

Press release: UK Emergency Medical Team heads home after bringing Bangladesh diphtheria outbreak under control

The UK Emergency Medical Team pictured at Manchester Airport. Picture: Russell Watkins/DFID

The UK Emergency Medical Team (EMT), deployed to the camps of Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh following a deadly outbreak of diphtheria, is heading home after bringing the disease under control.

Medical professionals, including doctors, nurses and paramedics, will return this weekend having spent up to six weeks triaging more than 3000 Rohingya people.

Almost 500 people were treated for diphtheria and were it not for British help, many could have died.

Dr Derek Sloan, a consultant in infectious diseases from Fife, Scotland, examines a young boy for symptoms of diphtheria in Kutupalong, Bangladesh

Stationed across three diphtheria treatment centres, the 40-strong UK aid-funded EMT prescribed precautionary antibiotics to the displaced men, women and children suspected to have the disease. Those displaying clear symptoms were immediately given live-saving diphtheria anti-toxin.

With the outbreak now under control, local Bangladeshi health professionals working for the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) have taken over from the UK clinicians and will work to completely stamp out this disease from the camps.

Ummul Jesmin, one of the Bangladeshi nurses who worked alongside the UK EMT, has also learned vital infection prevention and control skills. These will be essential should another infectious disease outbreak like cholera occur. Pleased with the opportunity to work alongside the EMT, Ummul had nothing but praise for her British colleagues.

Ummul Jesmin, one of the Bangladeshi medics who worked alongside the UK EMT and who will continue to tackle the outbreak now that the British team is leaving.

Diphtheria, entirely preventable through vaccination, surfaced within the camps in late 2017. To date, there have been over 5,000 suspected diphtheria cases and at least 37 deaths.

The overcrowded camps, home to over 655,000 Rohingya refugees who have fled

persecution in neighbouring Burma, are a breeding ground for diphtheria.

The contagious disease can cause extreme breathing difficulties and inflammation of the heart. This can lead to heart failure, damage to the nervous system and fatal paralysis.

It is especially dangerous to children; more than half the deaths recorded relate to those under the age of five. The expertise of the British clinicians has saved countless lives including that of four-year-old Settara.

Settara was brought to a treatment centre by her mother Moriam in mid-January with a fever, sore throat and in pain.

One of the nurses instantly identified that Settara was displaying symptoms of diphtheria. Doctors admitted Settara immediately and gave her diphtheria anti-toxin along with a course of antibiotics.

Whilst Settara underwent treatment, the team established that Moriam had seven other children who had all been exposed to the disease. The entire family was provided with precautionary antibiotics and Settara went on to make a full recovery.

Six-year-old Sumaiya, sitting up in bed and already recovering after receiving diphtheria antitoxin treatment.

Six-year-old Samaiya was also brought to the treatment centre in mid-January with clear symptoms of diphtheria. Just a few hours after being given diphtheria anti-toxin, she started to look and feel much better and was seen happily sitting in bed drawing pictures. Samaiya was discharged shortly after to complete her course of antibiotics at home.

The UK, having led the way in providing medical expertise to the crisis, has also helped fund a UNICEF vaccination programme which protects vulnerable Rohingya children from diphtheria.

The first round of the vaccination campaign is now complete and has ensured more than 350,000 children aged between six-weeks and 15-years-old are protected. Children are now receiving their second dose of the vaccine; 110,513 have been vaccinated in the last week alone.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

I have nothing but admiration and thanks for the UK medics who travelled to Cox's Bazar over the New Year to help victims of diphtheria, who, without UK support, would have died.

These medics embody everything that the UK stands for. We are a nation which does not shy away from our responsibility. When the desperate and the displaced are in need of our help we step in. We should be incredibly proud of this.

Our team has now handed their knowledge over to medics in Bangladesh so they can carry on the fight against diphtheria. Diseases have no respect for borders and this vital work is ultimately making the world a safer place.

Notes to Editors:

1. The UK's Emergency Medical Team (EMT) is a collaboration between DFID, the NHS, Public Health England, UK Med – a register of NHS volunteers ready to deploy to emergencies, Handicap International and the UK Fire and Rescue Service. This is the first deployment of the EMT since it was verified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in December 2016. UK medical personnel have previously been deployed to respond to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013 and the Nepal earthquake in 2015.
2. The deployment has been funded from DFID's Bangladesh humanitarian budget – up to £650,000 has been earmarked for the EMT.
3. The EMT deployed to Cox's Bazar on 28 December 2017 and some staff were rotated out of Cox's Bazaar after three weeks. Replacement clinicians were deployed in mid-January. All staff were given a diphtheria booster injection before deployment.
4. Following the request for international assistance by the World Health Organisation on 15 December, a UK EMT team travelled to Bangladesh to conduct an emergency assessment, and recommended the deployment of the EMT.
5. In response to the diphtheria outbreak in Cox's Bazaar, existing clinical facilities have been converted and scaled up. This was led by Médecins Sans Frontières MSF and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). However IOM and other international NGOs are unable to manage the complex care needs of these patients, which is why they required the support of UK staff.
6. IOM has provided the medical facilities for the deployment. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has provided drugs. The UK EMT provided a specialised clinical team, clinical oversight, some key medical equipment not available in country, and accommodation and transport for staff.
7. Diphtheria is a bacterial infection. It most often causes infection of the upper respiratory tract. Diphtheria is most commonly spread from person to person through respiratory droplets (coughs and sneezes), or by direct contact with either respiratory secretions or infected skin lesions. Respiratory diphtheria usually occurs after an incubation period of 2-5 days. It causes life-threatening airway obstruction if untreated.
8. The first suspected case of diphtheria was reported on 10 November at an MSF clinic in Cox's Bazar. The outbreak was confirmed through laboratory testing on 04 December 2017. As of 30/1, 5,120 suspected cases of diphtheria and 37 deaths have been reported.
9. DFID is working in partnership with the government of Bangladesh to ensure that children living in the camps and host communities are vaccinated against this deadly disease.
10. DFID is funding £2 million of the \$4.6 million cost (£3.4 million)

