

Press release: UK outlines new humanitarian support and urges international community to save lives before it's too late

The International Development Secretary Priti Patel has today announced new packages of life-saving UK aid for South Sudan and Somalia and issued a call to action to the international community to step up their support before it is too late.

Before this week there has been only one certified famine globally since 2000. Parts of South Sudan are now in famine and in 2017 there is a credible risk of another three famines in Yemen, North East Nigeria and Somalia. Drought and conflict in these countries are pushing families to the brink of starvation and there is also no end in sight to the six-year conflict which has ripped Syria apart.

As the world faces an unprecedented number of humanitarian crises, Priti Patel outlined how the UK will lead the world in supporting famine stricken areas. In response to famine warnings in Somalia and South Sudan she announced new UK support to provide lifesaving food, water and emergency healthcare which will save more than a million lives.

This is alongside continued life-saving aid to Yemen and North East Nigeria which provided food, medical supplies, water and emergency shelter to over two million people in 2016.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

The world faces a series of unprecedented humanitarian crises and the real threat of famine in four countries. These crises are being driven by conflict and drought and we must respond accordingly. Our commitment to UK aid means that when people are at risk of dying from drought and disaster, we have the tools and expertise to avoid catastrophe.

In times of crisis, the world looks to Britain not just for our work on the ground, but also for our leadership internationally. While we step up our support for emergency food, water and lifesaving care to those in need, our message to the world is clear – we must act now to help innocent people who are starving to death.

In Somalia, more than six million people have no reliable access to food and there are 360,000 acutely malnourished children. All the signs are pointing to a famine as bad, or worse, than the one in 2011 which killed 260,000

people. The UK is acting now to prevent this.

Today's announcement of new support to Somalia will provide:

- emergency food to up to one million people
- life-saving nutritional support to more than 600,000 starving children and pregnant and breastfeeding women
- safe drinking water for one million people
- emergency healthcare for 1.7 million people

In South Sudan, famine has now been declared and more than half the population is in desperate need. Almost five million face the daily threat of going without enough food and water and three million people have been forced from their homes because of ruthless violence and widespread rape. The UK is leading the way by providing:

- Food assistance for over 500,000 people
- Life-saving nutritional support to more than 27,500 children
- Safe drinking water for over 300,000 people
- Emergency health services for over 100,000 people
- Livelihood support for over 650,000 people
- Vaccinations for over 200,000 livestock

In North East Nigeria, as Boko Haram is pushed out, we are increasing our humanitarian support. The UK is providing:

- food to more than 1 million people
- treatment to 34,000 children at risk of death from hunger
- access to clean water and sanitation for more than 135,000 people

In Yemen, the UK is delivering life-saving aid to the most vulnerable people which included supplying food, medical supplies, water and emergency shelter to over one million people last year.

To stop famine spreading and help support stability in these regions the system needs urgent reform. The UK is pushing for a faster, more effective international humanitarian system fit for the 21st century, which is firmly in our interests.

-ENDS-

Notes to editors:

1. The UK is providing £100m in new support in Somalia and another £100m in South Sudan for 2017/18.
2. In addition to South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and North East Nigeria, the UK is at the forefront of the response to the Syria crisis. UK aid is helping millions of civilians caught up in the war; supporting Syrian refugees to remain in host countries in the region; and is enabling host countries to accommodate them.
3. The UK has committed £2.3 billion to the Syria Crisis Response between 2012 and 2020. Since February 2012, across Syria and the region, we have distributed over 21 million food rations that feed a person for a month,

over 6.5 million relief packages, over 6.2 million vaccines and provided over 4.8 million medical consultations

4. We are supporting the governments of Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey to better cope with a protracted refugee presence, and enable Syrian refugees to remain in the region until they can safely return to Syria. Our programmes are aimed at meeting immediate humanitarian need. In addition, we are improving people's lives by helping support children into school to avoid a lost generation, creating job opportunities and improving skills.