

## **UNICEF alarmed at the surge of COVID-19 cases amid low vaccination rates in Libya**

**20 July 2021, Tripoli** – Libya is witnessing an alarming surge in COVID-19 cases in the last 2 weeks where infections area at their peak. The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) recorded 4,061 new COVID cases on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, the highest daily rate since the onset of the pandemic.

Libya has surpassed 221,495 new COVID-19 cases since the beginning of the pandemic as the highly contagious Delta variant persists in the neighbouring countries and most likely is in Libya. The virus is rapidly spreading across Libya with a 270% increase in COVID-19 cases in the West, 480% in the South and 50% in the East of the country. These numbers are terrifying enough but the actual number of cases is likely to be much higher due to acute shortages of tests and laboratory capacity.

*“We are alarmed at the rapid spread of the virus in the country,”* said AbdulKadir Musse, UNICEF Special Representative in Libya. *“The vaccination rate is very low, and the spread is fast. We must be faster in our response. The most important thing we can do to stop the spread of COVID-19, and the variants, is ensure everyone who is eligible gets vaccinated. Countries with high coverage of two doses of vaccines have been able to drastically reduced rate of hospitalization and deaths. We also need follow and abide to preventive measures.”*, he added.

Already disrupted by years of instability, the Libyan healthcare system is further challenged with high rates of community transmission and is struggling to curb the rapid spread and to meet the population’s needs.

UNICEF is supporting the authorities and scaling up COVID-19 response, including supporting the rollout of national COVID-19 vaccination and Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE). UNICEF continues to provide support for safe delivery and use of the COVID-19 vaccines in Libya. So far, UNICEF delivered three batches of COVID-19 vaccine through the COVAX Facility. The vaccines are distributed to vaccination centers throughout the country in coordination with the national health authorities in Libya.

UNICEF is working closely with WHO and partners to spread awareness on key preventive measures, create demand for vaccines and address the rumours and misinformation around vaccines. Additionally, cold chain capacity building is ongoing to ensure quality and efficacy of vaccines.

*“On the Eve of Eid Al-Adha, UNICEF wishes all the children in Libya and their families a safe and healthy Eid. In order for Eid to be safe, we strongly urge all the people in Libya to wear masks, maintain physical distancing, wash hands frequently and get vaccinated.”*, said AbdulKadir Musse, UNICEF Special Representative in Libya.

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### **About UNICEF Libya:**

*Since 2012, UNICEF has promoted the rights and wellbeing of children and their families in Libya. Together with our partners, we work throughout the country to reach children and their families through our Health, Nutrition, WASH, Education, Child Protection and Emergency Response interventions. We strengthen the linkages between humanitarian action and development programming, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and conflict-affected children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere in Libya.*