

Islamabad/Cairo/Geneva: The World Health Organization (WHO) today urged all donor partners to intensify efforts to provide the resources needed to deliver emergency health and humanitarian assistance to Pakistan's flood-affected communities.

Surveying the damage caused in flood-affected areas of Peshawar, Dr Abdallah Assaedi, Deputy Regional Director of WHO's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean said: "We must accelerate our efforts as we have not yet seen the full extent and magnitude of this disaster affecting the people of Pakistan."

Some 20 million people have been affected by this unfolding crisis, 7 million of whom need direct life-saving humanitarian assistance. WHO and Health Cluster partners are seeking US\$ 56 million to fund emergency health projects, but just one-quarter has been pledged or committed to date.

The health impact of the emergency is immense. More than 200 health facilities have been damaged or destroyed, greatly reducing the level of available health care for survivors. Waterborne, airborne and vector-borne diseases, including acute watery diarrhoea (AWD), measles, malaria and acute respiratory infections (ARI), are imminent threats due to poor sanitary conditions, overcrowding, bad hygiene and breakage in waterlines. Initial reports from the field already indicate a significant rise in the caseloads of acute water diarrhoea, skin infections, malaria and ARI.

"The depth of suffering is incalculable as risks escalate of diarrhoea, acute respiratory infection, malaria, and other communicable diseases," WHO Representative in Pakistan Dr Guido

Sabatinelli said. "It is crucial that all humanitarian health providers, local and national, coordinate their relief efforts closely to save lives, reduce suffering and deliver the most effective response."

If relief efforts wane, current projections anticipate some million of diarrhoeal cases within the next 6 months. Furthermore, there is a need to ensure immediate access of health services to flood affected communities by restoring damaged hospitals and clinics or strengthening mobile health services.

Dr Abdallah Assaedi pledged WHO's full technical support to respond to the demands of this evolving crisis and address the health needs and demands.

Thus far, WHO has provided essential medicines for more than 2 million persons, is assessing the health status of the vulnerable populations – particularly women and the elderly – and helping raise needed humanitarian funding. WHO has strengthened its surveillance system in flood-affected areas of Pakistan and leads the coordination of health partners in scaling up service delivery to the affected population.

“With financial assistance from donors, we will be able meet the demands for more life-saving drugs and medical supplies, for more medical teams, and for restoring damaged and destroyed health facilities to save the lives and protect the health of millions,” said Dr Assaedi during a donors’ meeting held today in Peshawar.

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