GENEVA, 15 December 2015 – The World Health Organization and health partners are appealing for US$ 31 million to ensure the continuity of health services for nearly 15 million people in Yemen affected by the ongoing conflict. Funding is urgently needed as the Yemeni health system has collapsed, leaving millions of vulnerable people without the care and medications they urgently need.

"WHO is appealing to donors to help us meet the urgent, immediate humanitarian needs of the injured, pregnant women, malnourished children and elderly who are bearing the brunt of a collapsing health system," says Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the WHO Eastern Mediterranean. "We should not allow this to continue. With sufficient funds, we can reduce the risk of disease outbreaks, provide life-saving medications and vaccinate children to reduce avoidable deaths."

Currently, WHO and health partners are providing essential medicines, supporting health services and providing mental health psychosocial support in hard-to-reach areas through mobile clinics and primary health care centres. However, more funding is required to ensure that disrupted services are restored. "The funding requested will help WHO and our partners support vital health services in 3 major areas: casualty management for those injured due to the conflict, treatment for patients with chronic diseases, and disease surveillance and vaccination activities to prevent outbreaks," says Dr Ahmed Shadoul, WHO Representative to Yemen.

The health and humanitarian situation for the civilian population in Yemen has reached catastrophic levels. The situation in some governorates is especially critical: 100% of the population of the Aden governorate and more than three quarters in the Taiz governorate are in need of humanitarian assistance. Since September, fighting has intensified in Taiz, and almost 240 000 vulnerable civilians are living under a virtual state of siege. In other parts of the country, the conflict has crippled the health system, making the delivery of health services and supplies extremely challenging. Almost 70 health facilities and 27 ambulances have been damaged, and there is a shortage of health workers, limiting access to health care.

Compounding the situation, fuel shortages have made it impossible for many major hospitals and health facilities to function optimally, while lack of fuel for ambulances has crippled the referral process. Surgical operations, including caesarian sections, have been disrupted. Patients whose treatment requires constant power supply are also at risk. Fuel shortages are also are creating severe challenges for the transportation of food, water, and medical supplies, and the operation of water pumps and generators. In response to this, WHO has supplied over one million litres of fuel to health facilities and ambulances to keep them functional. Support has also been provided for the delivery of water purification tablets and over 19 million litres of water to camps and areas hosting internally displaced persons.

Over the past 9 months, WHO has distributed over 250 tonnes of life-saving medical supplies

to Yemeni health authorities and international, and local nongovernmental organizations, serving more than 7 million beneficiaries. Together with health partners, WHO has vaccinated 4.6 million children against polio and 1.8 million against measles in high-risk areas.

"WHO and health partners call on all donors to urgently fill this funding gap and ensure continuity of life-saving and essential health services," says Dr Shadoul.