required to vaccinate 351,458 children aged six-weeks to 15-years-old as part of the vaccination campaign.

11. The wider UNICEF vaccination campaign will also vaccinate 130,000 school children living in host communities near to the camps in Cox's Bazar.
12. Funding for this vaccination campaign has been provided from the response budget announced on 23rd October and 27th November 2017.
13. Medics have worked tirelessly to ensure the swift vaccination of those most at risk.
14. The UK has currently contributed £59 million to the crisis since 25 August 2017.

[Press release: Multi-million package of support for lending to small businesses and workers affected by Carillion liquidation](#)

- British Business Bank to support up to £100 million of lending to small businesses through its delivery partners
- UK Finance confirms an additional multi-million pound package for SMEs and extra help for customers concerned about their mortgage or credit card payments
- industry and government continue to work together to ensure businesses and workers are supported following Carillion's liquidation

A further package of support for the businesses and workers affected by Carillion's liquidation was welcomed today (Saturday 3 February) by Business Secretary Greg Clark.

Through delivery partners that include all the major high street lenders, the [British Business Bank](#) will provide support to make available up to £100 million of lending to small businesses who may not have the security otherwise needed for conventional bank lending using its Enterprise Finance Guarantee programme.

This will be of benefit to small businesses, including the chain of subcontractors to Carillion, who may not have sufficient assets as security to access conventional loans. These guarantees can be used to support overdraft borrowing and refinancing of existing debt.

The UK's leading banks have also furthered their commitment to provide support to those affected with UK Finance confirming additional support for [personal banking](#) customers concerned about overdraft, mortgage or credit card repayments, as well as further financial support for [small businesses](#) to provide short-term relief to help keep them afloat.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

We want to signal very clearly to small and medium sized businesses who were owed money by Carillion that they will be supported to continue trading.

The banks have responded to my request by agreeing to support businesses and individuals affected. This further guarantee will help those businesses who may not be able to provide the usual security for a loan.

I will continue to work closely with business organisations, trade unions and banks to actively support those affected by Carillion's insolvency.

British Business Bank CEO Keith Morgan said:

The Enterprise Finance Guarantee (EFG) is an important option for smaller businesses who need access to finance, but may not be able to meet a provider's normal security requirements. To help in these exceptional circumstances, we have designed additional flexibility into EFG that could be particularly suitable for firms in the Carillion supply chain. We would encourage lenders to work with their customers to use these new flexibilities to meet their needs.

UK Finance Managing Director, Commercial Finance Stephen Pegge said:

UK banks are working with government to support customers and businesses who have been impacted by the Carillion liquidation. The enhancement of the Enterprise Finance Guarantee by the British Business Bank will help those facing temporary cash flow issues to access the finance they need to support their businesses through this period.

This package is in addition to the more than £200 million [already announced](#) by Lloyds Banking Group, HSBC and RBS.

1. More than 40 accredited lenders provide finance to their SME customers under the British Business Bank's Enterprise Finance Guarantee (EFG) scheme. The Business Secretary has written to all accredited Enterprise Finance Guarantee (EFG) lenders to draw their attention to this additional support, and expects them to ensure that they are actively engaging with SME businesses in Carillion's supply chain so they can give them the support they need. Accredited EFG lenders are listed on the [British Business Bank website](#).

2. The Business Secretary has written to all accredited Enterprise Finance Guarantee (EFG) lenders to draw their attention to this additional support, and expects them to ensure that they are actively engaging with SME businesses in Carillion's supply chain so they can give them the support they need. Accredited EFG lenders are listed on the [British Business Bank website](#).
3. Information on how the Enterprise Finance Guarantee scheme operates and supports businesses can be found on the [British Business Bank website](#).
4. The [British Business Bank](#) is the UK's national economic development bank. Established in November 2014, its mission is to make finance markets for smaller businesses work more effectively, enabling those businesses to prosper, grow and build UK economic activity. Its remit is to design, deliver and efficiently manage UK-wide smaller business access to finance programmes for the UK government.
5. On Thursday 18 January the Business Secretary chaired the first meeting of a taskforce set up to monitor and advise on mitigating the impacts of Carillion's liquidation on construction firms, particularly SMEs and those working in the sector. This meeting builds on a series held by the Business Secretary last week with trade associations, unions and banks.

