of 2020, UNFPA supported four local partners in running eight centres providing specialized mental health and psychosocial support services in Aden, Ibb, Hadramaut, Hajjah Sana'a and Taizz Governorates.

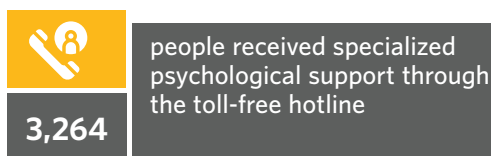
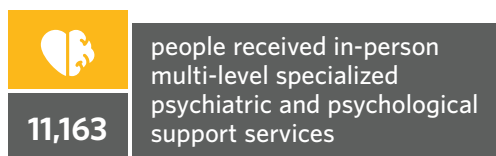
Psychiatrists and psychologists through this network assisted patients with psychiatric evaluation, psychotropic drugs, individual and group psychotherapy, and day and night emergency care.

¹ OCHA (2020), Yemen Humanitarian Update, Issue 12 / December 2020

² Health Cluster Yemen (2020), Health Cluster Bulletin, November 2020

³ <http://fcdy-ye.org/DocumentViewerEN.aspx?id=18>

For the period October to December 2020:



Psychosocial Services for Women and Girls

Focused, non-specialized services and community and family support is critical for reducing and mitigating harmful psychological effects of stressful and traumatic experiences in men, women, boys and girls who are in need of psychosocial support but don't necessarily require specialized services.

In this framework, safe spaces and safe shelters represent a core component of UNFPA programming in Yemen, providing quality, survivor-centered psychosocial support focused on healing, empowerment and recovery through a package of multi-sectorial services.

In the last quarter of 2020, despite COVID-19 related challenges, 51 women and girls' safe spaces and 8 safe shelters remained operational and continued to assist internally displaced, host communities and refugee communities, across 14 governorates with psychosocial support and other critical services.

From October to December 2020:



people assisted with focused, non-specialized psychosocial support services



people assisted through community and family psychosocial support services

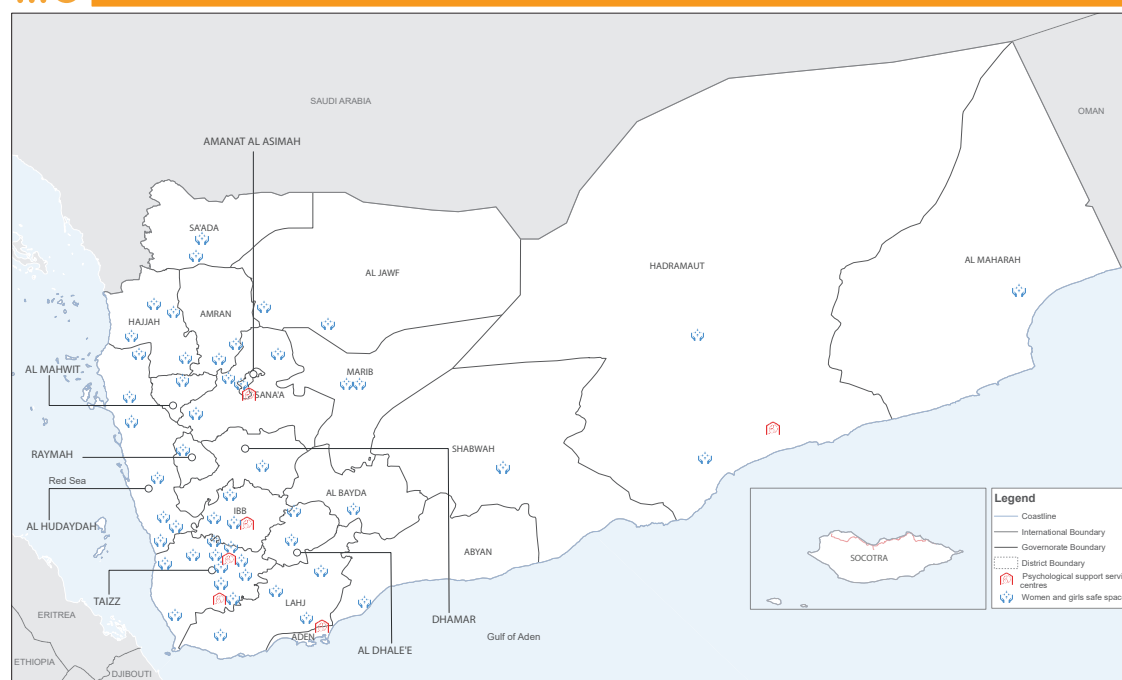


people assisted through toll-free tele-counselling hotlines



women and girls assisted with psychosocial support services at safe shelters

YEMEN: UNFPA Supported WGSS and PSS Centers 2020



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Creation date: 07/10/2020

Psychosocial Support through Mobile Teams and Outreach Activities

Some 172,000 persons (28,659 families) were newly displaced in Yemen during 2020, according to IOM reports. An estimated 82 per cent of displacement was due to conflict, while 13 per cent was as a result of natural disasters. The remaining five per cent were due to the declining economy and health conditions caused by the outbreak of COVID-19.⁴

Under these circumstances, most vulnerable individuals are at heightened risk of developing mental health disorders like depression and anxiety, including post-traumatic stress disorder.

In order to improve the well-being of the most vulnerable persons, UNFPA supports a network of mobile teams reaching out to displaced communities across the country and providing multi-sectoral services, including mental health and psychosocial support services. These services include psychological first aid, referral and awareness to promote well-being of displaced persons living in camps.



6,633

people were assisted with psychosocial support services through mobile teams

Technical Support for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Community in Yemen

In August, UNFPA Yemen deployed an international Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Specialist to assist the Country Office in providing technical support to MHPSS interventions across the country. In addition, the MHPSS Specialist is available to assist the broader MHPSS community with training, expertise and knowledge sharing.

In November, a stress management session for first responders was provided to 96 individuals from 70 organizations, who are members of the GBV Sub-Cluster. UNFPA is also a regular member of the MHPSS Technical Working Group in Yemen.

Helping to Close the Mental Health Services Gap

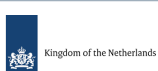


SANA'A, Yemen - Suad was forced to marry a cousin two decades earlier. She has lived a life of misery and pain at the hands of a physically and emotionally abusive husband. He made their children abandon their studies to work, and if they did not return home with money, he would imprison them in a room for days without food or water.

At her lowest, Suad contemplated killing her children before committing suicide. Before that could happen, her husband kicked her and the children out.

Emotionally scarred, she suffered from depression until she was persuaded by a woman in her village to call a tele-counseling hotline. Eventually she began to attend psychotherapy sessions, and after six months of treatment, she is set on the road to recovery.

Read more: [LINK](#)



⁴ UNHCR 2021, UNHCR Operational Update, Yemen, 7 January 2021