

Press release: UK to increase Syria medical aid in wake of chemical attack

The International Development Secretary announced additional funding today (09/04/2017), which will ensure health workers on the ground in Syria can deliver healthcare and essential medicines across the country; enabling them to prepare for future medical emergencies.

Global Britain has been at the forefront of the response to the Syria crisis, and we continue to lead international efforts by providing additional emergency medical support to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people.

This allocation builds on existing UK support to the World Health Organisation, which has enabled it to pre-position supplies and train medics in anticipation of an attack of this kind. As a result, WHO was able to rapidly deliver medicines including Atropine (an antidote for some types of chemical exposure) and steroids for treatment, ship in additional medicines, and provide immediate support to medics.

The new support from the UK will go to three NGOs on the ground and will provide a wider range of lifesaving medical aid right across Syria, including:

- access to clean water for 500,000 people for drinking and sanitation, to help prevent the spread of disease and sickness;
- medicines, medical supplies and equipment including basic surgical supplies such as sutures and pain medications for 340 primary health clinics and 69 hospitals;
- 1 million primary health care consultations, along with more than 30,000 mental health and psychosocial consultations for traumatised people; and
- training for more than 400 Syrian health workers responding to the ongoing conflict.

Priti Patel said:

This was a brutal and indiscriminate attack. Unleashing the horror of chemical weapons on women, children and the defenceless is not only utterly deplorable, but it is the mark of a craven coward.

Those responsible must be held to account. And the victims must get the help they so desperately need – that is why we are providing further medical support not only for those subjected to the horrors of chemical attack, but for those countless victims of the equally deadly bombs, bullets and diseases that are devastating lives across Syria.

It is vital that the international community continues to support the Syrian people and the UK led calls at the Brussels Conference on Syria this week for

donors to step up assistance to the most vulnerable people. As a result, \$6 billion in international funding was committed for the coming year.

Notes to editors

1. The new allocation of funding to WHO and two other undisclosed NGOs totals £7 million. It will support ongoing delivery of medicines and basic supplies to primary health clinics to treat minor illnesses, infections, chronic conditions and mental illnesses; primary healthcare and mental health support; and clean water and sanitation programming in Idlib.
2. It builds on £10.7 million provided to WHO last financial year (2016/17). WHO has been advised that any remaining UK funding from last year can be used flexibly as necessary in its ongoing response to the chemical attack.