

Press release: UK aid will be “even quicker and smarter” in 2019

The UK is stepping up preparations for global humanitarian crises in 2019 and harnessing the power of satellite and supercomputer technology to better predict where disasters will strike.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said the UK will take early action to prepare for crises where possible in 2019, not just dealing with the aftermath of dire humanitarian incidents.

The need for humanitarian aid will remain especially high in 2019, driven by conflict in countries like Cameroon and the Central African Republic. Food insecurity will also be a top concern and priority for the humanitarian community, including in Afghanistan, which this year experienced severe drought.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

One in every 70 people worldwide is caught up in a humanitarian crisis, and throughout 2018 UK aid has been at the heart of providing life-saving assistance to those in need: from supporting efforts to prevent and curb Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo to tackling the risk of catastrophic famine in Yemen.

With 132 million people – almost double the population of the UK – expected to need emergency aid next year, we must act even quicker and smarter to better prepare for humanitarian crises before disaster strikes.

Acting early not only helps the UK and developing countries to save money, but also saves more lives. UK aid is leading the way in being better prepared, making use of science, research and innovation to shape a global humanitarian system fit for 2019.

UK aid is harnessing technology, such as space satellites and super computers, to help improve warning systems to better predict the impact of global humanitarian crises, including:

- using some of the most accurate weather forecasts in the world to help families, communities and governments prepare for El Nino which could affect up to 25 countries;
- working smartly with the Met Office, NASA and US scientists to accurately predict where and when cholera will spread in Yemen;

- teaming up with the UK Space Agency to help farmers in Kenya, Ghana and Zambia to understand when pests or disease may strike, allowing preventative action to be taken more quickly.

DFID announced today (Monday 31 December 2018) it will provide £1 million to the World Health Organisation this year to help enhance its Early Warning Alert and Response System (EWARS) to prevent the spread of life-threatening infectious diseases such as diphtheria and measles, as well as diarrheal illnesses, among the 800,000 Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

Ms Mordaunt's comments on humanitarian aid in 2019 follow a £34 million uplift in UK aid support to the United Nations Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF), which supports the UN to respond rapidly to crises across the world. The UK is one of CERF's leading supporters, and in 2018 is its largest donor.

Throughout 2018, this fund provided time-critical life-saving assistance to millions of people in 45 countries, including Yemen, Syria, South Sudan and Nigeria.

UK aid provided life-saving assistance, including food, water, medical care and shelter to millions of people desperately in need in 2018.

This year, UK aid responded to crises across the globe including:

- sending 47 tonnes of aid and a team of aid workers to Indonesia following a devastating earthquake and tsunami which is believed to have left over 2,000 people dead;
 - deploying a team of 67, including 57 medics, to Bangladesh to tackle an outbreak of diphtheria in Cox's Bazar, after hundreds of thousands of displaced Rohingya had fled there;
 - supporting the development of a life-saving vaccine to tackle Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has helped to prevent it spreading to neighbouring countries;
 - meeting the immediate food needs of 4 million Yemenis, and supporting aid agencies to screen and treat for malnutrition and disease.
- At the High-Level Pledging Conference for the CERF at the United Nations in New York, the UK announced on 7 December it was bringing forward an additional £34 million this year to support UN CERF.