

Press release: UK leads action plan to help those hardest hit by Yemen's nutrition crisis

The UK is leading international efforts to develop an urgent action plan to tackle malnutrition in Yemen, Minister for the Middle East Alistair Burt announced in New York today (Tuesday) at the United Nations General Assembly.

With 7.4 million Yemenis on the brink of malnutrition, a coordinated response is needed to prevent the food crisis worsening.

Today, Minister Burt chaired a 'Call to Action' event bringing together agencies from the United Nations, Non-Governmental Organisations and donors to make a series of commitments to help millions of malnourished Yemenis over the next three years.

These commitments include:

- reducing cases of severe and moderate malnutrition through the detection and early treatment of all children under five and pregnant and lactating women;
- reversing chronic malnutrition prevalence, and in the long-term reducing chronic malnutrition annually by at least 50,000 children;
- increasing breastfeeding rates, whilst also providing food supplements (such as folic acid and iron) to children under five, adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women;
- providing children under two and pregnant and lactating women with extra food rations in areas most at risk of famine; and
- developing more robust monitoring mechanisms and referral services to help agencies better understand and target malnutrition cases.

Speaking from New York, Minister Burt said:

The UK is deeply concerned about the food security crisis in Yemen – the largest in the world, with nearly 8.4 million people not knowing where their next meal is coming from. Children are often the worst affected, with malnourished children being 12 times more likely to die from disease.

This is entirely preventable, which is why today the UK has brought together UN agencies, donors and NGOs to work smarter and more efficiently to save Yemeni lives.

UK aid is helping to meet the immediate food needs of 2.5 million Yemenis this year, as well as treating children with severe acute malnutrition and providing safe water, shelter, and emergency livelihoods across the country.

The UK has been clear that the way forward remains a political solution, and is committed to helping the UN Envoy end this conflict which has brought severe pain and suffering to the Yemeni people.

Notes to editors

- The UK's £170m in aid this financial year (2018/19) will meet the immediate food needs of 2.5 million Yemenis, as well as treating children with severe acute malnutrition and providing safe water, shelter, and emergency livelihoods across the country. The UK is the fourth largest donor overall to Yemen this year.
- According to the United Nations, the humanitarian situation in Yemen is the worst in the world, with the largest number of people at risk of starvation in the world. Rapidly rising food and fuel prices, the depreciating Yemeni riyal and the fact that non-payment of public sector salaries in many parts of the country for over two years makes it increasingly difficult for Yemenis to buy food and meet their other basic needs. At least 1.8 million children and 1.1 million pregnant or breastfeeding women are acutely malnourished, including over 400,000 children under age five who are suffering from severe acute malnutrition.
- The root causes of chronic and acute malnutrition and the factors leading to it are complex. The current conflict creates conditions where malnutrition can take hold, exacerbated by poverty, constrained development, low socioeconomic status, and other social circumstances. Women and young girls and boys suffer disproportionately. Countries with high levels of malnutrition lose as much as 10 percent national GDP year-on-year.