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Older People in Crisis: Yemen's Urgent Call for Humanitarian Assistance

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The conflict in Yemen which has been ongoing for ten years led to one of the worst humanitarian crises worldwide. While the attention is given more to the general population, there are many unique challenges focusing on vulnerable elderly people face that remain unnoticed.

Background

- Yemen's humanitarian crisis is multifaceted, stemming from armed conflict, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and economic decline.
- The cost of essential food items is rising which has led to reduced food intake for elderly people, while the fuel price hike results in the inability to access work and healthcare services.
- Older Yemenis end up selling valuables to sustain their livelihoods and medical needs, many become heavily in debt.

Food, Fuel, and Finance Crisis

- Described as the worst humanitarian crisis globally, Yemen faces acute food insecurity. Two-thirds of Yemenis are starving, and nearly half do not know when they will eat next.
- Older people are most affected by the high cost of essentials, especially food. Most have to reduce food intake significantly, sacrificing their meals for younger family members to ensure that they have something to eat. Many elderly women go to the streets to beg for money due to their inability to afford basic food items for their families.
- Access to services and transportation are impacted by the continuously high cost of fuel.

Health Concerns

- Health concerns are another major issues for Yemen's elderly population. Transportation expenses have skyrocketed, making it increasingly difficult for them to visit health services. Instead, many people have been forced to rely on substandard medications that do nothing to relieve their suffering.
- To make ends meet, some people have turned to selling household items and personal belongings, frequently resulting in growing debt with no clear road to repayment.

Community Empowerment and Capacity Building

- Training and Education: provide older Yemenis training programs on health awareness, financial literacy, and income-generating activities. Give them the tools they need to successfully overcome their obstacles.
- Community-Based Support Networks: Create local support groups where elderlies can provide emotional support to one another, share experiences, and exchange knowledge.
- Advocacy and Awareness: Increase community understanding of the specific needs of the elderly. Motivate people in the community to take an active role in helping to ensure their well-being.
- Enhancing Healthcare Infrastructure: ensuring the availability of essential medical equipment, medications, and skilled healthcare professionals.
- Expanding Healthcare Coverage: insurance programs or social protection schemes.
- Promoting Preventive Care.
- Combating institutional corruption.

Humanitarian Response

- HelpAge International: This organization plays a pivotal role in advocating for older Yemenis. They estimate that 1.65 million older Yemenis are at risk of starvation and exposure to diseases like cholera and COVID-19. The mission of HelpAge International is to improve the transportation, food, and healthcare services available to the elderly population.
- UNICEF's Rapid Response Mechanism: UNICEF delivers aid to vulnerable individuals, including older people affected by floods. Their rapid response efforts provide essential supplies, medical assistance, and support during emergencies.

Conclusion

The elderly population in Yemen is in a terrible state and needs humanitarian aid right away. Collaborative efforts are crucial to alleviate their suffering and ensure their survival.

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