5 September 2016 – In light of the unfolding humanitarian situation in Salah al-Din governorate and the expected influx of internally displaced persons from Mosul with the start of military operations there, WHO held the first Health Cluster meeting at Salah al-Din Directorate of Health in Tikrit, capital of the governorate. The aim was to discuss ways to strengthen the coordination mechanism between the health partners working in the governorate and their response to the urgent health needs of internally displaced persons in Beji and Sharqat districts.

The meeting, jointly chaired by WHO and Salah al-Din Directorate of Health, was attended by Health Cluster partners, including International Committee of the Red Cross, International Organization for Migration, INTERSOS, Médecins Sans Frontières, Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid, United Iraqi Medical Society and Relief International. The meeting focused on the limited capacity of the Directorate of Health in terms of health provisions in health facilities, medicines, medical supplies and equipment, ambulances and mobile medical clinics. Issues including vaccination campaigns and human resources were also discussed at the meeting.

“WHO and its Health Cluster partners have previously hosted two coordination meetings with Salah al-Din Directorate of Health; the first in Baghdad and the second in Erbil,” said Dr Fawad Khan, Health Cluster Coordinator in Iraq.

“In this meeting, held at the governorate level, we discussed important issues such as the overlapping of activities and provision of emergency life-saving medicines to Salah al-Din Directorate of Health”, he added.

The Directorate of Health is in regular contact and coordination with WHO and other health partners to support its response to the needs of internally displaced persons in the governorate. The Iraqi Ministry of Health and WHO is close to finalizing the Directorate of Health’s preparedness plan to meet the urgent health needs of the anticipated influx from Mosul in the coming weeks.

Salah al-Din governorate is expected to host an additional 400 000 internally displaced persons who it is anticipated will evacuate Mosul during the upcoming military operations in Ninawa governorate. The three locations of Qadasyah, Dream City and Al Oja are currently accommodating the majority of internally displaced persons in Beji and Sharqat, estimated to
stand at 23,000 in the governorate.

A deployment schedule for partner mobile medical teams, with identified locations and times of work, was finalized by the Directorate of Health on 1 September 2016. This will help organize activities in the internally displaced persons transit and host camps to avoid the overlapping and duplication of services.

The Directorate of Health will also coordinate with governorate Health Cluster partners for the regular submission of data on disease trends, especially for communicable diseases. Refresher training on the Early Warning Alerts and Response Network (EWARN) will be provided by WHO to Directorate of Health staff and new Health Cluster partners joining the field in the governorate.

The next Health Cluster meeting is scheduled to be held at the Directorate of Health in Tikrit in Salah al-Din governorate on 19 September 2016.

For more information, please contact:

Ms Ajyal Sultany
Communications Officer
World Health Organization
Iraq Country Office
Email: sultanya@who.int
Mobile: +964 7510 101 469

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