



# FUNDING THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN YEMEN

Are donors doing their fair share?

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Almost six years on from the escalation of conflict in March 2015, the humanitarian crisis in Yemen remains the worst in the world. Eighty percent of the population is in need of some kind of humanitarian assistance or protection, yet the Humanitarian Response Plan is only 42 percent funded.

This paper looks at donor contributions to the 2020 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan to date. Using a methodology based on the relative global share of Gross National Income for high-income countries, it examines whether these countries are doing their 'fair share' in funding the response to the crisis in Yemen.

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For further information on the issues raised in this paper please email [advocacy@oxfaminternational.org](mailto:advocacy@oxfaminternational.org)

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Cover photo: A woman with her children in Hajjah governorate, Yemen. Ahmed Al-Fadeel/Oxfam.

# INTRODUCTION

Almost six years on from the escalation of conflict in March 2015, Yemen is in the midst of the world's largest humanitarian crisis. There have been more than 12,000 civilian deaths due to airstrikes, fighting and indiscriminate shelling.<sup>1</sup> More than 3.65 million people have been forced to flee their homes, and 24.3 million people – 80% of the Yemeni population – are in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>2</sup>

Yemen's economy has been shattered by the ongoing conflict, and the COVID-19 pandemic has further worsened the situation. The Yemeni Riyal depreciated by approximately 12% in the first five months of 2020 alone.<sup>3</sup> It continues to depreciate dramatically, particularly in the south of the country.<sup>4</sup> A study undertaken for UNDP in 2019 estimated that \$89bn had been lost in economic output as a result of the war, warning that by 2022 this could rise to \$181bn if the conflict continues.<sup>5</sup> Remittances, which made up 13% of the country's GDP in 2019, have seen a dramatic decline related to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Yemenis abroad.<sup>6</sup>

In this context, humanitarian aid is a lifeline for millions of people in Yemen whose livelihoods have been destroyed. In 2018, an injection of humanitarian assistance is widely credited with having averted widespread famine in Yemen.<sup>7</sup> However, with food insecurity on the rise,<sup>8</sup> and INGOs and UN agencies once again warning of the risk of famine, the consequences of acting too late could be devastating.<sup>9</sup>

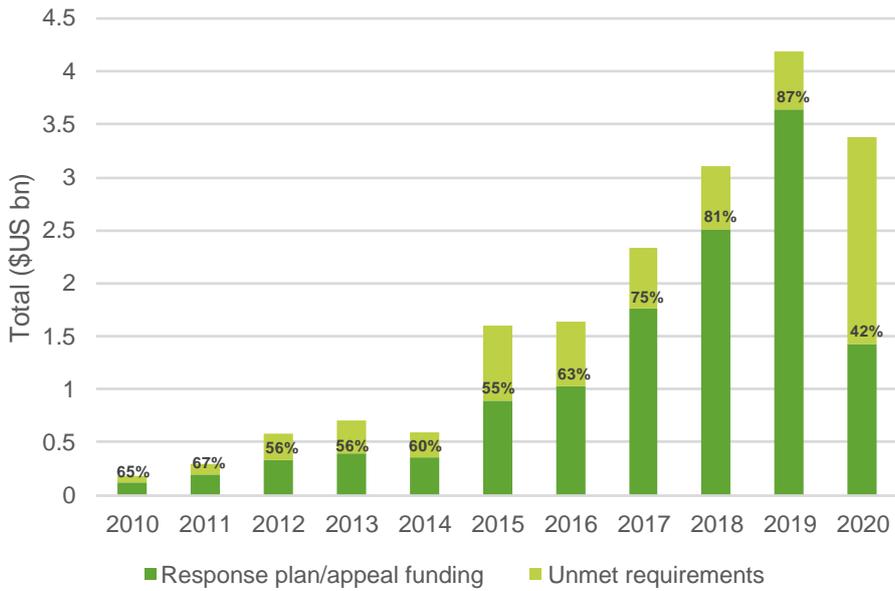
**It is clear that aid alone cannot put Yemen back on its feet. What is needed above all is a nationwide ceasefire, in order to allow for the resumption of negotiations towards an inclusive political settlement. However, while conflict continues, the aid provided by international donors continues to be essential for saving lives and delivering humanitarian assistance on the ground.**

