

While in lockdown, patients are benefiting from mobile health services reaching them through one WHO-supported mobile clinic run by partner Dary in Mosul. May 2020. WHO/Iraq Baghdad, Iraq, 20 July 2020 – The COVID-19 outbreak in Iraq has presented a huge challenge to the country's fragile health infrastructure weakened by decades of unrest and internal conflict. It has also severely impacted over 1.3 million vulnerable internally displaced people and over 4.7 million returnees living in difficult conditions in many parts of the country.

Ninewa, northwest Iraq, hosts the highest number of these returnees. Their living conditions have worsened as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak and the subsequent containment measures, including lockdown, which has impacted the ability of over 270 000 returnees to access health care services, including access to prevention and treatment services for COVID-19.

First deployed during the Mosul crisis of 2014, a network of WHO-supported mobile medical clinics is again delivering first-line health care services, and helping to contain the spread of COVID-19 in remote and conflict-affected areas.

"WHO was concerned about the health of the vulnerable population in Ninewa and in other conflict-affected areas who are still living in difficult conditions," said Dr Adham Ismail, WHO Representative in Iraq. "In close cooperation with local health authorities, WHO and health cluster partners are coordinating sustainable access to essential health care services in these locations, in addition to disseminating messages to the public about how to limit transmission of COVID-19 to protect themselves and their families. We believe that the spread of the pandemic in settings such as displacement and refugee camps or returnee shelters could lead to dramatic and uncontainable infection consequences," Dr Ismail added.

