

Mobile medical clinic supported by WHO delivers health care services in hard-to-reach areas of Kirkuk 7 April 2019, Baghdad – Today, as the world commemorates World Health Day with the theme, universal health coverage, WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF recommit to supporting the Government of Iraq in ensuring that every person in Iraq has access to quality health care services, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goal target of achieving universal health coverage by 2030.

Iraq has made considerable progress in ensuring access to quality and affordable health care services for its citizens over the past 25 years. The country has seen great improvement in life expectancy, increasing from 68.1 to 70.3 years, while neonatal mortality has decreased from 27% to 17% per 1000 live births, and under-five mortality has reduced from 54% to 30%. However, more needs to be done in order to build on these achievements and ensure equitable access to essential health services, irrespective of socioeconomic status or geographical location.

Accessing universal health coverage means providing access to essential quality care and protection. This entails integration of good stewardship, adequate public financing, qualified and motivated health workforce, access to quality medicines and health products, functional health information systems and people-centred service delivery systems. WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF are working closely with the authorities in Iraq at national and subnational levels to strengthen health systems for better service delivery.

WHO continues to support the Iraqi Ministry of Health in prepositioning mobile clinics in areas with limited or no access to health care services, procuring medicines and other medical

supplies, and developing strategies, guidelines and policies in favour of universal health care. In addition, the organization is working to build the capacity of health workers through training and support the rehabilitation of damaged and destroyed health facilities.

Women and girls, in particular, are still unable to realize their sexual and reproductive health and rights and suffer from gender-based violence. Protracted displacement places an extra burden, making them unable to access reproductive health services in a timely manner, leading to life-threatening risks during pregnancy and delivery. UNFPA continues to prioritize maternal health, childbirth and newborn care services through the support of 76 facilities to mitigate the risk of maternal deaths and ensure no pregnancy is unattended by birth attendants in Iraq.

UNICEF has focused much of its health care work on immunization, newborn care, and nutrition across Iraq, including among vulnerable communities, such as the internally displaced, and in hard-to-reach areas. Although 90% of under-fives received polio and measles vaccinations last year, only half of under-ones received all the vaccinations required to ensure a healthy childhood. Without adequate immunization, Iraqi children have significantly higher risks of developing debilitating diseases and lifelong disabilities.

On this World Health Day, the United Nations reiterates its commitment to work with the Government to bring the country one step closer to an Iraq where everyone has rights, choices, and access to quality health services. Together, we can contribute to ensuring that the people of Iraq are able to exercise their human right to have access to quality health services.

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