



Um Salam has got her vaccine in a mass vaccination site in Kut City, west Iraq on 17 November 2021. Photo: WHO Iraq/Baghdad, Iraq, 8 February 2022: The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted an already fragile health system in Iraq. The health systems in the country had been crippled by decades of wars and instability that compromised the access to equitable and sufficient health care services across the country.

World Health Organization (WHO) and the Iraqi Ministry of Health (MoH) forged a close cooperation in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and succeeded in mapping a quick response to critical health issues like the low vaccination rates across the country's 18 governorates.

Capitalizing on donors' support and contributions, WHO and MOH jointly planned a vast on-site vaccine project to provide the population, including the vulnerable groups of the refugees and IDPs with equal opportunities to get the vaccine quickly and easily.

Um Salam, a 73-year-old widow- who lives in rural western Kut city in Kut governorate west Iraq, recently lost a relative due to complications caused by COVID-19 infection. The realization of the severity of the consequences of the virus led Um Salam to reach out to the city's local PHC to enquire about vaccinations for herself and her two grandsons. She was pleased when the vaccination process was simple and effortless. Her queries were immediately answered, and she was able to take the vaccine herself along with her two grandsons at the site.

" We are grateful for the continued support of our core contributors. The latest support from the Qatar Fund for Development and other core contributors has indeed enabled WHO and the Ministry of Health in implementing multiple projects including strengthening the national surveillance system, promoting the prevention and control of communicable diseases like

COVID 19, and facilitating the preparedness for mass gathering events, especially in central and southern Iraq.” Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Iraq said.

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