

Press release: UK aid stops ‘untold horror’ of child pneumonia deaths in Syria this winter

International Development Secretary Priti Patel has announced a new package of UK aid support to help end the “untold horror” that means thousands of helpless Syrian children fall victim to the “brutal assault of winter” every year.

From November, temperatures typically plummet in Syria and as many as 1 in 3 child deaths could be caused by respiratory illnesses such as pneumonia – up from 1 in 10 before the crisis began.

Chest infections are now the number one reason for children in Syria seeking medical attention. UK aid will provide immunisations and give early treatment for coughs and colds, preventing children from suffering life-threatening illnesses and giving them hope for the future.

People living in tents and make-shift shelters in Syria do all they can to survive sub-zero temperatures but they are struggling to afford daily essentials, food and medical care. Dirty conditions increase the chances of chest infections and malnourishment makes children up to 15 times more likely to die from pneumonia.

As well as delivering life-saving medical support, UK aid is restoring large buildings so that people have a safe and clean place to stay for as long as they need, helping them now and in the winters to come. It is also providing more than 100,000 people with hot meals, warm clothes and blankets to stop children falling ill in the first place.

UK aid will:

- provide more than 1.3 million health care consultations, including 700,000 reproductive, maternal and child health care consultations to give children early treatment and prevent illnesses such as pneumonia.
- provide vaccinations for more than 100,000 people to help prevent infections and boost immune systems.
- support 102,500 people, including families living in besieged and hard to reach areas, with winter kits that include blankets, warm clothing and kitchen utensils to help cook hot meals.
- accommodate 3,000 people in secure shelters by restoring 600 housing units that are fitted with heaters, new doors and windows, and working amenities.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

The barbaric conflict in Syria means that hundreds of thousands of vulnerable men, women and children face another deadly winter

ahead.

Pneumonia is an untold horror of the Syria crisis and helpless children are falling victim to the brutal assault of winter before their lives have properly begun. No child should die from the cold. As well as providing lifesaving vaccines and medical treatment, we're taking action to fortify buildings against sub-zero temperatures and prevent these needless deaths for winters to come.

I urge the international community to step up and provide support that will not only keep people alive but also give them a fighting chance of rebuilding their lives.

The brutal Syrian civil war has already cost an estimated 400,000 lives, with over 11 million people displaced by conflict and causing a severe shortage of food, clean water and healthcare.

Over half of Syria's population has been displaced by the violence, with nearly 3 million people in hard to reach locations. Today's UK aid package includes critical support delivered across international borders to people trapped in besieged areas in Syria.

Britain has been at the forefront of the response to the Syria crisis and already we have delivered 26.2 million food rations, 9.8 million relief packages, 8.3 million vaccines against deadly diseases and 10.4 million medical consultations for those in need.

Notes to Editors

1. Today's £62 million package is an allocation of support from the UK's response to the Syria crisis and will be provided to partners already working in Syria, including UN agencies.
2. This includes £15 million for UNICEF, £12 million for UNRWA, £7.2 million for the Danish Refugee Council, £6 million to the World Health Organisation and £21.8 million for other NGOs. For safety and security reasons, DFID does not name a number of our partners operating in Syria.
3. The UK is a leading donor in the humanitarian response. To date we have committed over £2.46 billion in funding to the region.
4. For more information on the UK's humanitarian response to the Syria crisis, visit:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/factsheet-the-uks-humanitarian-aid-response-to-the-syria-crisis>

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