19 June, 2015 | Sana'a, Yemen: A major health crisis is unfolding in conflict-ravaged Yemen, where hospitals have been destroyed, health workers killed and critical shortages of food, medical supplies and fuel are causing large-scale suffering , according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

"Urgent action is needed to safeguard health facilities and ensure people caught up in the insecurity have access to health care," says Dr Ahmed Shadoul, WHO's Representative to Yemen.

"Yemen's health system is on the verge of breakdown, and it is only thanks to the heroic efforts of the country's health workers, the resilience of its brave people and the tireless efforts of national and international humanitarian organizations that any semblance of health care is being provided."

From 19 March to 15 June 2015, more than 2800 people have been killed in the conflict, and approximately 12 500 injured, according to Yemen's Ministry of Health.

Key health challenges include:

- more than 15 million people, including over one million internally displaced person (IDPs), in dire need of health services;
- critical shortages of medicines for diabetes, hypertension and cancer, and essential supplies including trauma kits and blood bags;
- more than 3000 suspected cases of dengue fever;
- 1.8 million–2.5 million children at risk of diarrhoeal diseases and up to 1.3 million children at risk of acute respiratory infections;
- increase in hospital admissions for malnutrition by 150% since March;
- tens of thousands of pregnant women face great difficulty in accessing antenatal and emergency obstetric care;
- health worker safety under threat, including 5 deaths and 5 injuries, and at least 53 health facilities damaged – including 17 hospitals, as well as the Operations Room of the Ministry of Health in Sana'a, which manages all emergency operations for the entire country;

- more than 20 million people in Yemen lack access to safe drinking-water and sanitation.

WHO and Health Cluster partners have been responding to the Yemen health crisis by providing supplies, services and support to national and regional authorities.

Since March, WHO has:

- dispatched approximately 130 tonnes of medicines and medical supplies, to provide emergency and routine care to 4.7 million people for 3 months;
- distributed more than 650 000 litres of fuel to health facilities to support their continued functioning;
- deployed disease surveillance and humanitarian experts to support WHO's response;
- provided safe water and sanitation kits and supplies to health facilities and IDP camps;
- delivered cleaning tools and equipment, safety materials and awareness publications to health centres and more than 250 households;
- trained local nursing staff of 3 main hospitals in Sana'a (Al-Kwait, Al-Jumhoori and Al-Sabeen hospitals) who have replaced evacuated foreign staff.

Humanitarian needs have grown immensely since the conflict started. On Friday, the revised Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan was released to respond to these increased demands, including in the health sector. The plan calls for US$ 152 million to enable WHO and Health Cluster partners to continue meeting the health needs of 15 million people.