# FUNDING FOR THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

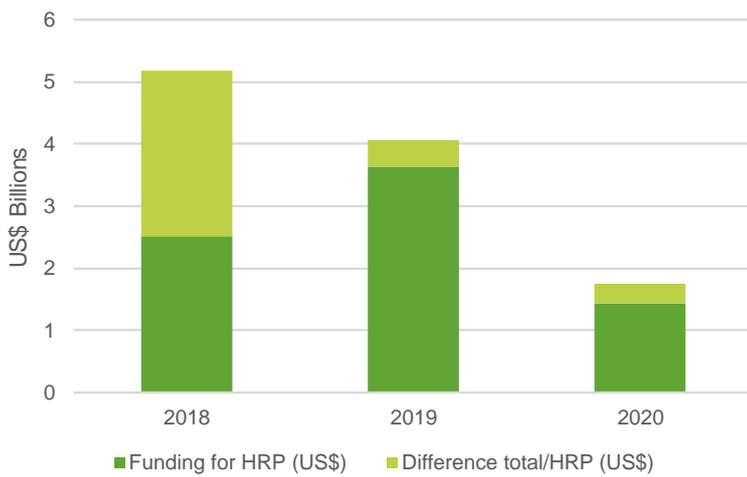
In June 2020, a donor conference for Yemen saw international governments pledge only \$1.35bn, falling more than \$1bn short of the \$2.41bn target set by the UN and raising only half of what was raised in 2019. Aid organizations in Yemen are still waiting to see many of these pledges materialize, even with this drastically reduced figure. Currently, only \$1.43bn of the \$3.38bn requested for the 2020 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan (YHRP) has been received.<sup>10</sup> This means that almost 60% of the requirements of the plan remain unmet. In comparison, by this point last year, the response plan was already 65% funded.<sup>11</sup> Yet almost three-quarters of the way through the year, in relative terms **the 2020 YHRP is on track to finish the year as the worst funded in a decade** – despite the fact that now, more than ever, Yemen is in dire need of donor assistance.

Not only is the 2020 YHRP the worst funded in relative terms since the conflict escalated in 2015, but it is indicative of an overall drop in funding for the humanitarian crisis in Yemen over recent years. Current funding levels for the YHRP so far in 2020 are almost half of what they were in 2018, and less than 40% of 2019's total. Out of 20 of the most generous government donors<sup>12</sup> to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen over the past three years, more than half of them have cut their funding by over a third since 2019; five of them have failed to provide any direct assistance at all to the YHRP so far this year.<sup>13</sup>

