

Inter-Agency Observation Mission: Marib Governorate

Mission: 15 January 2015 | Final Report | 27 January 2015

Background

In late August 2014, intermittent clashes in Al Jawf Governorate spread to neighbouring Majzar District of Marib Governorate. Fighting occurred between Al Houthis militants, Islah fighters and their tribal affiliates. No major clashes have been reported in Majzar since mid-September, when a tribally-mediated agreement came into force in Al Jawf. As of January 2015, Al Houthis affiliates controlled most of Majzar District, and tensions remained extremely high across Marib Governorate.

Early reports estimated that 300 families in Majzar had been displaced by the fighting; by October, these estimates had risen to nearly 1,200 families. Humanitarian partners provided one-off assistance (mainly food and NFIs) to all 1,200 families in October.

Mission objectives and locations

Humanitarian presence in Marib is extremely limited due to long-standing concerns about safety, including kidnapping. Marib's highly complex, tribal social structure also complicates efforts to obtain impartial, verified information.

By January, it was unclear how many people remained displaced (and why), and what conditions prevailed in conflict-affected areas.

An initiative was taken by The Humanitarian Forum Yemen (THFY) in cooperation with the WASH cluster to coordinate a meeting with the General Authority for Rural Water Supply Projects (GARWP) to discuss the possibilities of conducting a joint assessment to validate the need for WASH interventions. The need for validating the needs in the field was affirmed by other clusters, UN agencies & NGOs as well, who felt that discrepancies in the existing data, absence of reliable data & lack of access attributed to security issues, are the main impediments to responding effectively to the crisis & helping the people in need in Marib. As a result, these agencies showed interest in joining the venture, which ultimately took shape of a one-day Interagency Observation Mission. The mission had the following objectives:

- Clarify current displacement levels and identify remaining humanitarian needs (if any) of conflict-affected people;
- Estimate the impact of conflict in affected areas on key infrastructure (if any);
- Strengthen contacts with local partners and build networks in Marib that could be activated in the event of wider conflict.

Locations observed

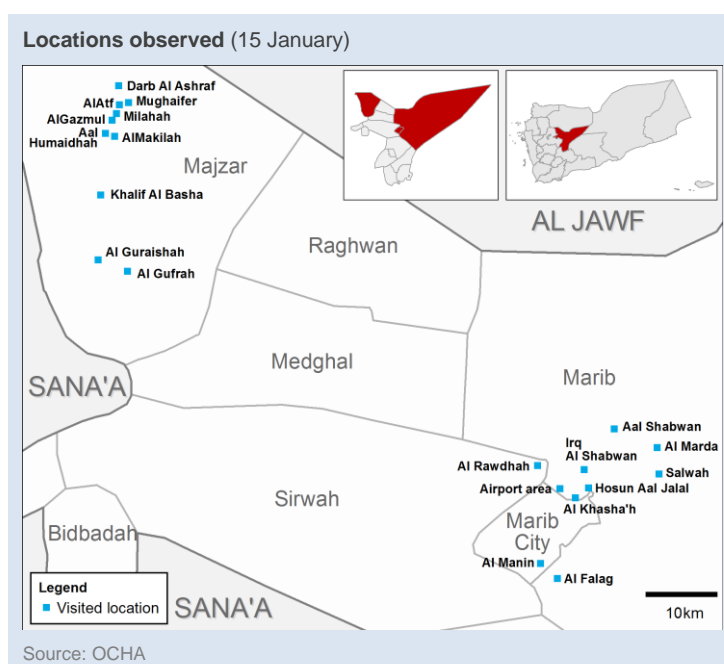
The mission visited 19 locations: nine in Majzar District, three in Marib City and seven in Marib District.

- **Majzar District:** Directly conflict-affected villages and areas of return
- **Marib City:** Areas of displacement (currently hosting IDPs)
- **Marib District:** Areas of displacement (currently hosting IDPs)

Findings and recommendations



Overview



- Needs of remaining IDPs in Marib City and Marib District are mostly being covered by a larger Qatar Charity programme. No major gaps were identified within this population, and no further action is required by partners.
- Observation teams identified a large number of refugees and migrants in Marib City and Marib District, many of whom are living in extremely precarious conditions. Programming recommendations for this group are summarized under “Protection”.
- Of nine visited locations in Majzar, teams identified pressing humanitarian needs in only two locations: Al ‘Atf and Al Humaidha. Programming recommendations for Majzar refer to these locations only.



