15 June 2020 – “I wished desperately that COVID-19 wouldn’t reach Yemen, as we are already suffering from cholera, diphtheria, dengue, malaria and malnutrition compounded with the ongoing conflict that has wrecked the already appalling health system,” said Khaled Mohammed, a laboratory technician in the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) COVID-19 department in the Central Laboratory in Sana’a.

Yemen is the world’s worst humanitarian crisis, and it is now facing another major threat to health security — COVID-19. If countries with well developed health systems are struggling to contain the virus, the effects on Yemen with just 50% of its health system operational will be catastrophic.

Almost 6 years of ongoing conflict have pushed the country into uncertainty and left its population vulnerable even before COVID-19, leaving it with a collapsed social and civic infrastructure, a frail economy, and a fragile health system. 19.7 million people are in need of access to health care.

“As we were watching the news of COVID-19 ravaging the whole world, with my country as one of the last ones to join the battle, I felt fearful. To watch it on the news and hear about it and to be constantly faced with the risk of contracting it since I’m running COVID-19 tests is a completely different story.”

Due to the ongoing conflict, health workers are not receiving their salaries. Still, they are working tirelessly to respond to the COVID-19 crisis in addition to a host of other communicable and noncommunicable diseases which continue to affect people across the country.

These health workers are the real heroes of the crisis

“Yes, I’m afraid for my health and my family’s, but as long as I can provide help, I will never stay aside. I’m working 24 hours tirelessly in the PCR section to run the COVID-19 tests. And this is...
the least I can do.”

Now more than ever, all health partners need to galvanize efforts in the fight against COVID-19 and other dangerous diseases that will continue to pose a threat in the lives of Yemenis.

“We are putting our lives at an unprecedented risk to save you and your families, I call on all Yemenis to be extremely vigilant and protect themselves. We are working for you, please stay home for us.”

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