

Yemen's health crisis: WHO calls for increased funding to save millions of Yemenis



Sana'a, Yemen / 26 February 2023 – Ahead of tomorrow's High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen, the World Health Organization (WHO) together with its Health Cluster partners in Yemen is appealing for US\$392 million to reach 12.9 million people with essential health assistance in 2023.

"Yemen requires urgent and robust support from international donors and other partners to effectively avert the potential collapse of its health system," said Dr. Adham Abdel Moneim Ismail, WHO Representative in Yemen. "New funding in the amount of US\$392 million is required by Yemen's health sector to ensure that overstretched health facilities can continue providing even most basic services to 12.9 million most vulnerable people."

In 2022, international funding pledges enabled WHO and 44 Health Cluster partners (including 4 other UN agencies, 39 international and local NGOs, and Yemen's Ministry of Public Health and Population) to deliver medical equipment, supplies, trainings and other support to hospitals and health facilities that provided a wide range of vital and often lifesaving services to nearly 7.8 million Yemenis. Nevertheless, this level of funding fell far short of addressing identified and urgent health needs of some 12.6 million persons, effectively limiting assistance to only 7.8 million of them.

Increased funding urgently needed

"To date in 2023, funds pledged to the WHO-led Health Cluster equals only 3.5 percent of the US\$392 million required to provide even most basic services to the 12.9 million most vulnerable Yemenis targeted by this year's United Nations Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Yemen," said Dr. Adham Abdel Moneim Ismail. "They include up to 540,000 children under age five who are otherwise facing severe acute malnutrition (SAM), with direct risk of death."

“Unless and until this massive funding gap is reversed, we will not be able to sustain our health emergency interventions in Yemen. We therefore call upon donors to continue to support our efforts to provide essential and lifesaving health services to the Yemeni people,” Dr. Adham Abdel Moneim said.

Yemen requires continuing strong support from the international donor community to deliver a minimum health service package that prioritizes access to primary health care services by vulnerable population groups, especially in remote and conflict-affected districts of Yemen where these services are most needed.

This minimum service package entails health interventions and continuum of services prioritized at each level of care – from prevention and diagnosis to treatment and rehabilitation – in order to:

- maintain even low levels of immunization coverage against recurring and fast-spreading outbreaks of communicable diseases including COVID-19, measles, diphtheria and the vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2);
- sustain and strengthen local capacities to detect, assess, and contain vector-borne and water-borne diseases including malaria, dengue fever, and cholera;
- ensure adequate nutrition surveillance and continuation of life-saving medical and nutrition care for Yemeni infants and children, especially those suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM) with medical complications;
- continue deliveries of essential fuel, oxygen, medicines, and water, sanitation and hygiene for services (WASH) for infection prevention and control to functioning/targeted health facilities country-wide; and
- prevent the potential collapse of Yemen’s health system, which will otherwise be unable to reach some 39.5 percent of the population.

“Tomorrow’s high-level pledging event for the humanitarian crisis in Yemen comes at a crucial moment to show the world’s commitment to assisting millions of Yemenis who are in distress and suffering from diseases, malnutrition, and trauma,” Dr. Adham Abdel Moneim added.

Underfunding of the Health Cluster in Yemen in 2023 (serving 4,812 health facilities, 276 hospitals and specialized centres, 1,199 health centres, and 3,337 health units) will result in:

- Up to 1,000 unsupported health facilities;
- 10 million persons including 7.9 million children without needed access to health services;
- 1.1 million children with acute malnutrition facing deteriorating health or death; and
- 2.9 million women of reproductive age lacking maternal, child, and reproductive services.

Note to the editors

Worsening health situation and WHO’s response across Yemen

Nearly nine years of conflict has left over two thirds of Yemen’s population (21.6 million people) in present need of humanitarian assistance. An estimated 4.5 million people are internally displaced. Endemic violence, a deteriorating economy, mounting food insecurity and recurring disease outbreaks have all but collapsed the country’s health system. Across Yemen currently, 46 percent of all health facilities are only partially functioning or completely out of service due to shortages of staff, funds, electricity, medicines, supplies, and equipment.

In 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) provided life-saving medical and healthcare services to 12.6 million Yemenis – 62 percent of last year’s Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).

The World Health Organization (WHO) is sustaining an integrated response in these priority areas: 1) coordinating the national Health Cluster; 2) keeping therapeutic feeding centres (TFCs) operational; 3) strengthening disease surveillance; 4) responding to all infectious disease outbreaks; 5) supporting health care facilities and services; 6) controlling vector-borne, water-borne, and neglected tropical diseases; 7) fighting chronic diseases including diabetes, renal diseases, and cancer; 8) maintaining water, sanitation and hygiene services (WASH) to strengthening infection prevention and control measures in hospitals; 9) supporting and improving maternal and newborn health care; and 10) responding to a neglected mental health crisis.

WHO follows an integrated and sustainable health approach focused on ensuring continuous access to health for all vulnerable people, while also strengthening the capacities and efficiencies of the national health system and Ministry of Public Health and Population (MoPHP) in Yemen with sustainable solutions.

These solutions include but are not limited to the rehabilitation of health facilities; the establishment of units and laboratories that the Yemeni health system lacks; the establishment of a disease outbreak surveillance system, a health information management system, and much more.

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