

Hope Lang
Columbia City High School
Columbia City, IN, USA
Yemen, Foreign Aid

Foreign Assistance to Alleviate Conflict-Based Struggles in Yemen

Conflict brings almost all problems affecting the world's populations to a single culminating point. Countries suffering from conflict, whether internally or indirectly, face many conflict-based impacts, including increased environmental strain, food insecurity, water inaccessibility, and displacement.

One of the many examples of countries distraught with conflict is Yemen, a country in the Middle East between Oman and Saudi Arabia (Yemen - The World Factbook). The effects of the current conflict reach Yemen's bordering countries as well, meaning a vast amount of people are struggling to survive with the ever-present conflict. This conflict is one that many people have heard of but have little involvement, monetary or otherwise, in. But it encompasses a huge humanitarian crisis that has left 16.2 million Yemenis food insecure (Yemen Emergency: World Food Programme).

The climate in most of Yemen is arid desert with some hot and humid areas along the west coast and temperate areas in the western mountains that often face seasonal typhoons (Yemen - The World Factbook). The harsh desert environment in the east adds difficulty for farming families, as arid climates often complicate agriculture. In times of conflict, agricultural land is difficult to maintain, as farms are often destroyed as a direct result of armed warfare and the shift to urban areas means fewer rural farm workers. In 2018, Yemen's farmland was reported as 44.5 percent of the total land area, but with the current conflict, this cannot be fully utilized (Yemen - The World Factbook). 62% of existing farms consist of under two hectares (Yemen). For comparison, this is almost 4 football fields. While exports are largely halted as well, 2019's main exports included crude petroleum, gold, fish, industrial chemical liquids, and scrap iron.

And conflict turns blind eyes away from the population involved. Yemen has a population of 30,399,243 people with a growing urban percentage of 38.5 percent of Yemenis (Yemen - The World Factbook).

Yemen, much like the United States, has a government headed by a president with 7 year terms under the constitution. However, Yemen, facing unpredicted circumstances, currently lacks a steady government. Under usual circumstances, the president would also nominate members of the Consultative Council and the House of Representatives. Due to the war, this election has not yet taken place (Yemen: Freedom in the World 2021 Country Report).

A typical family in Yemen is largely affected by the overwhelming circumstances surrounding the current conflict. The average family consists of 7 to 8 members and around 3 members share a room (Taylor and Holtrop). Housing is less than ideal for families, especially those with young children, and is considered inadequate. About a fourth of urban housing consists of huts, tents, and similar buildings (Yemen - Housing). Displacement is common in the current extreme conditions and houses are often destroyed, leaving families without shelter and unsure of their next steps.

A family diet often includes cereal grains daily and very few to no staple foods like fish, meat and eggs. More food secure households simply introduce staples like vegetables, fruits, and meat, but, especially with the current state, these are rarely seen in diets (The State of Food Security and Nutrition in Yemen). Nearly a third of families have major gaps in diets (Yemen Emergency: World Food Programme). This is partially due to the previous dependence on imported foods. With the rarity of imports due to the war and blockade, food is scarce (Alles).

Most careers are in agriculture, trade, and the informal sector (Flynn). The average monthly salary is 718 US dollars (Salaries in Yemen). Conflict has disturbed the education of 2.4 million students. Female inequality is also a major problem, as girls have a much harder time getting an education (Yemen: Global Partnership for Education). But much more concerning is the current state of health care access. Only 51% of health facilities are up and running, leaving many uncertain of what to do in the face of an injury or illness. With COVID-19 remaining a major problem, this only exacerbates the situation. Less than half of births are overseen by health workers and 20.1 million lack access to basic healthcare (Access to health care and medical facilities - Yemen).

Other problems facing the country include clean water, toilets, electricity, telephones, roads and local markets. Less than 55% of the population has access to clean water and life-threatening diseases related to poor sanitation spread daily. 2018 brought the largest malaria outbreak in modern history to Yemen (Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation: UNDP in Yemen). Wartime has brought major losses to the telecommunication sector as well, totaling 4.1 billion USD (Impacts of the war on the telecommunications sector in Yemen). Telephone prices are up and family access to a telephone is highly uncommon. Roads are another infrastructure majorly impacted by the conflict. Only a fourth of Yemen's rural households live with two kilometers of paved roads (Paving Yemen's treacherous roads).

While the conflict impacts so many Yemenis, it's vital that other countries contribute much-needed humanitarian aid. Perhaps the best way to aid those in need is to contribute directly to the need for food through agriculture. Yemen's farmland, along with so many other infrastructures, is currently suffering and unable to feed the large population. In fact, 257,000 hectares of cropland are currently in distress (Report: Yemen's Agriculture in Distress). This is worsened by direct attacks on crops and agricultural establishments, displacement to urban areas, lack of water outputs, and inability to respond to extreme weather and pests (Report: Yemen's Agriculture in Distress).

Urban displacement is one of the most publicized impacts. As nearly 70% of conflict occurs in rural areas, it is safer for families to move to urban areas with other benefits including increased access to basic services like food, water, markets, and education (Yemen - Urban Displacement in a Rural Society). Of course, this has a negative impact on rural farms, as they are left uncared-for and cannot produce the yield they would have, causing more food insecurity.

