7 November 2018 – More than 3 and a half years of war and conflict in Yemen have resulted in widespread devastation and the silent suffering of millions of people. With half of all health facilities closed, access to basic services is limited for Yemenis, resulting in an extremely deteriorated health situation across the country.

Vulnerable communities are forced to travel long distances in order to access basic health care. Due to the precarious economic situation as a result of the conflict, the sick have no choice but to stay at home and face the risk of dying, simply because they cannot afford to pay for transportation to the nearest functional health facility.

Azal Health Centre in Azal District, Sana'a, is supported by WHO through the provision of essential medicines and medical supplies and supporting health workers with financial incentives. The centre is overcrowded with cholera patients of different ages, many of whom have had to travel for hours to reach this facility.

Seventy-year-old Taqiya Ali was sick for 3 days before she was brought to Azal Health Centre, where she was diagnosed with cholera. The 3-hour journey from her home town of Al Saudah to Sana'a almost cost Taqiya her life. During the drive, she experienced severe diarrhoea and vomiting, causing her to faint many times.

"When we first arrived in Sana'a, 2 hospitals turned her away due to limited capacity before she was finally admitted to this health centre" says Taqiya's sister.

Fifteen-year-old Haifa Khaled is devastated. Admitted to Azal Health Centre with cholera for the second time this year, her symptoms are even more severe that those following her first diagnosis. Her mother died of cholera in the same facility just a few months ago. She believes she will suffer the same fate.

"Water and sanitation services are non-existent in our area. This is why people continue to get infected," explained Haifa's sister.

Upstairs Jamela Saleh Mohamed, a woman in her late forties, is tired. She had to pay more than she could afford to take a taxi for a one-and-a-half-hour drive from Bani Al-Hareth to Al-Sabeen hospital in Sana'a, which did not admit her due to capacity issues.

Jamela arrived at Azal health centre after she experienced 4-hour long seizures due to severe dehydration. "I am feeling better now, but my body is exhausted."

Azal Health Centre in Sana'a is one of 176 health facilities that WHO is supporting with the minimum service package to strengthen Yemen's health system at district level by providing for essential health needs and services in these hospitals, free of charge. This support is provided in partnership with the World Bank, OFDA, KSRelief and UAE Aid. WHO is currently expanding

the number of facilities supported through the minimum service package to ensure more district health facilities are reached with key health services.

http://www.emro.who.int/yem/yemen-news/who-supports-district-health-facilities-in-yemen-to-respond-to-basic-health-needs.html