Yemen Humanitarian Health Intervention for Food Water and Malnutrition

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Introduction

The ongoing conflict in Yemen has pushed the country into an economic, social and institutional breakdown. The continued war has rendered 18.8 million civilians in dire need of humanitarian assistance. Out of these 18.8 million people, 7 million people lack food security, and about 8 million people have no access to clean water and sanitation. About 3.3 million people, including pregnant women, nursing women and children, are suffering from severe acute malnutrition ("Yemen | World Food Programme," n.d.). An analysis by Health Cluster shows that infectious diseases, such as perinatal, maternal, and nutritional conditions, are the main cause of preventable deaths in Yemen. They account for about 50% of the total deaths in this war period. The country is facing the world's worst food insecurity crisis, and if this man-made calamity is not addressed with urgent man-made solutions, the situation can get even worse. Several steps have been taken by the world communities to alleviate the crisis, but the conditions have not improved, which calls for further interventions to completely tackle the situation ("WHO | Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan 2017," n.d.).

Yemen was among the poorest countries in the Arab world even before the conflict in 2015. A great number of children were stunted, and the average life expectancy was less than 64. The conflicts in the previous decade made the bad food, water and nutritional crisis even worse. The blockade denied any access to humanitarian assistance, which threatened the lives of millions of people, including women and children. To deprive a great number of people of the provisions that are necessary for survival is an immoral act and also a violation of humanitarian law ("WHO | UN leaders appeal for an immediate lifting of the humanitarian blockade in Yemen – lives of millions are at risk," n.d.). Research by a group of scholars revealed the positive connection between food security and the levels of conflict. The research also showed that food security also deteriorated in the areas that were not exposed to the conflict due to a large influx of internally displaced people (Breisinger et al., 2014).

WASH, FSL, And CMAM

Several international institutions and NGOs have employed several strategies to provide medicine, water and food to the war-torn people. Different strategies had different success rates in improving the nutritional status of the crisis-affected people of Yemen. The most notable strategy is the

integration of WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), FSL (Food Security and Livelihood), and CMAM (Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition) programs to improve the water, food and malnutrition situation in Yemen. The aid agencies that operate under the recent restraints of political reform and continuing war should adopt an integrated set of interventions containing these programs all over Yemen to address the food security, nutrition and livelihood situation in the country (Breisinger et al., 2014).

Such a strategy was used by an organization named Action Against Hunger, ACF International, in which the targeted beneficiaries were children below five and pregnant and lactating women ("ACF-2014-Yemen," n.d.). The organization identified the beneficiaries. The organization operated in nine districts of Yemen. In its operating area, each child was examined and sent to the TFP to be treated for malnutrition if he/she met the criteria of the beneficiary for the target. The organization targeted the communities that had very little or no access to potable water but had a potential for water source restoration under WASH. The communities that had the highest number of stunted children below the age of five were given priority. Moreover, the organization gave priority to providing food to the villages where access to livelihoods was compromised during the hunger period and where the hunger gap reinforced the suffering of people from acute food scarcity. Priority in supplying food was given to those households that were headed by a female member.

The strategies based on these programs are long-term and can lead to food and water security without exhausting the resources. The organizations set criteria to select target beneficiaries and provide food and water for them. The beneficiaries can be targeted actively and effectively by the three programs. The organizations can select the weakest households based on criteria such as containing pregnant and breastfeeding women, the number of children, the household headed by a female, the household headed by a disabled, elderly, or chronically ill person, and the household with no capital assets. The aid agencies can improve the food and nutritional conditions of the people of Yemen by using this strategy over a decade or two. The strategy was employed by Action Against Hunger, ACF International, which effectively helped in improving the condition of about 2,202 households so far. ACF International also carried out this strategy to improve the food and water conditions in several districts of Sindh, a province of Pakistan. The strategy helped the organization in curing 136,104 in four districts. One million one hundred seven thousand sixty-four children under the age of five were screened in the program. At present, 10,444 MAM (Moderately Acute Malnourished) and 5,624 SAM (Severely Acute Malnourished) are being treated in the targeted districts ("www.wins.org.pk.zip," n.d.).

