

Erbil, 15 February 2017 – After over 2 years of suspended routine immunization activities in Mosul and the surrounding districts, the World Health Organization, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and UNICEF, have trained 30 vaccinators from the recently taken areas in east Mosul and Salahuddin to help revitalize routine immunization services.

The 3-day training that targeted grass-root level health workers is funded by the Government of Japan. The funds will also be used to improve health services for highly vulnerable populations.

More than 450 000 children aged 0 to 5 years are in need of urgent vaccination services in Mosul and surrounding districts. As a critical measure to prevent outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases among internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps and host communities in Ninewa and Salahuddin governorates, WHO, UNICEF and the Ministry of Health are working closely to immediately reactivate immunization services.

The biggest challenge that WHO and other partners face in supporting the Federal Ministry of Health and Directorates of Health to deliver life-saving health services throughout Ninewa is that of insecurity. Despite this challenge, WHO and partners remain committed to ensuring that all vulnerable people in Iraq have access to basic integrated health services, including vaccination. Vaccines are among the most successful and cost-effective public health interventions for preventing diseases and death. Routine immunization services can also be the platform for a range of other cost-effective health interventions, such as micronutrient supplements and routine health checks.

With the vaccination coverage of 84% and compromised nutrition, internally displaced children are at a higher risk of high mortality and morbidity due to vaccine preventable diseases, such as polio and measles in particular, but also due to whooping cough, influenza, mumps and diphtheria. The basic immunization schedule in Iraq provides children with protection against tetanus, tuberculosis, meningitis, diarrhoea and rubella, as well. Those trained are expected to train additional 90 vaccinators in Ninawa and 139 vaccinators in Salahuddin so that more areas are covered and more children reached.

WHO and UNICEF's aims are to support the Ministry of Health to reach as many children as possible in Mosul in spite of accessibility challenges in some parts of the city and the surrounding areas. The Ministry of Health's leadership remains committed to the vaccination

programme and is procuring vaccines for children of Iraq despite financial crisis. There is need for improved vaccination management practices at the subnational level to have uniformly high coverages at districts and subdistrict levels nonetheless.

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