



WHO-supported immunization teams in Rural Damascus are vaccinating all children under 5 against polio at crossing points and established shelters

Photo: WHO Syria

AT A GLANCE

389,000

People affected and in need of humanitarian aid

20,000+

People displaced, including more than 5000 children < 5

235

People hospitalized in 5 referral hospitals

>550

Patient consultations per day supported by WHO

13

Health partners on the ground

SITUATION

- Evacuation of civilians continues through Hush Nasri area, East Ghouta as a humanitarian corridor for civilians set up by the Syrian Arab Army and their allies.
- The security situation at exit points in remains unpredictable with reported sporadic clashes, exchange of IAF, airstrikes, and significant military ground movement.
- Since 11 March, an estimated 20,000 people left East Ghouta. The majority of those leaving are from the Hamouriyeh area, given the fierce fighting and damage to civilian infrastructure.
- More than 8000 are housed in Adra shelter, 3700 in Al Dweir shelter and 7500 in Herjelleh shelter and humanitarian needs are rapidly increasing.
- The planned joint mission to the evacuation point at Hamouriyeh was postponed due to ongoing hostilities in the area.
- Most critical health needs are related to trauma management, immunization, management of noncommunicable diseases, and maternal and child health care.

GAPS/CHALLENGES

- Lack of health professionals on the ground; weak coordination among health care providers in the shelters; and limited access to follow up on referred patients for hospitalization.
- **Focal points** on the ground are reporting shortages of chronic and pediatric medicines.

HEALTH SECTOR PRIORITIES

- Temporary deployment of mobile medical teams and clinics.
- Provide routine vaccination of children to different health facilities.
- Support the diagnosis and treatment services by provision of medical equipment and supplies needed for PHC services at health facility or mobile team/clinic.
- Build up the partnership aimed to strengthen and improve the emergency referral system to access the secondary and limited tertiary health care services in Damascus and Rural Damascus health facilities
- Strengthen the level of preparedness and response for and management of trauma and other types of patients.

WHO RESPONSE

I. IMMEDIATE HEALTH INTERVENTIONS

a. Outreach essential services

- The health sector has mobilized sufficient health resources for life-sustaining and life-saving medicines and consumables, as well as three mobile teams supported by WHO and 10 Directorate of Health mobile teams on the ground.
- WHO delivered 40 hospital beds and 9 tons of health supplies for 180,000 medical treatments to SARC. Who has also prepared a shipment of health supplies for DoH Rural Damascus, sufficient for 190,516 medical treatments.
- WHO-supported NGOs (Association for Poor charity, Al Sham and Circassian Charity Association) are covering Al Dweir collective shelter with multi-disciplinary mobile medical teams. Over 550 consultations were provided in on March 18 alone.
- WHO is on standby to participate in the planned IA convoy to Douma re-sending earlier reduced and rejected health supplies (26 tons, 124,000 medical treatments) in the coming days dependent on access and the security situation.

b. Mental and psychosocial health support services

- WHO has trained more than 200 health professionals on mhGAP and more than 225 health workers on Psychological First Aid. The trainees are working in about 60 health facilities in Rural Damascus.
- A WHO mental health team is providing hands-on technical support to MHPSS care providers in the field.
- Two NGO mobile teams (Al Sham Association for Health and Association for Poor Charity) include community psychosocial support workers to provide PSS.

c. Immunization and communicable diseases

- WHO-supported immunization teams in Rural Damascus are vaccinating all children under 5 against polio at crossing points and established shelters.
- WHO is covering the operational costs of field activities of 10 Directorate of Health teams. 280 children under 5 were vaccinated in Herjelleh, 144 children in Adra and 91 children in Al Dweir shelter.
- An additional shipment of vaccines (TB, MMR, vitamin A, OPV, Penta) will be sent to each shelter by the Directorate of Health on 19 March.

- One previously diagnosed TB patient has begun to receive the necessary treatment.
- A suspected Hepatitis B patient who was reported on 13 March and referred to Al Qutaifa hospital will be transferred to Damascus hospital for laboratory confirmation of Hepatitis B and treatment.
- 4 health centers, including in Al Dweir and Adra, are sentinel sites reporting on cases of communicable diseases.

d. Nutrition

- WHO has mobilized two nutrition stabilization centers in Damascus to receive complicated cases, and a nutrition team follows up on the admission of patients in hospitals.
- Nutrition screening is being carried out by 3 Directorate of Health teams in rural Damascus. Cases of SAM and MAM were detected and provided with required ready to use therapeutic feeding supplies in Adra. One case of complicated SAM was transferred to SC in Al Mujtahed to received hospitalized care.

II. HOSPITALIZATION OF CRITICAL CASES

- As part of the medical evacuation plan, Health sector partners have been alerted to enhance the capacity of existing public health sector in Damascus and Rural Damascus to receive referred cases
- 235 people from east Ghouta have been referred to hospitals.
- An additional 139 patients were referred to hospitals but were not admitted (based on medical examination and evaluation of their conditions).
- Referral hospitals Al mujtahed Hospital (MOH), Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (MOH), Al Hilal Al Ahmar Hospital (MOH), Al Qutaifa Hospital (MOH), and University Pediatric Hospital (MOHE).
- On 18 March, WHO team headed by the WR visited the University Pediatric Hospital to follow up on the conditions of the medical evacuees from East Ghouta. The hospital reported that up to 18 children have been hospitalized and are to be discharged once treatment is complete.

The ongoing response to East Ghouta involves 13 health partners: Syrian Ministry of Health, WHO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA, International Medical Corps, ICRC, Syrian Arab Red Crescent, Medair, Monastery Saint James the Mutilated, Syria Family Planning Association, Association for Poor Charity, Al Sham and Circassian Charity Association.