

Addressing the multidimensional needs of children in Yemen¹

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In Yemen, income poverty is estimated to be 85 per cent among children (UNICEF 2021). Meanwhile, millions of Yemeni children are facing a range of deprivations that cannot be described using the concept of monetary poverty alone. The severe and cumulative effects of a seven-year armed conflict on the economy and the social protection and healthcare sectors is the major factor contributing to children's vulnerability. In addition, the economic fallout resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and, more recently, the war in Ukraine, has exacerbated these vulnerabilities.

Social protection plays a crucial role in addressing children's multidimensional needs, but since the beginning of the conflict many public social protection programmes and services have been interrupted. However, there are many ongoing initiatives that cover children's needs. Given the humanitarian crisis, many of these initiatives are provided by international donors, United Nations agencies or civil society organisations and have a limited scope, with virtually no integration with each other.

The conflict in Yemen has contributed to deepening economic crises over time and led to infrastructure damage which affects not only the personal safety of children, but also limits their access to a range of basic public infrastructure and services. Affected sectors include healthcare, education, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), as well as food prices, jobs and economic activity. These factors have contributed to increased household food insecurity and malnutrition rates, which can lead to lingering consequences for child development. The conflict has also increased the risk of forced displacement, separation from families and guardians, and abuse and exploitation of girls and boys. Girls, children with disabilities, children living in rural areas, ethnic minorities such as the *Muhamasheen*, and internally displaced people, refugees, asylum-seekers and undocumented children are especially vulnerable groups and may face additional barriers to accessing basic children's rights. Against this background, the following recommendations were developed, focusing on social protection service delivery.

Short term:

- Build on existing initiatives that focus on coordination to reduce fragmentation of cash assistance; expand cash transfers and ensure predictability and adequacy of transfers; introduce child grant to enable children access to basic services.
- In-kind transfer programmes should provide menstrual hygiene items for poor girls.
- Strengthen child vaccination campaigns and systems, including through Cash Plus and case management approaches; scale-up the Disability Fund and strengthen coordination between the Fund and health service providers to improve provision of

healthcare services to children with disabilities; scale-up the Nutrition Voucher Scheme.

- Provide further incentives for children, especially girls, to enter or go back to school.
- Strengthen school-feeding programmes, especially in food insecure areas.
- Strengthen assistance to poor and shock-affected small-scale farmers, livestock producers and fishers.
- Provide social care services for orphans and unaccompanied children.
- Strengthen the provision of psychosocial services and civil registration campaigns, including via Cash Plus and case management approaches.

Medium and long term:

- Consolidate universal or quasi-universal coverage of children with child or family benefits.
- Provide education and training opportunities to school drop-outs who may need to work to earn a livelihood.
- Improve links between social protection and early warning systems.
- Cash transfers or water vouchers for families without easy access to clean and safe water.
- Assistance to poor internally-displaced households with children to fix housing infrastructure damaged by the conflict in areas with good potential to resume economic activities.
- Conduct assessments to inform the transfer value, duration and frequency of cash transfers and public employment programmes, to improve their effectiveness in reducing child labour and exploitation.
- Cash Plus initiatives should include communications on child labour and other child protection areas.
- Strengthen policies to rebuild infrastructure damaged by the conflict in Yemen: public lighting, safe streets and roads.

References:

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UNICEF. 2021. *Education Disrupted: Impact of the Conflict on Children's Education in Yemen*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund.

Note:

1. This *One Pager* is based on Andrade and Pereira (2022).