Nour and his mother sit together at the Tamayoz Social Care Association in Damascus

1 March 2018 – Nour and his family fled their home in a besieged area last year, arriving in Damascus with almost nothing, after living through a terrifying ordeal. Nour lost his father and had stopped speaking.

Now 11, Nour lost his hearing when he was an infant, but his family were unable to get him assistance until recently. Last year he received a hearing aid from the Tamayoz Social Care Association, a nongovernmental organization supported in part by the World Health Organization (WHO).

"Now he can talk, express his feelings, and call to me," says his mother. "It's made a big difference."

Nour also receives medication for epilepsy from the Association, and attends psychosocial support activities in a colourful children's play area.
Children take part in games and learning activities at the Tamayoz Social Care Association.

"When we arrived in Damascus he was stressed and anxious because of his hearing difficulties," his mother explains. "After being integrated with other children here he has a better relationship with me and his brother. He is less aggressive and more self-confident, and he knows how to act in social situations."

"When he lost he father, he lost his relationship with others," she continues. "He had no friends. But here he learned that other people care about him. And with help from the hearing aid, he was able to hear and to interact more with other children. He knows now that people value him."

The Association offers education, in-kind assistance and training, in particular to orphans and extended families caring for orphans. Health services include medical consultations, referrals for surgeries, health awareness sessions for pregnant women and new mothers, nutrition monitoring, and mental health support.

Families receive information at a reception area in the Tamayoz Social Care Association.

Dr Assam, the General Manager of Tamayoz, smiles when she sees Nour speaking with his mother again.

"These stories are why I stay here," Dr Assam says. "You can see the impact that you are having – you are improving lives. Nour regained his ability to communicate – he is part of a community again. Imagine the happiness you would feel being a mother and hearing your child speak again after so long. There are many cases like this."

In 2016, the Tamayoz Social Care Association provided support to more than 120,000 children, women and men in Damascus and Rural Damascus. Many who receive services from the Association are displaced from other parts of Syria and have few other means of assistance.

WHO works with a network of 83 nongovernmental organizations that provide health care services across Syria, including in areas with high numbers of displaced Syrians, in camps, and in besieged and hard-to-reach locations. Working through nongovernmental organization partners like Tamayoz, WHO was able to provide essential health and nutrition services to over 2.7 million Syrians in 2017.

Dr Assam hopes that peace will return to Syria, but cautions that the crisis is far from over for those who have already lived through so much. "I can't imagine the cases that we will see coming out of the areas that are still besieged," she says. "The children saw terrible things. They need so much support. There is a very big challenge coming."

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In the last biennium, WHO's support to Tamayoz Social Care Association was provided in partnership with a number of donors, including the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), and the Governments of Kuwait and Norway.

Read more about the work of WHO in the Syrian Arab Republic in our Annual Report 2017.