Armed with great determination to help people and serve the deteriorating health sector in Hodeida, Dr Maysoon focuses on her two priorities: helping the increasing numbers of internally displaced persons and making sure that health facilities continue functioning.  

20 May 2015 – For more than 10 years, Dr Maysoon Al-Sakkaf, WHO coordinator in Hodeida governorate, Yemen, has seen repeated incidents of conflict and worked in some of the county’s most impoverished areas. This current crisis, however, is the “most challenging” she has ever witnessed.

Like the majority of people in poverty-stricken Hodeida, Dr Maysoon is facing difficulties in finding basic supplies. “Life is hard here and we are all struggling to obtain water and fuel even at home. We’re constantly working with the fear of being targeted,” she says.

Harsh weather amid power outages is another challenge she faces.

“Summer has arrived and the intense heat is unbearable here. It’s painful to see the suffering of vulnerable people, including internally displaced persons and patients who live without electricity in such scorching weather,” she says.

Already responsible for nutrition, health, water and sanitations services, and emergency operations in the western coastal city of Hodeida, Dr Maysoon has expanded her tasks during the current crisis as the WHO sub-office in Hodeida has been overwhelmed with huge demands for health interventions by public hospitals and other health facilities. “In addition to my current work, I’m now assisting the health office of Hodeida to make sure that all activities are carried out efficiently,” she said.
“My phone doesn’t stop ringing,” she says. “I keep receiving calls from hospitals, health centres, vaccine stores officials and medical teams asking WHO to urgently provide them with fuel, medicines, water supplies and operating costs.”

Armed with great determination to help people and serve the deteriorating health sector in Hodeida, Dr Maysoon has been working day and night since the current crisis has erupted, even drawing on the support of her family.

Dr Maysoon says that despite the personal and professional challenges faced, she is driven by her strong desire to help those affected and to keep working until the crisis is resolved, focusing on her two priorities: helping the increasing numbers of internally displaced persons, and making sure that health facilities continue functioning. “Under these exceptional circumstances, I have to keep my energy and dedication to help the people and mobilize support for struggling hospitals.”

Before joining WHO in 2013, Dr Maysoon worked in emergency rooms and gynaecology departments in hospitals in Aden and Lahj. She has also worked as a supervisor in the Expanded Programme on Immunization and monitored reproductive health activities in 6 governorates.

“Every day, I go home from work exhausted. But when I remember that I am serving my country and contributing to alleviating the suffering of the people, all the fatigue and problems disappear.”

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