Improving Agriculture

The agricultural sector of Yemen is greatly restrained by diminishing water resources, and the conflicts further inflicted great increases in the prices of fertilizers, fuel and transportation costs. Access to markets is also restricted because of the decreasing demand and insecurity due to the lessening purchasing power of the customers. Crop, fishery and livestock production has drastically

decreased in the areas of continued conflict. About 83% of agricultural production has decreased due to a lack of fertilizers and water ("Yemen – Food Security and Nutrition Assessment (EFSNA), June 2017," n.d.). If the worsening conditions of agriculture in Yemen are improved, they can contribute to improving the food insecurity that the country is facing. The European Union (EU) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have initiated joint efforts to address the alarming situation of agriculture in Yemen. The European Union has allocated 12 million euros to improve the food conditions in Yemen. The funds will be utilized to spread awareness about the deteriorating food security while providing instant agricultural support to speedily increase food production ("EU and FAO team up to address alarming food insecurity in Yemen," n.d.).

Agriculture plays an important role in food security in Yemen, especially in the rural areas of the country. The EU's aid will provide considerable relief to the distressingly extraordinary levels of malnutrition. The funds will be utilized to collect analytical data about food security, which will help the authorities in taking action to prevent further deterioration in the situation and give early warning about any emerging crisis ("EU and FAO team up to address alarming food insecurity in Yemen," n.d.). The EU's contribution will also help the farmers and herders in increasing the quality of agricultural production. The farmers will also be taught about efficient irrigation systems, which will help in lessening the risks of drought, water scarcity, and climate change. The funds will also be spent to install solar pumps that will provide power to the farming households that are suffering fuel shortages to supply water. Hopefully, the EU's grant will lead to greater food security for a long time, as it did in Zambia. In 2014, the EU and FAO teamed up with the Zambian Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. They initiated the Conservation Agriculture Scaling Up (CASU) project to improve food security and nutrition and reduce hunger. The total cost of the project was 11 million Euros, and it benefited twenty-one thousand farmers, who, in turn, will teach the other farmers ("10 years of EU and FAO joint work on agriculture and food security," n.d.).

World Food Programme (WFP)

In October 2015, the World Food Programme (WFP) launched an Emergency Operation (EMOP) in response to the growing conflict in the country ("UN World Food Programme (WFP)," n.d.). The WFP's operation focused on saving lives by supplying food to the war-torn and starving people of Yemen. The Emergency Operation concentrated on delivering aid with food and market-based interventions, such as cash and voucher transfers. The operation aims to provide nutrition support to children and pregnant and breastfeeding women who are suffering from malnutrition (Marslen and Lehane, 2015). In March 2017, an Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) issued a report which revealed an alarmingly worsening food security in Yemen. The report has also shown that the number of people lacking food security has jumped from 14 to 17 million in the second half of 2016 ("IPCInfo", n.d.). In November 2016, another such report by Emergency Food Security and Nutrition Assessment (EFSNA) revealed the same information and, based on the information provided by these reports, WFP expanded its activities in the country to tackle the situation ("Yemen – Food Security and Nutrition Assessment (EFSNA), June 2017," n.d.). By mid-2017, WFP had provided food to more than seven

million individuals (“UN World Food Programme (WFP),” n.d.).

The World Food Programme, along with its partners, is struggling to avert a slide into famine. WFP also performs Special Operations (SO) to make sure the needed services are available to the whole charitable community (“UN World Food Programme (WFP),” n.d.). WFP supplies inter-agency shipments to the conflict-affected country and delivers fuel for the activities of humanitarian communities on behalf of Logistics and Emergency Telecommunications Clusters. WFP reaches about twice the number of people every month, but it is facing financial restraints, due to which only half of the people get the complete amount of food. WFP has also given its services in Bangladesh, where it has helped more than 155 million susceptible people so far by teaming up with the Government in 1974 (“Bangladesh | World Food Programme,” n.d.).

Conclusion

Yemen has been suffering from different conflicts for the last two decades, due to which the quality of life of its citizens has worsened to the level where 50% of the total deaths are due to the lack of food, water, sanitation and proper nourishment. To alleviate these conditions, several governments, non-governmental and international organizations have stepped in. The organizations use a particular methodology to provide for the weak and hungry individuals in Yemen.

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