Displacement and return

- Immediately following the August-September conflict in Majzar, partners estimate that 1,200 families were displaced. Most moved to safer areas within Majzar, stayed with relatives or friends, and returned home after fighting stopped. In Majzar District, observation teams confirmed that the vast majority of IDPs from Majzar have returned to their home areas. No remaining IDPs were identified.
- In Marib City and Marib District, observation teams identified 169 families from Majzar that remained displaced. These families are perceived to be Islah affiliates staying in Islah-controlled territory due to difficulties in returning to mostly Houth-controlled Majzar. Many males in these families reportedly took part in the conflict.



Food Security

Findings:

- IDPs in Marib City and Marib District are receiving food assistance as part of a larger Qatar Charity programme. No major gaps were identified.
- Returnees in Majzar District require additional food assistance. Although markets are open, many returnees have lost their source of income and are unable to purchase sufficient food. The Humanitarian Forum Yemen (THFY) is organizing follow-up food assistance.

Recommendations:

- No gaps exist in emergency food assistance, and no further action is required by partners.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Findings:

- IDPs in Marib City and Marib District are receiving WASH assistance as part of a larger Qatar Charity programme. No major gaps were identified.
- In Al ‘Atf and Al Humanida villages of Majzar district, returnees face serious difficulties in accessing safe drinking water. The hand pump serving these villages is not functioning. The closest safe water source is a well located 15-20 kilometres away, although a second well closer to the villages provides water suitable for washing. Yemen LNG (private company) is planning to repair the water pump and extend a water network to these areas.

Recommendations:

- GARWAP-EU should confirm the estimated completion date of pump repairs.
- Humanitarian partners should consider water trucking to these villages until repairs are completed or assess the quality of water from the closer well, and provide filters to make the water drinkable (if possible).



Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs)

Findings:

- IDPs in Marib City and Marib District have adequate emergency shelter. No major shelter gaps were identified. In Salwa Health center, five IDP families are occupying a health facility, and the facility was not

accepting patients. However, many health facilities in Marib do not function for reasons unrelated to the conflict, and it is not clear that this facility would be working without IDPs living in it.

- In Majzar, observation teams estimate that over half of private homes in X and X villages are damaged or destroyed. Houses in Majzar were constructed out of mud.
- Destroyed houses mainly appear to belong to IDPs living in Marib City and Marib District, and may have been destroyed due to their owners' perceived political affiliation or participation in conflict.
- Damaged houses belong mainly to returnees, who live in them despite damage. Some returnees have plastic sheeting received as part of earlier emergency response, but this is reportedly of poor quality.

Recommendations:

- Shelter partners should travel to Al 'Atf and Al Humaidha villages to conduct a more detailed assessment of shelter needs there. During the mission, they should distribute high-quality plastic sheeting to qualifying returnee families.



Health

Findings:

- General health services in Marib City and Marib District are reportedly available in line with their usual availability in these locations. IDPs have access to health services in similar proportion to regular residents of the area.
- No health services of any kind are reportedly available in Majzar District. The Majzar hospital was abandoned by health workers during the conflict, and subsequently used as a militant camp and attacked.
- IDPs and returnees (Marib City, Marib District and Majzar District) report that recent national immunization campaigns did not reach their children.

Recommendations:

- Health cluster partners should organize a mobile clinic to visit Majzar District, particularly Al 'Atf and Al Humaidha villages. The mobile clinic should include nutrition and reproductive health services, as well as primary health care.
- Partners should review immunization rates in visited areas and take necessary action.
- In the longer term, the Health Cluster should organize an assessment of Majzar Hospital and advocate necessary rehabilitation.



Protection

Findings:

- Observation teams encountered a large number of migrants and refugees in Marib City and Marib District. Many were living in unsanitary conditions. Tensions reportedly exist between these groups and local residents. Many migrants are attempting to reach Saudi Arabia and only in transit, while others have chosen to remain in Marib to work.
- Observation teams in all locations report that the surrounding environment is largely free from dangerous or unsanitary debris. No evidence of mines or other explosive remnants of war was identified.
- Children are reportedly scared to attend school in some locations due to past conflict. Teachers in some cases were also observed carrying machine guns.

