

Sana'a, 23 August 2021 – The World Health Organization (WHO) country office in Yemen denies what has been reported in some local media concerning the 2020 suspension of the “medical airbridge” project for Yemeni patients.

The WHO Yemen country office also wishes to clarify the following points about this project:

This project was implemented by WHO in Yemen in 2020 with funding from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The role of WHO-Yemen was limited to supervision, coordination and arrangement of accommodation and treatment for patients and their companions.

This project did not fall within the usual activities of WHO as they are implemented in 193 countries around the world. Rather, the project was exceptionally implemented in Yemen in cooperation with OCHA, as agreed with the two ministries of health working in the north and south of Yemen, and with strictly controlled funding from donor countries.

The process of selecting patients was conducted with the Higher Medical Committee of the Ministry of Public Health and Population in Sana'a, independently of any WHO involvement.

The total cost of this project was approximately US\$ 6.5 million, including all costs of transporting patients and their families from different governorates to the capital, in addition to the costs of treatment, examination, accommodation and subsistence in the capital's five-star hotels. The patients and families were originally scheduled to stay in these hotels for only two days; however, these stays were extended to more than six months as the result of obstacles raised by internal and external parties. These obstacles effectively blocked all arrangements and efforts made by WHO in Yemen to expedite the travel of these patients for treatment abroad, as had been originally intended, scheduled, and expected to take place.

Medical services were arranged and provided to Yemeni patients on their first trip to foreign hospitals. In Amman, Jordan, the costs of these services extended over more than a year of treatments, totalling approximately US\$ 4.8 million and depleting all remaining project funds.

Most of these patients returned to Yemen at the end of their medical treatments; however, some sought political asylum in Jordan rather than returning to Yemen voluntarily.

Despite continual efforts made by WHO in Yemen to secure funding needed to continue this project, donor countries were unwilling to fund any more flights for patients from all regions of Yemen to receive medical services anywhere outside the country.

Since the 1940s, the WHO Yemen country office has been providing financed health assistance to the people of Yemen, in agreement and coordination with national health authorities. This assistance has included medical services, equipment, supplies, medicines, vaccination and control campaigns for many diseases during the past 80 years. WHO has not and will not compromise this assistance in any way, at any time, while continuing to assist all Yemeni citizens wherever and however this is possible, now and in the future.

Having clarified the above points about the 2020 suspension of the “medical airbridge” project for Yemeni patients, the WHO country office calls on all media to be responsible, credible and accurate when reporting the news.

Tuesday 30th of April 2024 01:00:21 PM