



Participants of the meeting on specialized medical services

Erbil, 25 June 2012 – The Ministry of Health of Iraq and the Ministry of Health of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Iraq, in collaboration with the WHO country office in Iraq, organized from 25 to 26 June 2012 in Erbil, the sixth steering committee meeting of the 13 million Euro (€) European Union (EU)-funded programme to support specialized medical services in Iraq focusing on emergency medical services and blood transfusion services.

Dr Mohammed Khazal Ibrahim, on behalf of H.E Dr Majeed Hamad Amin, the Minister of Health of Iraq stated, “The SMS programme focuses on improving the quality, efficiency and standards of emergency medical services and blood transfusion services,” and added that, “we are working to minimize the health consequences of emergencies, crises and conflicts and reduce the number of avoidable deaths and the long-term impact of disabilities”.

This meeting is part of the mechanisms that were put in place to provide policy guidance and to oversee programme implementation,” stated Dr Aram Rustom on behalf of H.E Dr Rekawt Hama Rasheed, the Minister of Health of the Kurdistan Regional Government.

Dr Syed Jaffar Hussain, WHO Representative for Iraq stated, “We understand that the implementation of such a large programme with a wide range of activities, including developing policies, strengthening institutional capacities, procuring supplies, constructing and managing emergency medicine-related infrastructures may present huge challenges. However, by coordinating efforts, we can overcome these challenges and successively contribute to achieving the overall goal of assuring the right to health for every Iraqi in need.

Ms Hala Al-Sharifi, EU programme manager for health and education, thanked the Ministry of Health and WHO for the invaluable efforts they have exerted during the programme

implementation period, and said, “We know the project’s lifespan is going to end soon, and hence, action must be taken by the Ministry of Health to build on this success and ensure sustainability of the programme beyond EU funding.”

About 40 members of the SMS Project Steering Committee and participants representing the two ministries of health, other relevant line ministries, in addition to representatives from WHO and EU, reviewed the progress made in the programme implementation since the last Steering Committee meeting in November 2011 and identified challenges that hindered the programme implementation.

At the end of the second day, the steering committee members agreed on priority activities for the next six months and these will focus on policy development, strengthening the existing systems for injury surveillance, disability registration and Community Based Rehabilitation, completion of the construction of Najaf Blood Bank and the Baghdad based Emergency Readiness Training Center as well as in empowering professionals dealing with emergencies through different capacity building activities. Recommendations to overcome identified challenges and how to optimize outcomes of the programme and ensure its long term sustainability through government funding were also made.

For more information, please contact: Dr Khals Qader, Head of Media Unit, Ministry Of Health of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Iraq

Ms Ruba Hikmat, Health Promotion Officer, World Health Organization, Iraq , Tel. +962 795096066

[hikmatr@irq.emro.who.int](mailto:hikmatr@irq.emro.who.int)

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