Baghdad, 16 June 2016 – Beginning of Ramadan. In the dry heat of the morning, the streets are deserted except in front of Qushtapa refugee camp primary health centre. Several people are sitting on benches in front of the facility, some are staring blankly. A doctor appears at the doorway of the centre and gesticulates to patients whose faces light up at the knowledge that here they will be treated well and receive the care that they need.

Some 6050 people live in this camp, all of them are Syrian refugees who came to Iraq in 2013. Preventive and curative health care services provided by WHO in this camp and in surrounding communities serving refugees living outside the camp are made possible thanks to the generous financial contribution from the Government of Kuwait.

About 100 people receive care at the centre every day – from routine health care like treatment for diarrhoea, respiratory infections, skin and chronic diseases to even more complex consequences on health of having to leave your country as a result of conflict such as mental health related diseases and trauma.

The centre’s staff manage these consequences well and every day prepare themselves to receive and treat new patients and offer advice to all patients seen at the center on how to manage and prevent diseases that may arise.

Good health is essential to good quality of life and this health care centre is significantly
improving the health of refugees. It is providing timely vaccination for all residents of the camp, decreasing maternal and child mortality rates, providing primary preventive and curative health care services, as well as enabling access for refugees to secondary and tertiary medical care.

30-year-old Farhad has allergies and his son has anaemia, both are undergoing treatment at the health centre. “I feel safe here and they take care of my family,” he said.

The centre keeps a record card of all families in the camp which provides information on health and documents the history of family consultations. It also enables referral for people complicated cases and patients with chronic diseases who receive a separate card to obtain their daily needed medications.

**Health educational sessions**

The primary health care centre provides educational sessions for its employees. During our visit, employees attended a session on the importance of a healthy diet and the first signs of malnutrition in patients.

**Challenges**

Despite the achievements of the centre, problems faced by the camp’s residents continue to challenge their efforts. Leaving an ordinary life to living life as a refugee translates into uncertainty and instability. It takes time to adapt and accept a new routine, a new life.

Health is the foundation on which refugees survive and recover and should be a non-negotiable human right. “WHO works in cooperation with the Iraqi government, its partners and donors such the Kuwait Government to ensure provision of and access to basic health care to the refugees,” said Altaf Musani, WHO Representative in Iraq.

Currently, WHO delivers and promotes health care in refugee camps but is constrained by limited level of funding required to increase its service capacity as the number of refugees living in camps and in host communities continues to remain high.

**Photos**
children living in the camps have more reason to smile

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