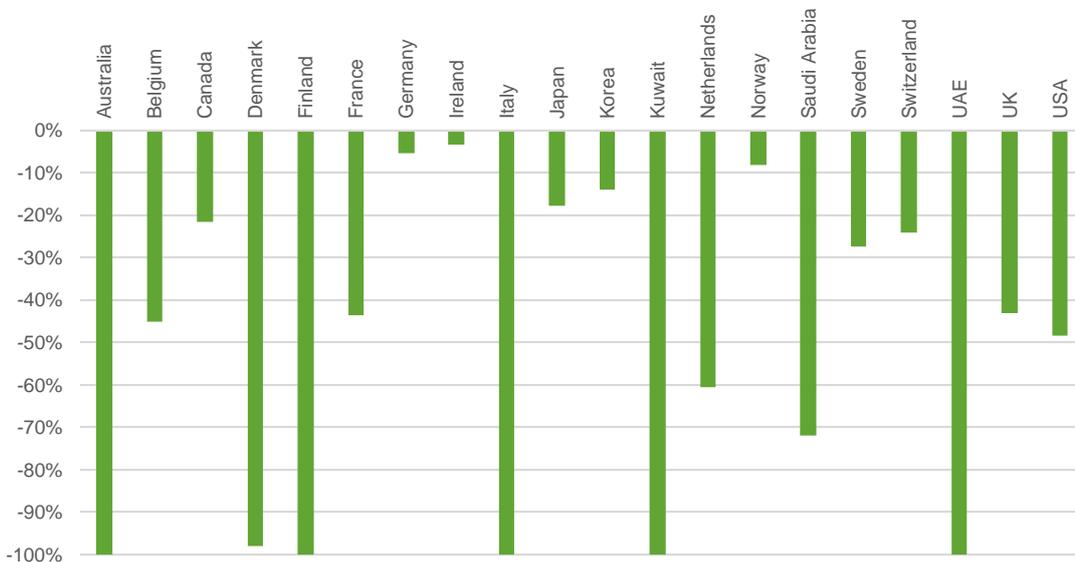
**Figure 1: Trends in response plan/appeal requirements<sup>14</sup>**



**Figure 2: Donor funding inside and outside the YHRP, 2018-2020<sup>15</sup>**



**Figure 3: Percentage drop in funding to the YHRP, 2019 vs 2020 figures to date<sup>16</sup>**



While humanitarian access remains challenging for a number of reasons, including barriers and restrictions placed on humanitarian actors by all parties to the conflict, there has been measured progress in the ability of humanitarian organizations to deliver principled assistance in Yemen as a result of humanitarian diplomacy with the authorities on the part of INGOs, the UN, and donor governments. Humanitarian actors on the ground in Yemen are able to reach those who most need their assistance; in the year to May 2020, aid agencies reached a total of 13.7 million people across Yemen with water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services, cash and voucher assistance, protection services, education support, and shelter.<sup>17</sup> It is clear that coordinated engagement and negotiation, led by the United Nations and other actors on the ground, has improved the ability of aid actors to operate effectively and in line with humanitarian principles.

Yet despite these improvements in humanitarian access, the lack of funding has emerged as the greatest threat to the ability of humanitarian organizations to reach those in need. It has meant that 15 of 41 major United Nations humanitarian programmes in Yemen have already been reduced or shut down, with many more expected to be affected.<sup>18</sup> Shortfalls in funding are likely to have a particular impact on women and girls; specialized services for hundreds of thousands of traumatized and vulnerable women and girls have been shut down, and more than 334,000 pregnant or breastfeeding women have been affected by the cut in funding to nutrition services.<sup>19</sup> **As the year draws to a close, it is urgent that donors rapidly commit and release funds to prevent the closure of yet more life-saving programmes.**

#### Good Humanitarian Donorship

Current funding levels potentially overstate the extent to which humanitarian assistance is, and may be, available for some of Yemen's most vulnerable people. Humanitarian principles require that donors address human suffering wherever it is found, and therefore offer funding based solely on need, without any adverse distinction or political agenda. Most donors have met that challenge, committing funding to the YHRP for activities throughout Yemen when those activities can be carried out properly. The United States took a different approach, suspending most funding allocated for northern Yemen in order to leverage greater humanitarian access. But the United States is not alone in restricting aid; other states have reportedly withheld contributions in order to extract promises of positive publicity, or chosen to fund projects that have higher visibility rather than meeting urgent humanitarian needs where benefits are more diffuse. Such approaches are not consistent with humanitarian principles or best practices in humanitarian donorship and undermine efforts to meet the humanitarian imperative.

## FAIR SHARE ANALYSIS

Table 1 presents a calculation of the 'fair share' of donor contributions for Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries and some high-income non-DAC Gulf countries for the 2020 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan (see the Methodology section below for more detail on how these figures are calculated and why these countries were selected to be included).