As most challenges do, the conflict affects different groups in different ways. Children are perhaps the most devastating group affected. Conflict largely disrupts education, as well as hunger, water shortage, and its other impacts. But much more concerning is the large number of children directly struck by the conflict. Over 10,000 children have been killed or maimed over the course of the Yemeni civil war (Yemen crisis). Women are also directly impacted in many ways. Gender violence and women's education

are ignored and brushed off as a less important problem than the conflict at hand, so the state of both has worsened. Mothers face terrible circumstances, often having to give birth without supervision from a medical expert. 1.1 pregnant or new mothers are acutely malnourished, leaving the new or not yet born children without nutrients needed for proper growth (4 ways the war in Yemen has impacted women and girls). The elderly are also more likely to be left behind when families flee from direct conflict due to the disadvantage that comes with age and increasing disability.

The current problems can also hit marginalized populations harder. The Muhamasheen, a particular ethnic group believed to descend African slaves brought to Yemen in the sixteenth century, face particularly difficult living situations. The conflict only adds to the previous harshness from discrimination. Unemployment strikes these individuals, leaving many unsure of their next steps after being displaced from their previous homes. The displacement affects not only the Muhamasheen, however, as 172,000 were displaced in 2020 alone (Beuze).

Moreover, conflict brings environmental strain. War debris as well as many of the remaining impacts not only has a direct impact on the people of the land but the land itself. Sustainable agriculture and the ecosystem struggle to survive in the face of local carbon emissions from Yemen and its surrounding countries as well as debris and other direct war impacts.

It is difficult for external countries to put an end to conflict but simpler to provide foreign aid to help those affected and improve the quality of life. The first barrier facing a potential foreign aid program is just that - a physical barrier and blockade. Complicated programs, such as improved housing or greenhouses for more war-resistant agriculture would be nearly impossible to implicate with the barriers facing them.

While optimism could argue the conflict could end at any time, tension is still high and a soon end seems unlikely. While rebuilding systems like terrace farming and irrigation or infrastructural systems could help the post-war economy, I believe the more pressing issue is to feed the people now, as the conflict rages on.

With complex and post-war solutions posing difficulties, it's clear that a simpler, more direct approach is a necessary path to take when considering foreign aid. The problem of hunger and distress on farmland due to direct attacks can be alleviated by implementing a foreign aid project that delivers care packages consisting of items like seeds, canned goods, bottled water, and a written letter with instructions on proper seed usage. Seed selection is vital to the process. Recent research by Texas A&M University shows that some crops are more suitable for conflict-filled environments than others. These efficient crops, coined conflict-resilient crops, are often hard to find, compact, and less expensive. For these reasons, they're more likely to withstand direct attacks or theft (Conflict Resistant Crops). Some examples include cowpeas, peanuts, and root crops.

It is also important to consider the environmental impact of the project. The care packages would be enclosed only in environmentally healthy, biodegradable packaging. This ensures that the project would not exacerbate the current environmental crisis. The project is, this way, certain to ensure a long-term solution to hunger and comfort for the current moment without being environmentally toxic.

The implementation plan begins with funding, stakeholders, and social media. The main stakeholders include the World Food Programme and the United Nations. The project would be led by the United Nations, as one of the Sustainable Development Goals they focus on is to reduce world hunger to zero (The 17 goals | sustainable development). The project would also begin the reach toward similar goals such as quality education and gender equality, as these are problems intensified by the problem of hunger, as hunger is an obstacle in the way of advocating for one's education and equal rights. The main role of the United Nations would be to manage the project, including its funding, marketing, delivery, and other aspects, and do part of the marketing due to its large, widespread following. They would be in charge of delivering the care packages to Yemen due to their establishment in most countries. The World Food Programme would be largely involved in the marketing and fundraising, due to their established website and similar projects.

Social media could likely have a major role in the funding as well. Many Tiktok and Instagram influencers have been using their platforms to make a positive impact in the world, and upon request and heavy marketing campaigns by the World Food Programme and United Nations, they would likely share the program through social media to make a positive change. Indirect marketing such as this is highly impactful because small, individual donors can add up to make all the change, especially in less expensive individually-based projects such as this. Of course, for marketing to bring donations and really have an impact on possible donors, marketing must be done well. With emphasis on the statistics on hunger and conflict-based fatalities, many are likely to show their sympathy through donations. More developed countries like the United States would be the target for the social media campaigns and funding, as for families with a large income in developed countries, a few dollars would be a reasonable donation and would likely cover most of the cost of one care package. Morality and human goodness/ willingness to donate to a good cause is clearly crucial to the funding process.

It's important to mirror other successful social media fundraising campaigns in order to raise the most money possible and get the United States more involved in Yemen's difficulties. Charity Water is just one example of highly successful social media fundraising. This was one of the first organizations to push for their supporters to begin "birthday fundraisers," where their followers would gift them with a donation to the cause rather than a physical gift ([donorbox](#)). Similar techniques could be used for the Yemen project.

Once funding has begun, the next step is finding Yemenis who are deeply in need of the gift and will accept the donation. A short survey would be required for those in need, slightly for proof of need but mostly for proof of acceptance of the gift. For some, donations like the care packages would result in wounded pride and it's important to understand that this gift would not be culturally accepted by all.

Assistance filling out the survey, as well as education about the project, including efficient farming practices, would be offered at local universities. A strong sense of community is necessary to make this project successful. Professors and otherwise educated and experienced individuals would need to be willing to assist and help the less fortunate, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or social class. The matter of those assisting being locals is also very important, as Yemenis would likely have a better understanding of the culture and increased sensitivity toward those who were unable to have a perfect education or have

lost a lot in the conflict. This education offered at universities would help to educate the less fortunate and instill a stronger sense of community and some comfort in the difficult situation.

Many countries face the problem of conflict and the food insecurity caused by it. Positive contributions to Yemen's wartime environment are the first step to a more food-secure, conflict-resilient world.

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