

Press release: New UK aid package to provide life-saving help to millions of Yemeni children at growing risk of famine

The UK is providing a major new UK aid package to help screen, prevent and tackle malnutrition in Yemen, Minister for the Middle East Alistair Burt announced today.

The UN estimates that 17.8 million people do not have reliable access to food across Yemen, including 1.8 million children who are acutely malnourished.

Today's UK aid package will screen 2.2 million children under the age of five for malnutrition and provide urgent treatment for 70,000 of the most vulnerable children.

UK aid will also:

- provide treatment to 3.2 million children suffering from childhood illnesses such as pneumonia, measles and chickenpox;
- enable 818,000 people to access water and sanitation which will help to prevent diseases from spreading; and help to prevent anaemia in 500,000 children by supporting iron and folic acid supplementation (nearly 90% of under-fives in Yemen are anaemic);
- scale up mobile health teams to provide care to the most vulnerable that might otherwise be unable to access health services.

Speaking on UN World Food Day, Minister Burt said:

The UK is extremely concerned at the deepening humanitarian crisis in Yemen, including recent reports of the growing risk of famine to millions of Yemenis who do not know where their next meal is coming from.

Children are suffering the most and are 12 times more likely to die from diseases. Today's UK aid package will help identify cases of malnourishment earlier and provide life-saving care for those most in need.

We continue to call on all parties to this conflict to support the UN Special Envoy's peace talks to find a political solution, which is the only way to bring the humanitarian crisis to an end.

UK aid is also supporting the World Food Programme (WFP) to support over 800,000 Yemenis with food vouchers for one month.

The UK has been at the forefront of the humanitarian response to the Yemeni crisis. It has consistently been one of the largest donors to the crisis and has helped secure vital access for food, fuel and medicine.

Last year UK aid support to UNICEF helped to successfully treat over 166,000 children for severe acute malnutrition and 1.4 million children for common illnesses.

Meritxell Relaño, UNICEF Representative in Yemen, said:

The United Kingdom, through its Department for International Development (DFID), is a key partner of UNICEF work in Yemen. Since 2016, DFID, along with other donors, has supported the humanitarian response in Yemen, particularly in the health and nutrition sectors, providing rapid response to disease outbreaks and helping vulnerable children and their mothers to access food.

Just yesterday, the United Nations warned that 13 million people in Yemen are on the brink of famine.

This renewed commitment from DFID comes at a time when we need support from our partners more than ever, to provide more than 2.5 million malnourished children with the urgent assistance they need to survive.

Notes to editors

- Today's UK aid package of a £96.5 million programme will fund UNICEF to tackle malnutrition in Yemen over three years. This is a multi-year commitment, and some of today's funding is from the £170 million announced on 3 April 2018 in response to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen for this financial year (2018/2019).
- The £170 million UK funding announced in April 2018 brought the total UK bilateral support to Yemen to over £570 million since the conflict began in 2015.
- As well as supporting the frontline delivery of medical care and assistance, UK aid will also strengthen health systems in Yemen by providing expertise to public health authorities to improve policies and strengthen the monitoring of malnutrition to enable officials to make better-informed decisions.
- Minister Burt chaired a side-event at the United Nations General Assembly last month to issue a Call to Action to the UN, NGOs and donors to tackle malnutrition in Yemen more comprehensively.