The aim of this analysis is to set out approximately how much donor countries would contribute towards the 2020 YHRP if their contributions corresponded to their share of global Gross National Income (GNI). Comparing this figure with the actual amount that has been committed to date, we can then calculate the shortfall for each donor. While this is far from being a perfect measure of each country's engagement, in the context of an ongoing funding crisis in Yemen it is a helpful tool to allow for an overview of the current landscape in terms of donor commitments.

Table 1 shows that only six of the 34 richest countries have given more than half of their fair share. Germany, Luxembourg, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Sweden and the UK are the best performers, and all have contributed at least 80% of their 'fair share' to the YHRP. The remaining 28 richest donors have contributed under half of their fair share. Some of the poorest performers include large European economies such as France (14%), Italy (11%) and Spain (12%), as well as large non-European economies such as Australia (1%), Japan (11%), and New Zealand (4%). Wealthy Gulf states such as Kuwait, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates have so far reported no direct financial contributions to the YHRP in 2020.<sup>20</sup> Other countries that could do more include Belgium (35%), Canada (29%), Denmark (22%), the Netherlands (37%), and Switzerland (30%). The United States, while ranked as the largest donor overall to the response, has given only 39% of its fair share.<sup>21</sup>

**We encourage donors to collectively commit to a coordinated, fully funded and transparent YHRP with a diverse set of donors providing their fair share. Despite the significant efforts and generosity of many donors thus far, there remains a major shortfall in funding for urgent humanitarian assistance to Yemen. We call on donors to contribute their fair share to the YHRP.**

#### **Humanitarian assistance from parties to the conflict**

High-income Gulf states have emerged since 2015 as major humanitarian donors in Yemen. In 2019, Saudi Arabia was the largest donor to the YHRP, with the United Arab Emirates coming in as the third largest behind the United States. So far in 2020, Saudi Arabia has committed \$297m to the crisis in Yemen, making it the second highest donor overall. However, this still falls short of the \$500m pledged by Saudi Arabia during the donor conference in June 2020.

That certain Gulf donors which are direct parties to the conflict feature among the largest donors to the humanitarian response creates an ethical dilemma for humanitarian agencies.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, despite the fact that our analysis of donor fair share suggests that Saudi Arabia is ostensibly 'doing its part' as a donor, provision of high levels of humanitarian funding cannot be used to absolve those governments which are direct parties to the conflict – or arming and supporting parties to the conflict – of their primary responsibility to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians.

Ultimately, there must be an end to the violence. Warring parties and the states that support them, including those such as the UK, the US, France and Canada which continue to provide arms to Saudi Arabia that are – or risk being – used in Yemen, cannot continue to pursue incoherent policy approaches in Yemen, which contradict and undermine their own aid efforts.<sup>23</sup> Airstrikes, shelling and continued ground fighting are causing intense suffering, huge humanitarian needs and mass displacement as well as creating an extremely challenging operational environment for aid agencies.

**Table 1: Donor contributions to the Yemen 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan (to 16 October 2020) and calculation of 'fair share' contribution**

