



# Save the Children's Response to the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen

An Update for Saint Rita Foundation for Children

April 2020

*Above: These two brothers were badly injured when an airstrike hit a wedding they were attending. One lost his right foot, the other suffered a badly broken leg. Since their family could not pay for medical treatment, Save the Children covered their hospital expenses and provided vital psychological support. Save the Children photo.*

## A Crisis like No Other

Children in Yemen are living through the largest and worst humanitarian disaster in the world today. Five years of ongoing conflict and economic decline has left millions of families displaced, and 80% of the population in need of humanitarian assistance—including more than 12 million children who are experiencing unprecedented suffering.

Air strikes and shelling have damaged or destroyed schools, health facilities and water and sanitation systems, leaving families without the most basic services. The results have been devastating. Twenty million people have been left without access to adequate healthcare. More than 2 million children are out of school and at risk of being recruited into armed groups and forced into early marriage. Reduced imports of food, fuel and other vital commodities have left more than half of all households—including 10 million children—without enough to eat and extremely vulnerable to malnutrition and life-threatening diseases such as cholera. More than 4.3 million people have been uprooted from their homes, including 2.4 million children.

The ongoing conflict has had a damaging impact on the mental health of countless children. According to a recent Save the Children survey, the constant psychological strain manifests itself in many ways. More than half of the more than 1,250 children (age 13-17) surveyed said they struggle with feelings of sadness and depression, with more than one in 10 feeling that way constantly. Around one in five said they are always afraid.

Despite the challenges, Save the Children teams are working around the clock to deliver

lifesaving aid to the most vulnerable children and their families, making sure they have enough food to eat, access to healthcare and education, and protection from violence. As the largest independent NGO in Yemen, we have reached 7.2 million people, including 3.7 million children, since the crisis began in 2015.

The results we achieve for children would not be possible without your generous support. Recently, however, the world has shifted dramatically as the COVID-19 pandemic spreads to every country in which we work. As such, this report includes updates on our pandemic activities taking place in Yemen, in real time.

## The Impact of Your Support at Work

The following overview provides details of our efforts in 2019 to reach vulnerable children with life-saving programming.



### Health & Nutrition staff reached more than 1 million children.

Our emergency health and nutrition programs provided maternal, newborn and child healthcare, communicable disease prevention and control, detection and treatment of acute malnutrition, and more. We taught new mothers how to feed their babies and coached them on breastfeeding. We set up safe water and sanitation systems to protect people from disease outbreaks.



### Food distributions reached 170,000 children

We distributed emergency food assistance through cash and food baskets so families had enough nutritious food to serve their children. Some families received temporary employment through cash for work in order to earn income to meet their food needs.





Cousins Rami\*, 15, and Waleed\*, 10, suffered life-changing injuries during two successive airstrikes near their home. (\* Names changed)

To escape fierce fighting in late 2018, Rami and his family left their hometown and went to stay with their grandfather in Hodeidah, Yemen. Shortly thereafter, during evening prayer at the mosque, the family of five heard warplanes and bombing overhead. “As we were about to leave the mosque, I heard the warplane and tried to hide,” says Rami.

During two successive airstrikes, however, Rami and his younger cousin, Waleed, suffered life-changing injuries. Rami was injured by shrapnel and lay on the ground, unable to move. His father searched for him and eventually found the injured child and took him to the health center. There, Rami received first aid and was referred to a hospital where he had a leg operation.

Save the Children paid for his operation, medicine and gave him a wheelchair. We also supported Rami through one month of physical rehabilitation. He can now feel and move his right leg, but not his left leg. Rami still needs an operation to remove fragments of shrapnel in his spine. Waleed suffered shrapnel in his head, hand and leg. Surgeons were not able to remove fragments from his brain.

“Before the war, we were safe and we went to school,” says Rami. “I used to work in our farm and water trees. Now we have lost everything, including security.”



### **Education staff reached more than 200,000 children**

Our education in emergency teams helped to quickly restore access to learning after schools were destroyed or taken over by armed groups. We repaired schools and set up temporary learning spaces. We provided essential teaching and learning materials. We integrated health and hygiene activities into the curriculum. We provided school bags and uniforms to more needy children.



### **Child Protection staff reached more than 90,000 children**

We provided individual and group-based mental health services to children in child-friendly spaces, where children can play, interact and relax with friends, and develop their cognitive skills. We trained teachers to support children's psychosocial well-being. In addition, we have begun to roll out a psychological intervention designed to support parents (adults over 18 years) experiencing distress and other common mental health conditions.

## **COVID-19: The Pandemic Reaches Yemen**

In early April, the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Yemen, and the likelihood of further spread is inevitable as the country is critically under-equipped to face this virus. Previous disease outbreaks, such as cholera, have demonstrated the country's vulnerability to infectious diseases. A Covid-19 outbreak will put a heavy strain on the country's damaged health infrastructures and have a devastating impact on civilians.

Save the Children is deeply concerned about the health and well-being of Yemini children who are particularly vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus because they lack adequate nutrition and access to clean water and soap. Schools have been closed and large gatherings banned. We are doing everything we can to stop the spread of the virus and have stepped up our own business continuity plans. We are training health workers on how to detect and treat COVID-19 as well as raising awareness of the virus through our health centers and community volunteers. We are distributing vital personal protective equipment to health facilities and hygiene kits to program beneficiaries. In addition, we are developing new program guidance for our staff on how to reduce person-to-person contact during food and non-food distributions, which typically result in large groups but can't be stopped due to the lifesaving necessity of these items.

Save the Children is mobilizing our full capabilities and knowledge in providing much-needed urgent support to the children and families in Yemen.

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Your support makes a tremendous impact on the lives of countless children. Save the Children remains grateful for your continued commitment and generosity. Thank you!