

Statement from Rt Hon Priti Patel MP Secretary of State for International Development

"I am proud that Global Britain is leading the response to the unprecedented humanitarian challenges the world faces today; we are among the first to act when disasters strike or conflicts erupt. I am also proud that we continue to reach those left furthest behind, by continuing to deliver on our commitments to women and girls in crises, and ensuring that all our humanitarian funding considers sexual and reproductive health.

This is a neglected and urgent issue and there is so much more to do, which is why we are shining a light on family planning in humanitarian crises at the Family Planning Summit. More than 26 million women and girls of reproductive age worldwide require humanitarian assistance. It is estimated that between 25% and 50% of maternal deaths in refugee settings are due to complications of unsafe abortion.

The UK is acting now to ensure more lives are saved in humanitarian crises through family planning. We are now demanding that our humanitarian partners deliver the Minimum Initial Service Package for Reproductive Health – which from late 2017 will include a new and vital objective on family planning – when it is required, so that the right services are getting to the women and girls who need and want them the most. The UK's own Emergency Medical Team is also ready and equipped to deliver sexual and reproductive health services, should it be called upon. We are continuing to strengthen the resilience of countries at risk, so that they are in a better place to provide family planning services when disaster strikes.

I am pleased to announce new programmes that will deliver sexual and reproductive health services in countries affected by, or at risk of, humanitarian crises: we are providing an extra £8m to train more female health workers who are delivering in areas affected by humanitarian crisis in North East Nigeria. We're also extending our funding to UNFPA in Syria by £1.5m, where programmes deliver essential reproductive health and family planning services, including support to survivors of violence. We are supporting WHO to build a global accountability mechanism, and next month DFID will launch an innovation challenge focused on access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for girls and women affected by conflict or disaster.

But UK support alone is not enough to change the tide. The international community must realise that family planning saves lives, that women and girls demand it, and that it is possible to deliver these essential services in difficult contexts. For too long it has been seen as optional; for too long family planning has been neglected in our humanitarian responses. The global humanitarian community needs to work harder for women and girls, and it needs to deliver on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Not only will UK core humanitarian funding be monitored for how it is delivering on sexual and reproductive health and rights, I am pleased to be teaming up with donor

colleagues so that we can collectively and consistently push the humanitarian community to do more. We are signing a [joint donor statement](#), committing us to working together to drive better outcomes for women and girls through our humanitarian funding. Together, we fully endorse the Global Data and Accountability Roadmap for Sexual and Reproductive Health in Crises, which will address the lack of information that lies behind the failure to reach these most vulnerable women. This game-changing initiative will mean that by 2020 we will have more evidence of what methods works in these contexts, and we will be able to gather vital data in order to hold the whole system to account.

More countries and international bodies must act now, to ensure that we reach the most vulnerable people with family planning services and save lives.”