					Colour coding		
Total required funds (\$m)		3,380			<div style="background-color: #d9ead3; padding: 2px;">&gt;90% fair share contributed</div> <div style="background-color: #f4cccc; padding: 2px;">50-90% fair share contributed</div> <div style="background-color: #f4cccc; padding: 2px;">&lt;50% fair share contributed</div> <div style="background-color: #e61e00; padding: 2px;">shortfall &gt;\$5m</div>		
HIC share (%)		90%					
HIC share (\$m)		3,042					
% HIC share received		45%					
		Direct contributions so far (\$m)	Imputed share of CERF & ECHO (\$m)	Total incl. CERF/ECHO share (\$m)	Fair share in \$m	Shortfall (\$m)	% of fair share contributed
Bilateral DAC members	Australia	0.00	0.54	<b>0.54</b>	74.96	74.42	1%
	Austria	0.00	2.67	<b>2.67</b>	24.82	22.15	11%
	Belgium*	5.43	5.06	<b>10.49</b>	29.58	19.09	35%
	Canada	26.08	1.57	<b>27.64</b>	95.66	68.01	29%
	Czech Republic	0.32	1.45	<b>1.77</b>	13.10	11.33	14%
	Denmark**	0.56	3.87	<b>4.43</b>	19.89	15.45	22%
	Finland	0.00	2.33	<b>2.33</b>	14.93	12.59	16%
	France	3.63	17.89	<b>21.52</b>	154.08	132.56	14%
	Germany	162.14	29.97	<b>192.11</b>	220.30	28.18	87%
	Greece	0.00	1.29	<b>1.29</b>	11.66	10.38	11%
	Hungary	0.00	0.92	<b>0.92</b>	8.64	7.72	11%
	Iceland	0.20	0.03	<b>0.23</b>	1.37	1.14	17%
	Ireland***	5.51	2.46	<b>7.97</b>	16.68	8.71	48%
	Italy****	0.00	12.68	<b>12.68</b>	112.35	99.67	11%
	Japan	33.03	0.02	<b>33.05</b>	292.98	259.93	11%
	Korea, Republic of	16.07	0.42	<b>16.48</b>	92.26	75.78	18%
	Luxembourg	1.41	0.70	<b>2.11</b>	2.53	0.42	83%
	Netherlands*****	8.08	10.67	<b>18.75</b>	50.78	32.02	37%
	New Zealand	0.00	0.45	<b>0.45</b>	11.19	10.74	4%
	Norway	16.10	3.28	<b>19.38</b>	23.38	4.01	83%
	Poland	0.00	3.59	<b>3.59</b>	31.51	27.92	11%
	Portugal	0.00	1.47	<b>1.47</b>	12.91	11.45	11%
	Slovak Republic	0.00	0.64	<b>0.64</b>	5.78	5.14	11%
	Slovenia	0.08	0.35	<b>0.42</b>	2.95	2.52	14%
	Spain	0.35	8.66	<b>9.02</b>	77.76	68.74	12%
	Sweden	23.78	8.04	<b>31.82</b>	30.33	-1.49	105%
Switzerland	10.19	1.73	<b>11.92</b>	39.91	27.98	30%	
United Kingdom	143.93	12.85	<b>156.78</b>	155.21	-1.57	101%	
United States	467.53	0.00	<b>467.53</b>	1203.70	736.17	39%	
Non-DAC Gulf HIC	KSA	297.08	0.00	<b>297.08</b>	44.58	-252.50	666%
	Kuwait	0.00	0.07	<b>0.07</b>	9.05	8.98	1%
	Oman	0.00	0.00	<b>0.00</b>	4.22	4.22	0%
	Qatar	0.78	0.07	<b>0.85</b>	9.97	9.12	9%
	UAE	0.00	0.36	<b>0.36</b>	23.56	23.20	2%
	CERF		<b>35.00</b>				
ECHO*****		<b>104.63</b>					
Total Received (all HIC)		<b>1362.06</b>					

\* In response to the report, Belgium indicated that in 2020 it has contributed €6,447,838 EUR to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. It is unclear what the discrepancy with the FTS figures is due to, but for consistency the FTS-reported values have been used for the purposes of this analysis.

\*\* When the Danish government was approached by Oxfam, it indicated that its contribution to the global COVID-19 response (around \$85m) has impacted on its ability to contribute to other humanitarian appeals.

\*\*\* Ireland indicated that it provides additional unearmarked core funding outside of the YHRP in line with Grand Bargain commitments and good humanitarian donorship which are not captured in the above data.

\*\*\*\* At the time of writing, a spending resolution had been issued by Italy for the WHO to the value of €3m.

\*\*\*\*\* In response to the report, the Netherlands indicated to Oxfam that its total direct contribution to Yemen in 2020, including contributions not reported in FTS, is around €20m.

