

The situation in Al-Hudaydah – one of the most impoverished governorates in Yemen – is further aggravated by the ongoing deadly conflict that erupted in mid-June. Many health facilities have either closed down or suspended their operations due to security concerns, and water and sanitation systems have been damaged, increasing the risk of waterborne diseases such as cholera. Electricity is unavailable in most areas, jeopardizing operations of health facilities and hospitals. Under the pressure of violence, high temperatures and spread of diseases, health needs remain dire.

While many people from Al-Hudaydah fled to neighbouring governorates, including Sana'a, Ibb and Dhamar governorates, others were forced to return to their homes and risk their lives as they were unable to cope with the cost of displacement. Their suffering is not only limited to poor living conditions, with many also enduring chronic diseases, such as kidney failure, diabetes, hypertension and cancer, as well as infectious diseases, including cholera.

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Sanad, 1 year, is diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition and receiving specialized treatment in the WHO-supported therapeutic feeding centre in Al-Thawra Hospital in Al-Hudaydah. Like most families, Sanad's mother struggles to buy medicines or pay for transportation to the hospital.

"I was advised to bring my child here to receive free treatment and formula milk. I cannot breastfeed him anymore as I am also suffering my malnutrition. My husband and I can't afford to treat him, especially after my husband lost his job due to this war," Sanad's mother said.

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While Al-Thawrah hospital in Al-Hudaydah continues to receive high numbers of patients and is considered the main referral hospital for health facilities and neighbouring governorates, the needs of the hospital are increasing. To ensure uninterrupted functionality, WHO provides fuel (50 000 litres per month), water, medicines, medical supplies and ambulances. Most patients coming to the hospital are very poor and cannot afford the minimal fees for medical consultations or laboratory tests. Many patients have been referred to the hospital by health facilities and centres in the city and other districts, and struggle to come up with the cost of transportation to the hospital.

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Mohammed Sagheer lives in a small and stuffy tin house in Al-Hali district of Hudaydah, one of the areas most affected by the cholera outbreak in the country. He lost two of his daughters to cholera, and he himself has been repeatedly infected with acute watery diarrhoea. In his neighbourhood, the water network and sanitation system are disrupted and people usually resort to unsafe water for drinking.

“We cannot afford to buy clean water to drink. Bread is the only thing we eat and sometimes we cannot even get that,” said Mohammed, who is also suffering from respiratory diseases.

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Two emergency mobile medical teams provide health services to IDPs in schools in Al-Hawak and Al Hali districts of Al-Hudaydah governorate. Deployed by WHO, each team consists of 5 personnel – a medical practitioner, vaccination specialist, pharmacist, nurse, and nutritionist. The teams are on the ground three times a week to provide primary health care services, including medical examinations, vaccination, as well as birth attendance. They also provide medicines, including for the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI). Cases in need of referral are transported to the nearest hospitals. The main health concerns prevalent in the designated areas are watery diarrhoea and skin inflammations.

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Abdul-Raheem, is one of more than 5000 cancer patients receiving medical care in the oncology centre in Hudaydah, which faces constant shortages in anti-cancer drugs and chemotherapy medications. Abdul-Raheem’s dejected mother says they sold off all belongings to be able to continue with the treatment of her son. “Now, we don’t have any choice but to borrow money to bring my child here. The treatment is free-of-charge but I desperately need money for transportation, medicines and lab testing.”

Despite the deadly violence in Hudaydah, the oncology centre in the city remains open to provide services for thousands of cancer patients but the centre’s officials say they might close

the centre if they don't receive the medications they need.

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The plight of patients with chronic diseases has been further exacerbated as a result of forced displacement. Abdullah Obaid, from war-torn Jabal Rass district in Al-Hudaydah, had to flee to Ibb governorate with his daughter suffering from renal failure. He has brought his daughter to the dialysis centre in Al-Thawrah Hospital in Ibb to receive regular sessions, but all beds in the centre were already fully occupied by patients, including IDPs from Taizz.

“I pleaded with the hospital’s management to find me a solution to save my daughter’s life,” said Abdullah. “The hospital then offered us dialysis sessions in the old building at night.”

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10-month-old Ghizlan is recovering from severe acute malnutrition in the WHO-supported therapeutic feeding centre in Al-Thawra Hospital in Al-Hudaydah. Despite security challenges and the recent attack on the hospital, the centre remained open to receive children with severe acute malnutrition with medical complications. Nowadays, the centre continues to work around the clock to provide specialized treatment for children in need.

“We never closed the doors of the centre even in the middle of intensive conflict. We’ve faced many scary moments but we stayed here to save the lives of the poor children,” said Samia Jurdi, one of the nurses at the centre.

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Cholera patients receive treatment in one of diarrhoea treatment centres in Al-Hali district of Al-Hudaydah, where cases, including lab-confirmed cases have recently increased. Most of these patients are deprived of proper sanitation services and unable to buy clean water. To prevent and control cholera, WHO is supporting diarrhoea treatment centres and oral rehydration corners in Al-Hudaydah with medicines, medical supplies and financial incentives for health workers to ensure uninterrupted health services for patients with cholera/ acute watery diarrhoea.

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9- Haneen, 10, fled with her family from Mabar district in Al-Hudaydah, where ground fighting erupted, and they are now living in one of schools in Hudaydah City. Despite harsh living conditions, Haneen shows remarkable resilience and spends her time playing with other displaced children.

“I cannot forget the scary sounds of bombings near our house, and I still dream about them. I’m happy that we could flee safely but I miss my home and want to return soon,” she said.

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