[News story: Home Office Minister visits Tunisia](#)

During the visit, Mr Wallace held a series of high-level meetings with senior members of the Government of Tunisia including the Ministers of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Tourism and Human Rights as well as the Secretary General of the National Security Council.

The Minister also met the tour operators and hoteliers who will be accommodating UK package holidaymakers due to return to Tunisia later this month and was shown [some](#) examples of the security improvements Tunisia has made, including some that the UK has supported.

Following his visit, Mr Wallace said:

"My first official visit to Tunisia comes at an important time for both our countries ahead of the imminent return of British holidaymakers this year. I was pleased to be able to visit some of the areas where tourists will stay and to see for myself the security improvements.

“I was delighted to meet a wide range of ministerial counterparts from the Government of Tunisia. A central theme of my meetings was our strategic security partnership in the fight against global terrorism. Countries around the world must work together by sharing information and expertise in order to combat this scourge and to mitigate the risks against all our citizens.

“I also made clear that the UK remains a steadfast partner in support of Tunisia’s remarkable democratic transition. We will continue to work hand in hand with Tunisia in the years ahead to support economic growth and prosperity as well as stability and security.”

Press release: Alistair Burt: UK “deeply concerned” by chlorine attack reports

The UK is deeply concerned by the three reports of chlorine attacks by Syrian regime forces in Eastern Ghouta so far in 2018. If it is confirmed that the regime has used chlorine, it would be yet another appalling example of the Asad regime’s blatant disregard for both the Syrian people and its legal obligation not to use chemical weapons.

Russia’s repeated vetoes – which ended the UN Security Council mandated Joint Investigative Mechanism – risk sending a dangerous signal to the Syrian regime that it can use chemical weapons with impunity.

The unrelenting airstrikes and violence by the regime and its backers in Eastern Ghouta and Idlib continue to claim indiscriminately civilian lives on a daily basis and are worsening the already dire humanitarian situation.

The Asad regime must allow immediate, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance. We call on Russia and the regime’s backers to exert their influence to ensure this.

At a meeting of the UN Security Council on Monday (5 February) the UK will again call on Russia and the international community to unite to hold the Asad regime to account for using these abhorrent weapons, to seek justice for the victims and to prevent further attacks.

[News story: Minister for Africa announces new support for Zimbabwe's democratic processes](#)

Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin meets President Emmerson Mnangagwa in Zimbabwe

Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin visited Zimbabwe on Thursday 1 February and Friday 2 February, on her first overseas visit in her new role as joint Minister for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development.

Minister Baldwin met with Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa and Foreign Minister Sibusiso Moyo to discuss the Zimbabwean government's vision for domestic transformation and international engagement through comprehensive political and economic reforms. As a central plank of this, they discussed the importance of the elections later this year being peaceful, credible, free and fair. Minister Baldwin welcomed the President's commitment to invite international observers from the EU and UN as well as SADC and AU.

Minister Baldwin met with Finance Minister Chinamasa and Reserve Bank Governor John Mangudya to discuss the government's plans for clearing debt and normalising relations with the International Financial Institutions. Minister Baldwin welcomed the government's recommitment to the Lima plan and confirmed that the UK would continue to support the government's reform agenda. Minister Baldwin also welcomed government plans to attract more investment into agriculture through ensuring land tenure and compensation are tackled.

Speaking at an event with prominent civil society actors, including human rights activists and elections experts, the Minister announced £5 million of new UK aid funding to support the strengthening of democratic electoral processes in the run up to and following the 2018 elections.

Minister Baldwin reflects on her visit to Zimbabwe

[Minister for Africa visits Harare](#)

In a meeting with Zimbabwean business people and entrepreneurs, the Minister heard of the enormous potential of Zimbabwe and how some of the obstacles including the currency crisis can be overcome with the support of business.

Minister Baldwin visited two DFID projects to understand how UK aid is supporting some of the most marginalised in Zimbabwe. At a school for children with disabilities, the Minister was able to speak to students and teachers to see how UK support has helped enrich the children's lives and give them skills for the future. The Minister also visited a DFID-funded

shelter for survivors of sexual and gender based violence. She was able to learn more about the experiences of the women and how UK aid is helping marginalised women and girls to access counselling, shelter and legal aid.

Minister Baldwin said:

I am pleased that my first overseas trip as Minister has been to Zimbabwe. The historic events the country has experienced over the last few months have created an opportunity to strengthen UK-Zimbabwe relations as part of a wider process of international engagement.

The upcoming elections are a major milestone for the people of Zimbabwe. When I met President Mnangagwa, I said my government welcomed his commitment to hold credible, peaceful, free and fair elections monitored by international observers.

I have seen for myself that Zimbabwe is a country of enormous potential. With the right leadership, the right policy environment and a vibrant democracy and civil society, Zimbabwe can undergo the transformation it so richly deserves.

Further information