

Act before time runs out, urges UNICEF, as Yemen grapples with 'unprecedented' cholera outbreak

31 May 2017 – Amid an “unprecedented” increase in suspected cholera cases in war-torn Yemen – where medical facilities are teetering on the edge of collapse – the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) has stepped up its response but warned that time may be “running out.”

“More and more children die every day in Yemen from preventable causes like malnutrition and cholera,” said Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, in a [statement](#) yesterday.

“Anyone with a heart for children cannot let the situation continue. Stop the conflict [now],” he urged.

According to the UN agency, [more than 65,000 suspected cases of the deadly disease have been reported](#) in the country, of which about 10,000 were reported in the past 72 hours alone.

Some 532 people, including 109 children have succumbed to the disease over the past month. The numbers are feared to rise as more cases are verified.

Responding to the outbreak, UNICEF has sent in three aircrafts carrying over 40 metric tonnes of lifesaving supplies including medicines, oral rehydration salts (ORS), diarrhoea disease kits and intravenous fluids to treat more than 50,000 patients.

It is also helping provide chlorinated drinking water, disinfect wells and set up water filling stations and storage.

But needs continue to increase, with medicines and other vital medical equipment in short supply, said UNICEF.

This latest crisis comes as the country has been reeling under the effects of a conflict, now into its third year, that has rendered water treatment plants barely functional and water sources severely contaminated by sewage and uncollected garbage.

Half of the country’s health facilities aren’t working, and medical staff haven’t been paid for over eight months.

“The situation in Yemen is teetering on the verge of disaster [...] over 27 million Yemenis are staring at an unforgiving humanitarian catastrophe. The biggest victims of this man-made tragedy are Yemen’s most vulnerable population – its children,” underscored Meritxell Relaño UNICEF Representative in Yemen.

“The international community needs to support long-term investments in social

services like water and sanitation. Otherwise, deadly disease outbreaks will strike again and kill many more.”