\*\*\*\*\* This figure is based on FTS data. The ECHO 2020 budget/HIP for Yemen amounts to €114m in total.

## CONCLUSION

During a briefing given to the UN Security Council on 15 October 2020, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock warned that “the window to prevent famine in Yemen is closing.”<sup>24</sup> As the situation continues to deteriorate, the world’s richest nations must not turn their backs to the suffering of those whose lives and livelihoods have been torn apart by almost six years of conflict. Increased donor commitments are essential to allow life-saving humanitarian assistance to continue in Yemen. International governments must step up and do their part to ensure that the humanitarian response is adequately funded.

**The COVID-19 pandemic that swept across the world in 2020 has resulted in a global economic downturn, and many governments are cutting their overseas humanitarian and development budgets to focus on the situation within their own borders. Yet this cannot be an excuse for donors to neglect the humanitarian response in Yemen; with COVID-19 adding yet another layer to the crisis, and the spectre of famine once again looming, a well-funded YHRP is needed now more than ever.**

Of course, while addressing the funding gap will go some way to ensuring that humanitarian assistance is available to those who need it most, what is really needed is an end to the war itself. Ultimately, the only long-term solution to the crisis in Yemen is through a comprehensive and nationwide ceasefire and the commencement of a truly inclusive peace process underpinned by the meaningful participation of women, youth, and other marginalized groups. Only the end of conflict will allow for Yemenis to rebuild their lives sustainably. In the meantime, however, international governments must do all they can to ensure that funding is available to respond to the most urgent humanitarian needs across the country. Without this, many more people risk losing access to the essential services that they so desperately need to survive.

## METHODOLOGY AND EXPLANATORY NOTES

This analysis is based on a ‘fair share’ methodology that has previously been employed by Oxfam, most notably in the case of the crisis in Syria.<sup>25</sup>

The total requirements of the 2020 YHRP for Yemen stand at \$3.38bn, of which \$385.7m is required for the COVID-19 response. This analysis calculates the fair share for all high-income countries, with the table displaying results for OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries and high-income non-DAC Gulf countries using total GNI to establish each country’s fair share. Direct contributions to the response as well as imputed shares of funding from CERF<sup>26</sup> and ECHO<sup>27</sup> are then tallied using publicly available sources like UN OCHA’s Financial Tracking Service (FTS) and crosschecked with donor governments where possible.<sup>28</sup>

High-income countries (HIC) would be expected to make the most substantive contribution to any humanitarian response plan, and here it is assumed that 90% of the requirements of the 2020 YHRP (i.e. \$3.04bn of \$3.38bn) would be funded by HIC.<sup>29</sup> Other sources of funding – including private and charitable donations – would be expected to account for the remaining 10%. The 90% figure is in fact slightly lower than the proportion of humanitarian assistance provided by HIC; according to Development Initiatives, over the past 10 years HIC have provided on average approximately 98% of total assistance. Our assumption that HIC would account for 90% of contributions is therefore a conservative estimate.<sup>30</sup>

In Table 1, we have chosen to display DAC donors and high-income Gulf donors, out of all HIC, because of the particular responsibility these two groups have when it comes to funding the humanitarian response in Yemen.<sup>31</sup> The 36 countries featured in the table therefore would not be expected to cover all \$3.04bn, however their share of HIC GNI is substantial (a total of 96.1%), and their total 'fair share' therefore comes to \$2.92bn (i.e. 96.1% of \$3.04bn).

For consistency, the fair share analysis uses data from the FTS. The FTS is a systematic source of funding information run by UN OCHA. Using the FTS has the added benefit of reinforcing Oxfam's calls for transparency, as the FTS is publicly available and updated regularly. There are some concerns around the time lag between commitment and updating, however, particularly for those countries who do not report to the FTS on a rolling basis. Moreover, reporting to the FTS is voluntary; many donors and some INGOs may not provide information to the system. For this reason, FTS figures have been checked directly with donor governments where possible, but Oxfam acknowledges the data may not be complete.

