

YEMEN PRIVATE SECTOR RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen remains the worst in the world, driven by five years of conflict, economic collapse and the breakdown of public institutions and services. This is worsening the food insecurity in Yemen, curtailing people's access to food and health services, disrupting livelihoods, reducing incomes, and leading to high prices of food and non-food commodities¹. The outbreak of COVID-19 in the current situation in over 200 countries has created unprecedented challenges and threats to the world. Yemen's ability to fight the spread of COVID-19 is likely limited, given the already weakened public health system and limited resources². Different reports and studies have stated that only 51% of health centers in Yemen are fully functional with very limited equipment and medical resources. Moreover, the years of conflict have left the country's infrastructure devastated, with major overland routes, sea- and airports severely damaged, causing severe shortage to provide and import medical supplies and equipment needed for the health facilities and medical manufactures³.

In mid of June, 2020, Yemen declared more than 800 cases and 200 deaths sending panic all over the country of a spread. However, there is a high chance that the figures are much higher considering the shortage in testing facilities and kits in all the Yemeni cities. In addition, Aden has been declared an 'infested' city with rising deaths from several diseases including Malaria and Chikungunya, hence a collective effort of supporting all health care providers; both public and private is necessary. The Yemeni Private Sector was amongst the first responders to these threats setting initiatives in place for preparedness and response, supporting health facilities and workers, affected families, families in need, stranded Yemenis in bordering countries and others. These included:

1. HSA Led-Initiative

One of the biggest private sector entities in Yemen, HSA - (Hayel Saeed Group) launched an initiative under 'The international initiative to overcome COVID-19 in Yemen'. This initiative was launched as a private sector initiative to compliment the efforts of local authorities and international partners in having a preparedness and response plan to overcome the spread of

¹ Yemen Humanitarian Update (OCHA), Issue 03 / March 2020

² Yemen Monthly Economic Update (World Bank Group), Issue February 2020

³ COVID-19 Impact on Yemen – update (acaps) Risk Report – 8 April 2020

COVID-19. The purpose of the initiative is to have collaborative efforts in supporting the procurement of essential medical supplies, support the ongoing efforts in preparedness and response and support other private sector initiatives such as investments in clinical and scientific resources and communication. Main challenges in achieving the set goals were those related to importing these supplies to the country and other raw materials by the private sector needed to produce hygiene materials and other medical supplies.

Therefore, HSA group and YPSC members coordinated with WHO and WFP in April, 2020 to discuss the possible logistic support of WHO in importing these equipment's for the health authorities in Yemen. WHO welcomed the positive initiative and agreed to collaborate and facilitate the equipment's access through UNHAS flights and UN Cargo shipment. So far, three shipments with medical items and equipment from the initiative have arrived, bringing in 43 tons of medical supplies including ventilators & PPE suits. The initiative has not only worked to equip the health facilities and workers with the tools and equipment needed to serve the patients (e.g. test kits, ventilators, PPE, etc.) but also worked to cover the salaries of the front-line health workers in the isolation units and continues to collaborate the efforts of private sector in responding to COVID19.

2. Private Sector Led-Initiatives

In addition to the HSA initiative, the Yemeni private sector in Yemen and outside contributed in several activities to respond to the threats and effects of COVID-19 from the beginning of the crisis, and are still ongoing. In Aden, after it has been affected from the flood in April and declared to be an 'infested' city with rising deaths from several diseases including Malaria, Chikungunya, COVID-19 and others, the private sector stepped in providing all needed support for the affected people and health facilities. As an example, the chamber of commerce in Aden established an emergency fund where the YPSC members and the private sector contributed to support health facilities and isolation units with the immediate medical requirements and tools (e.g. PPE). In addition, providing shelter kits for families affected from the floods, conducting streets sterilization in some of the districts and other activities that are in plan.

On the other hand, several commercial groups contributed through their charitable foundations, including Hayel Saeed Group association, which allocated more than \$1 million to restore and rehabilitate the roads, corridors and drainage channels that were damaged from the flood. With all the restrictions, the private sector including Hayel Saeed Group association carried out its activities through its associations. In addition, other groups including Al-Naqeeb Group, Bin Awad and Aden Exchange, Shammakh Group, Bajarsh Group, and others also contributed to support families affected from the flood, that had lost their houses, with cash relief reaches to \$1,000 per family.

The Yemeni Business diaspora abroad also supported in launching an initiative named 'Aden Charitable Oven', providing 19,500 individuals in Aden, Abyan and Lahj with daily food with daily expenses of \$35,000. Moreover, others such as HSA Group, Al-Kabous Group and Bazraa Group



supported the stranded Yemenis in bordering countries (Jordan, Egypt, etc..) with cash relief through the Yemeni embassies and currently are working to establish and equip shelters in Hadhramaut, Al Mahrah, and Dhamar.

With all the efforts and initiatives of the private sector, they continue to support and provide the health facilities and workers with their daily needs including PPE, oxygen cylinders and other materials. The private sector are the first movers to build the capacity of the health facilities especially in the current emergency context and need to support the health system in Yemen.

All allocated funds from the private sector and through its initiatives such as Yemen food bank, Yemen medicine bank, Aden Charitable Oven and other charitable institutions have exceeded \$20 million during 2019-2020, all of which were spent to emergency, relief work and disaster mitigation.

The private sector is still operating despite all the challenges and pressures experienced from the parties to the conflict including transportation and supply chains issues especially the ports, airports, and vital roads facilitating the movement of goods. To ensure the private sector continuity and work, the private sector including the HSA group worked to build and rehabilitate the main roads (Al-Rahadeh - Qubaitah - Dhamran - Al Rukab) that helps to facilitate and smooth the movement of people and goods without any obstacles.

To have more information on the YPSC activities and updates, you can connect us at our email: bbb@smeps.org.ye.

