



Baghdad, Iraq, 5 December 2020 – In November, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health in Iraq launched a new phase of the COVID-19 awareness-raising campaign in heavily populated and high-risk areas of Mosul, Ninewa governorate. The campaign aimed at reminding the public of the importance of wearing face masks, practising physical distancing and maintaining good hand hygiene.

The campaign like previous ones, was themed "Your Health is Important". More than one million people were targeted in this round of the campaign, including refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) in 10 locations of the governorate. The campaign used 150 local volunteers moving door to door to sensitize communities on ways to stay safe from COVID-19 as well as disseminating community awareness materials. Through its implementing partner the United Iraq Medical Society videos and audio messages were broadcast on booths, mobile screens and mobile clinics. The volunteers also distributed face masks and hand sanitizers.

According to Dr Adham Ismail, the WHO Representative in Iraq, the number of COVID-19 cases are likely to increase during the winter season, especially in the areas experiencing extreme cold temperatures such as Mosul and neighbouring governorates. Stressing the importance of the community responsibility and capability in containing the spread of the virus, Dr Adham said, "Controlling the level of infection in towns and cities to protect families and friends is essential. Citizens' awareness will ease the burden on health of high number of COVID-19 cases among health practitioners and authorities working day and night to confront the pandemic". Dr Adham added, "We witnessed an increase of 36% in COVID-19 cases in the governorate in the past week alone. Thus we call to expand surveillance conducted by the Iraqi health departments".



Like many parts of Iraq, Mosul has recorded high COVID-19 infection rates which is a burden to the already fragile health system that was heavily damaged during the internal conflict which

ended more than 3 years ago. “The outbreak is an additional burden on available resources and has greatly affected the national capacities needed to accommodate the high numbers of COVID-19 cases in the province,” added Dr Adham.

Since July 2020, WHO has been collaborating with the Federal Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Health in Kurdistan region, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Ministry of Interior (represented by the community police) to conduct COVID-19 community awareness-raising campaigns in heavily populated areas and affected districts of several governorates in Iraq: Baghdad, Sulaymaniyah, Basra, Wasit, Thi Qar, Misan, Hilla, Karbala, Erbil and Dohuk. So far, the campaign has reached millions of Iraqis with awareness and preventive materials.

WHO will continue reaching out to communities and extends its sincere gratitude for the support from donors – the European Union and governments of Germany, Kuwait, United Kingdom and France – who have helped the Organization reach vulnerable and underserved communities in Iraq.

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