WHO EMRO | 20 new ambulances to strengthen referral pathway in Mosul, Anbar and Kirkuk

19 June 2018 – The provision of health care in the conflict-torn governorates of Anbar, Ninewa and Kirkuk has recently been augmented by additional 20 ambulances procured by the World Health Organization (WHO) to support the referral pathway and ambulatory services in these governorates.

The ambulances were handed over to the Ministry of Health in Baghdad to be distributed according to a priority plan suggested by a recent assessment conducted by WHO.

“An average of 1200 to 1500 patients a month are expected to benefit from this service in each targeted location,” said Hameed Ali, an ambulance service director in the Ministry of Health.

“The new donated ambulances will surely save more lives,” said Majeed, a paramedic who worked in one of WHO’s field hospitals in Mosul. “Ambulance staff have some interesting stories to tell about Mosul response operations. You find out they saved the life of a family in Hamam Alil, raced against time to get a child who had been shot to the closest trauma stabilization point in Bartella, or helped a hard labourer at a late hour amid clashes and exchanges of fire.
Ambulances helped to ensure that the emergency response succeeded to a high degree in places like Mosul."

Ambulances contain emergency intervention equipment. The ambulances were procured with funds received from the United States Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) earlier this year and will be part of the overall referral pathway that WHO has been keen on strengthening to make it more responsive to the needs of the internally displaced and returnees in affected governorates.

Analysing the emergency and trauma referral pathway during the Mosul crisis, WHO identified an urgent need to strengthen the referral pathway and ambulatory services by deploying a network of new ambulances equipped with basic to advanced medical intervention services.

WHO has handed over more than 140 ambulances to support trauma referral services in Baghdad, Anbar, Ninewa, Salah Aldin, Kirkuk, Erbil, and others in needed locations.

The 20 new ambulances come at a time in which the federal Ministry of Health has lost hundreds of its ambulances during the fight against armed groups in the aforementioned governorates.

“In April 2017, we were called out to a paediatric trauma,” said Saif Abdul Rahman, a paramedic
in one WHO donated ambulance in Mosul. “When we got there we found an unaccompanied 4-year old girl who had a sniper bullet in her left leg she received while fleeing the fight with her family in western Mosul. In no time, IV fluid was administered and we headed east very fast as she started to lose consciousness. We brought her to Athba Trauma Field Hospital, but I still can’t get the image of her uneven eyelids and unfocused look out of my head.”

The Ministry of Health receives the ambulances at the Ministry building. WHO supported national health authorities in conflict-affected areas in 2016–2017 with a network of about 96 ambulances mobilized to serve trauma response activities, as well as ambulatory services in internally displaced people camps and hard-to-reach areas. The ambulances played a remarkable role in the response to trauma at the battle frontlines in Mosul and other conflict-affected areas.

WHO is thankful for the generous contributions from OFDA, the European Commission Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO), Government of Germany, and Government of Japan for funding the purchase of the ambulances.

About WHO

WHO is a specialized public health organization mandated to provide the most reliable and evidence-based technical assistance, strategic and operational guidance to countries worldwide.

WHO works very closely with the Iraqi Ministry of Health and related sectors on daily bases to
identify priorities and guide the health sector on preparedness, effective and efficient response to health and health care requirements.

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