

# Press release: UK renews push to tackle world's worst cholera outbreak in Yemen

Yemen is on the brink of a catastrophic disaster, International Development Secretary Priti Patel warned today, as she urged the international community to follow the UK's push to stem the country's cholera outbreak – the worst ever recorded in a single year.

The number of suspected cases of cholera is nearing half a million and the UK is working with organisations including UNICEF and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to tackle the disease which has so far claimed thousands of lives.

The UK's support will provide medical supplies, such as chlorine tablets and hygiene kits, for half a million people and rehabilitate medical facilities to help 250,000 people.

The UK's efforts will prevent and treat cholera across three of the most affected areas of Yemen: 300,000 people will benefit from access to safe, chlorinated water, helping to prevent the further spread of the disease; while seven health centres and 35 oral rehydration points will treat more than 27,300 cases.

British support will also include the secondment of an international health specialist from IOM to the Emergency Operations Centre in Sana'a to strengthen the response to contain cholera.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

Yemen is on the brink of a catastrophic disaster if the world continues to close its eyes to the urgent help three quarters of people across the country desperately need.

The response by the international community is the only hope Yemeni people have to survive. UK aid is providing lifesaving food for 1.7 million people, as well as clean water, emergency healthcare and sanitation to contain the cholera outbreak and prevent it from spreading further.

The international community must follow Britain's lead and join our efforts and step up support to avert famine and cholera engulfing the country.

UK aid is already saving lives – our support to UNICEF has provided cholera treatment kits for 60,000 people and oral rehydration salts to treat over a million people, as well as rehabilitating the rural water supply systems in

Hajjah and Sa'ada so that 74,000 people can access clean water.

Other partners, including the Yemen Humanitarian Pooled Fund, are also tackling cholera through re-prioritisation of their work within the UK's existing support. This includes providing medical treatment for vulnerable women and children, training health workers, and establishing oral rehydration centres.

Cholera is a bacterial disease, usually spread through contaminated water, which causes severe diarrhea and dehydration. The risk of cholera is highest when poverty, war or natural disasters force people to live in crowded conditions without adequate sanitation. Cholera can be fatal in a matter of hours if left untreated, but with medical support can be easily remedied.

Prevention is equally important and the UK is supporting chlorination campaigns in more than half the country's governorates, as well as public awareness sessions on how the disease is spread. UK support is also tackling the underlying causes of cholera by helping to provide emergency nutrition, health, water and sanitation to over a million Yemenis.

## **Notes to Editors**

- The UK is playing a leading role in the humanitarian response as the 3rd largest humanitarian donor to Yemen and the 2nd largest donor to the UN appeal. We have increased our funding for Yemen to £139 million for 2017/18 and are pressing the international community to step up its efforts. Other international and regional partners including the US, EU and Saudi Arabia are also playing a critical role in response.
- In April we increased UK aid to Yemen to £139m for 2017/18 and are prioritising life-saving aid, including helping to provide food and nutrition support for 1.7 million people and clean water and sanitation for an expected 1.2 million people.
- The UK is prioritising £8m from the Yemen budget this year for cholera. This includes £6 million for UNICEF and £2 million towards IOM's cholera response.
- Cholera is an infection of the small intestine that causes acute watery diarrhoea and can lead to rapid dehydration and death if untreated. It is caused by eating food or drinking water contaminated with the bacterium *Vibrio cholera* (faecal-oral transmission). Treatment requires oral rehydration, and in the most severe cases intravenous infusion and antibiotics. Chlorination of water supply and improved waste disposal and hygiene behaviour help control the disease.
- Last year, UK aid contributed to providing more than 462,000 people with food or food vouchers, provided food and nutrition support for 1.1

million women and children, and provided 123,000 people with emergency or sustainable clean water.

- The International Development Secretary, Priti Patel, hosted a high-level international event at the UN General Assembly in September 2016 to shine a spotlight on Yemen's 'forgotten crisis'. Over \$100 million in new funding was pledged by the international community and UN agencies to strengthen the humanitarian response.