



Jerusalem, 21 October 2022 - WHO in the occupied Palestinian territory, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, conducted two workshops on 11 and 19 October on findings of an assessment of barriers to accessing noncommunicable disease (NCD) services during the COVID-19 pandemic, focused on the specific impact on rural and semi-rural communities in Area C of the West Bank and the Access-Restricted Area of the Gaza Strip. The workshops intended to validate the key barriers identified in the assessment and to prioritize recommendations for action.

“The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare health inequities and the disproportionate vulnerability of certain groups in our communities to the impacts of public health emergencies,” said Dr

Shannon Barkley, Health Policy Advisor for WHO. “Differential access to health care for communities is a critical factor determining health inequities. Accurate assessment of intersecting barriers to access helps to understand and prioritize the actions that we can take to address health inequities more effectively, which are the unjust differences in health outcomes and the unfair distribution of health resources in our society.”

The assessment, conducted by Al Quds University, examines barriers related to availability of health care, different aspects of access (geographical, informational, financial, and organizational), the acceptability of health services and their effectiveness once a person with an NCD reaches the point of care delivery.

WHO’s Right to Health programme in the occupied Palestinian territory, with support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, aims to strengthen documentation and monitoring of barriers to the right to health and to advocate for improved respect, protection, and fulfilment of health rights. The assessment was organized as part of the Right to Health programme, with attendance at the workshops of more than 70 participants from health and human rights organizations working throughout the occupied Palestinian territory.

The final report of the assessment and associated recommendations for action will be launched in the coming months.

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