**UK provides COVID-19 humanitarian and remittance relief fund to Africa**

UK has provided vital support to almost 750, 000 people across eight Southern African countries impacted by COVID-19, including Madagascar.

On 1st December, the UK announced £7 million to provide much-needed essential services and food assistance to almost 750,000 people, including 14,000 households and nearly half a million migrants who have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic across Southern Africa.

The region has been hard-hit by a prolonged drought and the COVID-19 pandemic has further deepened the food insecurity situation – 18 million people across Southern Africa are at risk of hunger for the remainder of this year.

Communities in Lesotho, Eswatini, Madagascar, Namibia and South Africa affected by the pandemic will benefit from a £6.5 million emergency fund that – through partners UNICEF, International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) – will provide:

water, hygiene and sanitation services to 184,000 people

food security assistance to almost 14,000 households and more than 13,000 migrants

gender-based violence protection measures, including mental health care, for 24,000 women and children, as well as support for almost half a million migrants

In addition, a new fund set up by the FinMark Trust, will provide income relief to more than 8,000 families in Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe most affected by a drop in remittances from South Africa due to the negative impacts of COVID-19.

Many low-income families in the Southern Africa region rely on remittances from family members based in South Africa. Estimates indicate that there are up to 3.7 million migrants from Southern African countries living in South Africa, sending R21.9 billion (approximately £1 billion) annually to family members back home. An average of £15 per month will be provided to families affected by lost income from remittances, helping people meet immediate needs like food, rent and school fees. The UK is anchoring the fund with £500,000 in two tranches.

UK funding to provide emergency assistance to communities worst affected by impact of drought and COVID-19 in Madagascar:

water, hygiene and sanitation services including access to clean water for 2,000 people, sustainable water for 5,000 more, WASH kits for 15,000 households, and information on WASH services

75,000 parents will be trained to screen their children for acute malnutrition and refer them to the treatment sites over 8 districts, and in one specific district, 14 health centre staff and 74 community workers will be trained on mother and child feeding & hygiene practices to prevent acute malnutrition

social protection for 2,500 households in the form of emergency cash assistance (drought resilience)

GBV & VAC services for 3,250 women and children through behaviour change campaign and access to protection networks.

James Duddridge MP, UK Minister for Africa, said:

For many communities across Southern Africa, the COVID-19 pandemic is not only a health emergency – it is also damaging livelihoods and exacerbating food shortages. The support the UK is providing will help families in crisis across Southern Africa – many of whom are female-led households – improving access to COVID-19 information and basic services, and protecting livelihoods.

UK action to support the flow of remittances will help those most vulnerable to the economic fallout of COVID-19 across Southern Africa to access the necessary money to meet their immediate needs.

Brendan Pearce, CEO of FinMark Trust, said:

Families across Southern Africa rely heavily on remittances from their loved ones. Amongst these families, the economic fallout of COVID-19 has hit the vulnerable particularly hard, especially women and children. The Southern Africa COVID-19 Remittance Relief Fund has been established to bring much-needed support to these communities. We are working in partnership with financial service providers across the region to make sure that this money reaches those most in need as quickly as possible.

The British Ambassador to Antananarivo said:

The UK is proud to partner with UNICEF in the south of Madagascar to assist people affected by a combination of drought and the secondary impacts of COVID-19. We are contributing over £1 million to provide clean water, emergency cash transfers and nutrition services and to support initiatives that prevent and respond to gender based violence and violence against children.