From October to December 2020, 13.5 million people in Yemen, or 46% of the total population, are facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above), despite ongoing humanitarian food assistance. The number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity increased by nearly 3 million from 2018/2019 to 2019/2020. Among them, high levels of food insecurity are projected for at least 15 out of 19 governorates (68% of the total population) in Yemen and approximately 16,500 people in IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe).

In January 2021, the number of people facing high levels of food insecurity in Yemen reached 16.2 million. In Al Jawf and Hajjah governorates, which account for 54% of the total population, over 9 million people in IPC Phase 3 will likely be in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5). Over 4.5 million people are expected to face high levels of acute food insecurity in at least one of 19 zones of the country in the August to December 2020 period. The projection assumes that all beneficiaries will receive 50% assistance in January – June. Any further reductions in food assistance in January – June will increase the number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity, including those classified in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) and of greatest concern, approximately 16,500 people in IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe).

In early 2019, food insecurity in Yemen reached a level of emergency (IPC Phase 4) in Al Jawf, Hajjah, Ibb, Raymah, and Sa‘ada governorates. The protracted dire situation risked compromising the already fragile livelihoods, especially in areas with combined increasingly negative coping mechanisms, reduced income opportunities, and the impacts of COVID-19 on livelihoods. However, it is important to note that for most of 2019, the food security situation was stable as a result of generous contributions from donors who provided emergency food assistance and stabilise the economy, thus preventing a famine in early 2019.

There are more than 4 million IDPs in Yemen uprooted by conflict, facing comparatively high levels of food insecurity. High food prices, unaffordable minimum food basket and increasing depreciation of the riyal to unprecedented levels are expected to increase high levels of food insecurity for the majority of the population, who rely on remittances for household livelihoods. The food basket comprises 80% of households’ caloric and protein needs. However, the assistance provided is not sufficient to cover all needs, particularly in the northern governorates where beneficiaries have received reduced assistance since April 2020 with distributions every two months instead of monthly, due to limited funding. This has led to heightened household vulnerabilities, any further reductions or disruption would be catastrophic.