

It takes a village to save livelihoods and fight hunger

By Dr Hussein Gadain*

Yemen continues to face extreme hunger, with [figures released in March](#) this year showing that 17.4 million people needed food assistance. Projections are that the numbers increased to 19 million people needing food assistance, starting June this year.

As at the beginning of June, an estimated 161,000 people faced extreme hunger levels. Children, pregnant and lactating mothers are equally vulnerable. The same figures, released in March this year, show that approximately 2.2 million children under the age of five, and about 1.3 million pregnant and lactating women are projected to suffer from acute malnutrition over the course of 2022.

The conflict in Yemen has a debilitating effect on food and nutrition security in the country. Transportation of key agricultural inputs and produce has been disrupted by the conflict. At the same time, some smallholder farmers have been displaced. Ironically, the conflict largely affects local food producers who are the mainstay of the country's food and nutrition security.

The situation has been compounded by other external factors including the war in Ukraine, COVID-19 and climate change. Despite these seemingly unsurmountable challenges, FAO's work in Yemen has shown that agricultural production is possible and effective even in difficult crisis contexts.

This year's [World Humanitarian Day](#) echoes the need for collective action. The theme, "**It takes a village**", reminds us that our joint efforts are needed to overcome a plethora of challenges threatening to erode livelihoods and weaken food security and nutrition across the world.

At the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in [Yemen](#), we recognize ourselves as members of the metaphorical village, working with dedicated partners and the resilient rural communities we serve to ensure the continuity of agricultural production. We do so because we know that agriculture is an effective frontline humanitarian response—even in dark times.

FAO Yemen is currently implementing emergency, resilience, and development-focused interventions, with the generous support of the Central Emergency Response Fund, the European Union, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of the Netherlands and the World Bank. These ongoing interventions are primarily in support of small-scale farmers, pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and fisher folks whose food security and livelihoods continue to be heavily impacted by the ongoing conflict.

True to FAO's mantra of leaving no one behind, various activities are implemented to cushion Yemenis from the effects of the conflict, climate change and disruptions caused by the conflict. These activities, currently ongoing or carried out in the past, [improve the food security, nutrition](#) and resilience of vulnerable populations in Yemen

Some of the activities include supporting existing seed production institutions, establishing community-based seed production systems and promoting public-private-community partnerships for seed supply. This is aimed at boosting local food production.

Furthermore, FAO is implementing interventions to promote [sustainable water resources management](#) systems, [decentralized irrigation management schemes](#) and climate smart agriculture technologies and practices. Both surface and groundwater resources are scarce in Yemen and this scarcity often dents agricultural production and in some cases is a cause of conflict.

Additionally, FAO in Yemen promotes [sustainable livestock production](#) system through [mass vaccination](#), treatment against common diseases, strengthening animal health institutions and cost-effective livestock feeding systems to reduce livestock losses, improve production efficiency and household income generation. Our support for livestock farmers is premised on the fact that better livestock production improves family wellbeing and resilience.

As I round off, I would like to share what I experienced last week when I visited Lahj governorate. I spoke to local farmers, getting their expectations and experiences. I would say I witnessed first-hand humanitarian work in action. Through these interactions with the local farmers, I became more certain that humanitarian workers can only deliver because of the involvement of the local communities.

Today I wish to applaud all the humanitarian actors—from my FAO team, my colleagues in other organizations, our local partners, our resource partners and the inspiring Yemeni farmers and herders who nourish their communities and families. While your efforts and contributions may often go unseen, they are vital and are needed for this fight against acute hunger.

This year FAO in Yemen is seeking USD 50 million to reach 1.5 million vulnerable people and help to restore their agricultural production and create livelihoods opportunities in the face of an ever-increasing food and nutrition insecurity. So far, USD 28.8 million has been raised. Without urgent support to rural communities, the scale of the devastation in terms of hunger and lost livelihoods will be appalling. Urgent humanitarian action is needed on a massive scale to prevent that from happening.

Happy World Humanitarian Day

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