Recommendations:

- Partners from the Multi-Sector Cluster for Refugees and Migrants or Protection Cluster should conduct a more detailed assessment focusing on the immediate needs of refugees and migrants in Marib City and Marib District.
- Child Protection and Education partners should work with the Ministry of Education to discourage teachers from bearing arms in class. Partners may also wish to advocate child-friendly spaces.



Education

Finding:

- Schools are open and functioning in all locations. Limited damage to a school was observed in one location in Majzar District: Al 'Atf.

Recommendation:

- Education partners should conduct a more detailed assessment of the damaged school in Al 'Atf and take appropriate action.



Safe Humanitarian Operations

Findings:

- Check points number where more than normal.
- Observation teams in all locations reported that local residents were welcoming toward them.
- Marib Governorate is accessible with careful planning.

Recommendations:

- Partners who wish to organize assessments in Marib should contact THFY.

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Annex :

Methodology

In the preliminary meeting held between THFY, GARWP & WASH cluster in the first week of January 2015, it was agreed to conduct an assessment of the humanitarian needs in the Majzar district of Marib governorate. Other agencies (NFI and Shelter Cluster, Protection Cluster, OCHA, YRC) showed interest in the initiative and an interagency meeting was organised to discuss the assessment in more detail. During the meeting, it was agreed to modify and use the assessment form of the GARWP developed in coordination with the WASH cluster. Also, two Technical Working Groups (namely The Methodology Development Working Group & The Technical Working Group for Developing the Action plan for the Assessment) were formed as an outcome of this meeting.

The Methodology Development Working Group agreed that the assessment would focus on the WASH and shelter needs of the IDPs and developed a modified version of the assessment form of the GARWP. It was also agreed that if during the assessment the need for reconstruction / rehabilitation of dwellings or infrastructure was identified, the assessment would make recommendations to conduct a deeper technical assessment.

However, The Technical Working Group for Developing the Action Plan for the Assessment received information that the returnees in Marib were suffering more than the IDPs. Therefore, in light of the new information and in consideration of security issues, the group agreed to conduct the assessment by observation only.

Accordingly, a one day Interagency Observation Mission to Marib was organised. Two teams were deployed: one team to Majzar and the other team for Marib district (Al Wadi and Madina). The team to Majzar comprised of four persons (2 representatives of GARWP, 1 representative of THFY and 1 representative of the YRC). The team to Marib district comprised of three persons (1 representative of GARWP, 1 representative of THFY and 1 representative of the YRC). Teams included Marib and Sana'a based staff.

Agreed observation checklists, including several open-ended de-brief questions for discussion after teams returned to Sana'a, were developed for the mission and the teams provided an orientation on using the checklists. The methodology allowed teams to ensure a basic continuity in what was observed in all locations while maintaining a low profile.

The purpose of the assessment was to highlight immediate areas for response, as well as point to areas that require further investigation. A secondary goal was to improve overall understanding of and networks in Marib, given ongoing potential for conflict there.

Mission participants and roles

Mission participants included Sana'a- and Marib-based staff of GARWAP-EU, Yemen Red Crescent Society (YRCS) and The Humanitarian Forum Yemen (THFY). Additional support in coordinating the mission and designing the assessment was provided by OCHA, the Protection, NFI's & Shelter and WASH Clusters. It was agreed that the agencies participating in the mission would cover the costs of their representatives as well as other field logistics. Overall, following roles were agreed upon by the various agencies:

Agency	Role
THFY	Leading & Coordinating the assessment including compiling the assessment report and presenting the findings, planning for the deeper assessment, nominating persons for the deeper assessment, training the assessment team, participate in the field teams through its members.
OCHA	Supporting: Designing the assessment, Orienting the field teams, Compiling the assessment report and planning for the deeper

GARWP	assessment, Participate in the Field Team and covering the transportation for the team's car in Majzar during the mission. Also participating the deeper assessment.
YRC	Participate in the Field Teams, Nominate persons for the team for the deep assessment.
WASH Cluster	Training the team for the deeper assessment
Protection and NFI's Shelter Cluster	Additional Support, and covering the transportation for the team's car in Marib Almadina and Alwadi.