This analysis does not include any contributions outside of the YHRP (except where explicitly stated). Several donors have contributed large amounts of money outside of the YHRP, including to the International Committee of the Red Cross and national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies. However, these contributions fall outside of the YHRP.

The vast majority of the \$385.7m required for the response to COVID-19 in Yemen is included in the data used for these calculations. However, a small amount of money (\$945,000) received from the COVID-19 Humanitarian Thematic Fund has not been accounted for in the figures, due to the difficulties of calculating imputed contributions based on available data. Given the low value of this contribution, in relation to the overall requirements of the YHRP, this would be unlikely to significantly change any donor fair share values. However, it is important to note this omission and to reiterate the importance of pooled funds such as this one as a mark of good humanitarian donorship.

**More detailed information on the methodology and figures used for this fair share analysis can be provided on request.**

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- 12 Twenty of the government donors which have given the most humanitarian aid to Yemen – both inside and outside of the YHRP – over the past three years, according to Financial Tracking Service data.
- 13 Despite not necessarily contributing directly to the YHRP, most donors have contributed indirectly, for instance through contributions to the budget of the European Union or contributions made to the Central Emergency Response Fund. Such mechanisms are important sources of funding, and contributions to non-earmarked pooled funds are a mark of good humanitarian donorship.
- 14 Figures for 2020 are up to 16 October 2020. Graph taken from Financial Tracking Service (FTS), Yemen 2020 (Humanitarian Response Plan), available at: <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/925/summary> (accessed 16 October 2020).
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- 21 Given the limited access we have to financial data, our calculations for donor contributions are based on figures taken from the Financial Tracking Service website, and are current as of 16 October 2020. Where indicated, we have also made an attempt to verify these figures with donors themselves. Efforts

have been made to consider ways that donors contribute beyond direct commitments to the YHRP, for instance by including an estimate for imputed contributions through the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (EU ECHO) and the Central Emergency Response Fund. However, we recognize that there may be other ways that donors contribute which may not be accounted for here. See the methodology section for a more detailed explanation of the calculations and their limitations.

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- 26 Data for CERF contributions in 2020 are current up to 10 October and available here: <https://cerf.un.org/our-donors/contributions> (accessed 10 October 2020).
- 27 Imputed contributions to ECHO have been calculated using the latest data (from 2019) for total national contribution to the overall EU budget, available here: [https://ec.europa.eu/budget/graphs/revenue\\_expenditure.html](https://ec.europa.eu/budget/graphs/revenue_expenditure.html) (accessed 17 October 2020). Relative contributions to the EU budget have then been used to calculate relative contributions to the ECHO budget.
- 28 Oxfam contacted the following governments in order to confirm funding data: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Clarification has been provided where relevant. All other information is from the FTS and is correct as of 16 October 2020.
- 29 High-income countries are taken to mean the following countries, listed as such by the World Bank for 2019: Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Rep., KSA, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mauritius, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Qatar, Romania, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, St. Kitts and Nevis, Sweden, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay. Kuwait was the only of these countries for which no data was available for 2019, so 2018 GNI data was used. The follow countries also feature on the World Bank list, but no data is available for them: Andorra, Greenland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Palau. They have therefore not been included in these calculations. See <https://data.worldbank.org/country/XD> (accessed 23 October 2020).
- 30 Data available at Development Initiatives (2019). International humanitarian assistance provided by government donors, 2000-2018. Web page. Available at: <https://devinit.org/data/datasets/international-humanitarian-assistance-provided-by-government-donors-2000-2018/> (accessed 17 October 2020).
- 31 DAC members have a commitment to promoting international development, including through the provision of Overseas Development Assistance (which comprises humanitarian assistance). We have therefore assumed in this document that the DAC members would have a particular interest in ensuring adequate funding for the YHRP. Gulf donors, meanwhile, have been singled out because of their regional presence and proximity to the crisis in Yemen.

# OXFAM

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