

Press release: UK gives more emergency food for Yemen as number at risk of starvation reaches all time high of 8 million

A new UK aid package will provide life-saving food, medicine, clean water and sanitation to millions of desperate Yemenis facing disease and hunger, Minister for the Middle East Alistair Burt announced today.

There are now more than 8 million people at risk of starvation – an all-time high and one and a half million more people than this time last year – with three-quarters of the overall population of 27 million now in need of humanitarian assistance.

Speaking from Geneva at the UN High Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen, Minister Burt said:

There can be absolutely no room for complacency in tackling the world's worst humanitarian crisis. With no end to the conflict, the situation will deteriorate with the number of men, women and children at risk of starvation at an all-time high. That's why UK aid will provide enough food to meet immediate needs for 3.4 million people, and buy fuel to mill enough wheat to feed a million people for over a year. Our support will continue to improve nutrition and access to clean water and sanitation across the country.

I am also deeply concerned that as the heavy rains arrive in the coming weeks, another deadly outbreak of cholera will bring more misery. There were over a million suspected cases last year of this debilitating and preventable waterborne disease, intensified by the breakdown in health and sanitation services. Yemeni authorities must work closely with the international community to take immediate action to curb its spread.

The UK has been at the forefront of the response to the crisis, helping to secure vital access for food, fuel and medicine to enter the country and rallying the international community to focus their efforts on paying doctors, nurses and sanitation workers. This will keep clinics and schools open, clear overflowing rubbish from streets and put money in the pockets of 7 million people so they can afford food and basic healthcare.

But we are very clear: only a political agreement can bring an end to this humanitarian crisis. For the sake of all Yemenis, we urge all parties to return to the negotiating table to find an inclusive political solution, and the UK is continuing to do all it can diplomatically to ensure such an outcome.

The UK co-hosted an event with the United Nations today to sound the alarm and contain another cholera outbreak on the same scale as last year. UN agencies set out their plans to respond to an expected outbreak, and asked donors for support. Through the UK's existing aid to Gavi, we are supporting the first vaccination campaign for 1.1 million people against cholera since the conflict in Yemen began.

In 2017/18, UK aid provided nutritional support for 1.7 million people, and clean water and sanitation for an expected 1.2 million people.

We call on all parties to the conflict to allow unhindered humanitarian and commercial access throughout Yemen, including through Hodeidah and Saleef ports.

Notes to Editors

1. The UK has announced £170 million of funding to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen for 2018/19.
2. To date, DFID has provided over £400 million in bilateral support since the conflict began in 2015.
3. The UK is Gavi's largest donor, contributing £1.44 billion over the 2016 to 2020 period, which equates to approximately 25% of their spend globally.
4. As penholder for Yemen at the UN Security Council, the UK achieved agreement to issue the 15 March Presidential Statement which included calls for all parties to the conflict to allow unhindered humanitarian and commercial access for food, fuel and medical supplies throughout Yemen; and comply with obligations under International Humanitarian Law to reduce the impact on civilians. It also called for the payment of public sector salaries to avoid the collapse of critical services.

]