



Dengue fever investigation teams conduct control activities Sana'a, 27 August 2015 – A humanitarian corridor must be established to ensure access to health care for more than 3 million people in Yemen's Taiz governorate, where conflict and a resulting humanitarian crisis have left thousands of people in need of treatment, caused extensive damage to health facilities, and fanned a dengue fever outbreak.

“All parties to the conflict must observe a ceasefire and demilitarize all hospitals and health facilities in Taiz, allow for the safe delivery of the supplies, implement measures to control the dengue outbreak, provide treatment and enable access to injured people and other patients,” says Dr Ala Alwan, WHO's Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

Dr Alwan adds: “We need protection and safety for all people working to control the worrying outbreak of dengue fever in Taiz, which includes support with residual spraying, health education of communities and distribution of other supplies.”

With an estimated population of 3.2 million people, Taiz is the most populated governorate in Yemen, however, 3 of the governorates' major hospitals – Althawra, Al Jamhuri and Swedish hospitals – are currently inaccessible or have been caught in the frontline of fire denying millions of displaced, sick and wounded civilians access to health services. Moreover, 832 deaths and 6135 injuries have been reported in the governorate since March 2015.

Despite incomplete levels of reporting from Taiz, an extreme spike in cases of dengue fever has been recorded in the governorate in the past 2 weeks from 145 suspected cases at the start of August to 421 by 25 August 2015. With the ongoing insecurity and mass displacement of thousands of people, it is likely that the situation will deteriorate in the coming days, placing over 3.2 million people at additional risk.

“The number of reported dengue cases has tripled in Taiz this week. There is an urgent need for a humanitarian corridor to assess the situation and institute control measures,” says Dr Alwan.

To respond to the surge in dengue cases and prevent any further spread, WHO is working closely with partners and health authorities to:

- conduct indoor residual spraying to control mosquitoes, responsible for dengue transmission;
- provide health education and promotion on dengue fever;
- distribute long-lasting insecticide treated mosquito nets; and
- procure supplies, including for case management, laboratory and vector control and heightened surveillance.

WHO reminds all parties to the conflict of their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians, health facilities, and health professional during the conflict. Health facilities must be treated as neutral premises and never be exploited for military purposes.

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