

Damascus, 29 November 2022 – Trucks carrying two million doses of Oral Cholera Vaccines (OCV) arrived in Damascus, Syria, today.

Since the outbreak was declared on 10 September, tens of thousands of suspected acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) cases have been reported in all governorates.

“Both adults and children are at risk of contracting the disease, but children often bear the brunt of severe illness and death. Procuring and delivering the vaccines timely is a top priority for UNICEF as cases continue to be reported in Syria,” said UNICEF Syria Representative a.i., Ghada Kachachi.

The vaccines will be used in an immunization campaign starting on 4 December to reach vulnerable people in the highly affected governorates: Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa Al -Hassakeh, and Deir ez-Zor.

“Cholera is a public health threat affecting the health of populations and imposing substantial costs on public health systems. The arrival of the cholera vaccine reflects the collective efforts of all partners on the ground to curb the spread of cholera and enhance the humanitarian health response to protect, promote and secure the health of all Syrians in need across the country,” said Dr Iman Shankiti, WHO a.i. Representative in Syria. “These vaccines are part of a comprehensive response, and in order to curb the outbreak, we must ensure we continue our joint efforts to improve water networks, increase awareness among the population, and provide treatment to affected patients,” Dr Shankiti added.

WHO and UNICEF, with the Ministry of Health, are implementing a multisectoral approach to control the outbreak. The agencies are mobilizing critical water, hygiene, and sanitation (WASH) and health supplies, response services, and expertise in the affected governorates. This includes providing cholera treatment kits and supplies, including rapid diagnostics tests and tablets for home-based water treatment. UNICEF supports the distribution of sodium hypochlorite to increase chlorine dosages and concentration at household water sources to prevent and curb the spread of the disease. UNICEF engages communities through selected media and dialogues, door-to-door visits, and key messaging on the causes, symptoms, and prevention of cholera.

WHO is working to continuously monitor water quality in high-risk areas, enhance cholera surveillance in high-risk areas at health facilities and community levels and strengthen lab capacities. WHO, UNICEF and health partners have also supported the establishment of oral rehydration points and diarrhoea treatment centers and are working on scaling up the national capacities for cholera case management, including extending cholera treatment services to the primary healthcare level to ensure all communities are served.

“While we are all working to respond to this outbreak urgently, it is equally important we invest in the health and WASH systems underpinning the essential services vulnerable children and families so desperately need,” added Representative Kachachi.

### **Notes to Editors**

UNICEF’s complete AWD kits include oral rehydration solutions, medicine, soap, water purification tablets, and other infection control items to treat moderate and severe AWD cases.

WHO’s complete cholera kits contain intravenous fluids, essential medicines, and supplies for cholera and cholera beds.

### About UNICEF

UNICEF works in some of the world’s toughest places, to reach the world’s most disadvantaged children. Across 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone. For more information about UNICEF and its work for children, visit [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).

### About WHO

Under its vision of Universal Health Coverage and the right to health care for all people, everywhere, WHO works worldwide to promote health, keep the world safe, and serve the vulnerable. Its goal is to ensure that a billion more people have universal health coverage, to

protect a billion more people from health emergencies, and provide a further billion people with better health and well-being. Visit [www.who.int](http://www.who.int).

For more information, please contact:

Eva Hinds, Chief of Communication, UNICEF Syria, [ehinds@unicef.org](mailto:ehinds@unicef.org), +963 950 044 304

Christina Bethke, Emergency Team Lead, WHO Syria, [dupinc@who.int](mailto:dupinc@who.int)

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