

Voices from Yemen: Cash and voucher project

The Yemenis have faced the worst catastrophe in their history because of nine years of war and even with the current truce. Thousands have died and millions have been plunged into poverty and disease. Most of the country's population of 29 million need urgent assistance, according to the United Nations, and 11.3 million are struggling to survive.

The suffering in Yemen is not just a story, but many voices telling one story. One of them is that of Ahmed Abu Asaad, a 55-year-old man from Sayun. Alongside his wife and six children, He also has a lasting disability that makes his life even harder.



Ahmed was working as a correspondent, but he retired in 2012 with a pension of no more than 45,000 YER, equivalent to \$28. This amount is not enough to pay water or electricity bills, let alone buy food or medicine or cover the costs of education for his children.

The country has faced years of violence and conflict that have caused a severe food shortage and a risk of starvation. The war and its economic impact have hurt the whole economy since 2014 and made life harder for families who are struggling to make ends meet and have few options to survive.

Ahmed depends on the help of charities in his area to get the basics for his family, but it is not enough, especially with his wife's sickness. He must take loans to buy what they need. Ahmed says: "My pension is not enough for even one person for half a day because of the exchange rate difference, the increase in the value of the riyal, and the higher prices of everything. What about a family of eight? We used to go to bed hungry and endure sickness and pain, and we hope for a day when we can eat and drink without debts or waiting for the people." "I never thought I would see a day when I would worry about not having food for my children; the war and its economic impacts made us fight to find food and other things we need to live, where we can't afford food or medicine anymore. And other things that used to be necessary are now too costly even for Yemenis who have an income".





There are many people like Ahmed in Yemen, Ahmed and his family's survival now depends entirely on what he can get from the people. And when Ahmed cannot bring food to the house, and there is no source of debt, the children often go to their bed hungry. Since the outbreak of the war in Yemen, the Yemeni economy and the local currency have deteriorated rapidly. The exchange rate of the riyal at the beginning of the war was about 205 riyals to the dollar, and it reached 1572 riyals to the dollar in the governorates located in southern Yemen and 503 in the governorates located in northern Yemen.

Unconditional cash relief

The situation has worsened because of rising food and basic commodity prices and loss of money and livelihoods - resulting from the conflict that erupted in the country. The Yemen Red Crescent and its partners are currently responding to the urgent needs of Ahmed and hundreds of thousands of others like him through the cash transfer program for humanitarian purposes. Those who suffer from extreme poverty receive unconditional cash transfers of up to 147,000 per month for an initial period of three months. In this regard, Ahmed says: "The unconditional cash assistance provided helped us reduce the debts that weigh on us and buy a motorcycle that facilitates my transportation." Ahmed and the like see in this cash assistance a real opportunity for life. It finally gives Ahmed some hope, to pay off his debts and secure food and medicine for a period.