



2 April 2024, Aden, Yemen – To better protect one of the most vulnerable populations in the world from pandemic threats, Yemen has today launched the Pandemic Preparedness and Response Project (PPRP).

The virtual launch event was complemented by satellite in-person events in Aden, Republic of Yemen; Amman, Jordan; and Washington, D.C., United States of America. The event was attended by His Excellency Dr Qasem Buhaibeh, Minister of Public Health and Population; His Excellency Major General Salem Abdullah Al Soqatri, Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Fisheries; and Priya Basu, Executive Head of the Pandemic Fund Secretariat.

Also present were representatives of the PPRP implementing agencies: the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank. Senior government officials, Health Cluster partners, and members of civil society and the public also joined the event.

The new PPRP will run for 3 years. Its goal is to protect and improve the health and well-being of Yemen’s people, livestock and ecosystems by strengthening the country’s ability to prevent,

detect and rapidly respond to endemic and pandemic threats.

This goal will be achieved by pursuing the following 4 objectives:

Reinforce disease prevention, early warning, surveillance, detection and response capabilities through a One Health approach and at points of entry.

Improve health and veterinary laboratory capacities to confirm health threats and enhance biosafety and biosecurity.

Strengthen multisectoral workforce capacities from the community level up.

Enhance coordination, data sharing, communication and accountability among One Health stakeholders.

Delivery of these objectives will be supported by a US\$ 26 million grant from the Pandemic Fund, and complementary action under other World Bank grants. These other grants include the Emergency Human Capital Project (2021–2024), implemented by UNICEF, WHO and UNOPS, with funding to date of US\$ 448 million.

The Pandemic Fund grant also builds on the legacy of past successful investments that have strengthened outbreak preparedness and response, including the Yemen COVID-19 Response Project (2020–2022), implemented by WHO and the World Bank, and the Emergency Health and Nutrition Project (2017–2022), implemented by UNICEF and WHO with World Bank support.

Speaking at the launch, H.E. Dr Qasem Buhaibeh, Minister of Public Health and Population, reflected on Yemen's commitment to improve pandemic preparedness and response: "Guided by WHO's International Health Regulations, we are striving to raise our defences against persistent disease threats. This requires all-of-society action, and I hope everyone here today

will join us in this effort.”

In recent years, building on lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, Yemen has started to routinely deliver on the International Health Regulations (IHR) core capacities, such as IHR State Parties Self-Assessment Annual Report (SPAR). The country also conducted its first WHO joint external evaluation of IHR capacities in 2023 and is developing the first Yemen National Action Plan for Health Security, building on the findings and recommendations of these assessments.

H.E. Major General Salem Abdullah Al Soqatri, Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Fisheries, emphasized the importance of multisectoral collaboration: “We know a whole host of threats exist at the animal–human interface – using a One Health approach, with strong coordination at all levels, we can mitigate this risk and better protect ourselves and other countries.”

Dr Priya Basu, Executive Head of the Pandemic Fund, who joined virtually from the USA, said: “In partnership with the Government of Yemen, WHO, FAO, and UNICEF, the Pandemic Fund is proud to launch this innovative project aimed at fortifying Yemen against future major health threats. By enhancing digital surveillance capabilities and ensuring timely and effective response mechanisms are in place, alongside efforts to bolster laboratory systems and build a highly skilled health workforce, our project will significantly advance the country's pandemic preparedness and response capacities.”

WHO Representative to Yemen Dr Arturo Pesigan confirmed the need for broad-based action for pandemic preparedness and response, stating: “At WHO, we often say health systems strengthening is everybody’s business. I’d like to expand on this to say pandemic preparedness and response is everybody’s business.”

UNICEF Representative to Yemen Peter Hawkins stressed that “In a world still vulnerable to the impact of pandemics, our resilience will be measured by our ability to prepare diligently and respond swiftly. Every child must be protected from the threat of emerging diseases.”

PPRP is expected to make valuable contributions to Yemen’s preparedness and response capacities. Efforts will include, with WHO support, expanding and enhancing integrated disease surveillance and response. This will be done by leveraging and improving existing platforms

such as the electronic Integrated Disease Early Warning System (eIDEWS) and rapid response teams positioned in each of the country's 333 districts. The support will also help to sustain Yemen's 12 central public health laboratories and enhance sample transportation systems.

FAO will support action to enhance surveillance for zoonotic diseases and agricultural laboratories and UNICEF will enhance community-based surveillance across the country. This work will be done in collaboration with WHO and the health authorities. At every step of the way, civil society will be engaged – to mobilize communities for pandemic action, and to ensure project accountability for the delivery of effective results.

The launch served as a crucial moment to showcase Yemen's commitment to – and the support of local and international partners for – pandemic preparedness and response, and to mobilize broad action to protect communities from pandemic threats.

So far, the project has set up routine coordination meetings as well as a One Health coordination platform, bringing together the Ministry of Public Health and Population, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Fisheries, WHO, FAO and other key stakeholders. PPRP focal points have been assigned at each implementing agency and the relevant ministries. Granular technical plans are under development, along with a civil society network for pandemic action.

A joint coordination committee, made up of representatives of government entities and partner organizations, is also being set up. This will regularly review progress, discuss challenges, and provide guidance on the project's overall strategic direction.

About the Pandemic Fund

The Pandemic Fund – a multistakeholder partnership – was developed by the World Bank, in close collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners. It was established as a Financial Intermediary Fund at the World Bank in September 2022, launched in November 2022 at the G20 meetings in Bali, Indonesia, and has come together to deliver financing at record speed. The Fund is an innovative addition to the international health financing toolkit, a first-of-its-kind multilateral platform dedicated to making investments in pandemic prevention and preparedness in low- and middle-income countries. It has the flexibility to work through a variety of institutions, complementing efforts, drawing in co-financing, and promoting coordination on the ground; most importantly, it incentivizes countries to prioritize this agenda and increase their own efforts. The Fund's operating model

involves collaboration with governments, WHO, other United Nations agencies, multilateral development banks, global health initiatives, the private sector, philanthropic institutions, and civil society.

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