Yemen remains the world’s worst humanitarian disaster, and WHO’s most complex operation. More than 5 years of war have devastated Yemen’s health infrastructure. In 2020, more people in the country are dying from lack of access to treatment than they are from the bullets and bombs. Today, millions of Yemenis are yet again faced with the fight of their lives. Unlike a gunshot wound or injury from shrapnel, COVID-19 is silently and rapidly spreading in Yemen.

Over the next 6 months, WHO and partners need US$ 203 million to reach more than 7 million people as part of the COVID-19 response plan in Yemen. Without additional funds, there is a real threat of a public health catastrophe as already vulnerable Yemenis face yet another battle for survival.

Below are some highlights of WHO’s work to fight COVID-19 in Yemen.
upgrade 38 specialized isolation units across the country that authorities have designated for COVID-19. As of May 2020, 32 hospitals have already received equipment and 7 specialized isolation units are fully operational. The remaining 30 will be fully operational by June, with WHO funding.

WHO has already procured, transported and distributed 520 intensive care unit (ICU) beds and 208 ventilators. WHO has purchased 1000 more ICU beds and 400 additional ventilators and will transport these as soon as conditions permit.

To prevent health workers from becoming infected, WHO has distributed masks, gloves, surgical gowns, and other protective gear to Yemen’s health facilities, with more than 230 000 PPE units delivered so far. WHO is aggressively trying to secure the personal protective equipment needed to meet expected needs for the second half of 2020, despite global shortages.

Critically ill COVID-19 patients often require oxygen. Across Yemen, WHO ensures that more than 11 000 cylinders of oxygen are refilled each month.

WHO is training and funding 333 rapid response teams, which they plan to increase to 999 teams to triple detection capacity. These 5-person teams are present in every single district across the country, responsible for detecting, assessing and responding to suspected COVID-19 cases. People can reach out to these teams through multiple channels, including newly established hotline numbers. Contact tracing and case investigations are being carried out, but there are patient access and security challenges.
WHO has helped train 672 medical staff in preventing infection and treating COVID-19 patients.

WHO rehabilitated this laboratory department to increase detection capacity for COVID-19 cases and other diseases.

WHO Yemen works to dispel rumours about COVID-19 and make sure Yemenis know how to protect themselves. WHO tracks myths and fake news stories rigorously, then addresses them via social media and other channels.

To coordinate the COVID-19 response in Yemen, WHO is helping to repurpose 26 Emergency Operations Centres, which were established at the height of the cholera epidemic. Partners have already trained nearly 900 health personnel on rapid response, infection control, case management, psychological first aid and helping children cope with stress. WHO’s response to COVID-19 in Yemen is possible through the generous support of the World Bank.