

“Among challenges in past months is the general security situation, medicine shortages, and lack of personal protective equipment for our staff”, the doctor says as he examines Warda’s foot.

We’re in a primary health care centre in the village of Zardana in Idlib governorate, a short distance from the Turkish border. The centre is one of nine centres in northwest Syria that are part of a WHO project on noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), aiming to provide a package of treatment protocols and operational procedures. The staff have been trained in screening and early detection of chronic disease.

“What’s bothering you is a complication of your diabetes”, the doctor says to Warda, a 60-year old mother of five children that have all moved elsewhere and have their own families by now.

“I know I’ve neglected my own health and that I haven’t been able to take proper care of myself. These days, I live alone and there is no one to take care of me. I’ve had this tingling feeling in my foot and it started to get more and more painful and even turned blue. Eventually I decided to go to the clinic out of fear of losing my foot. This time I’ll do as the doctor tells me”.

When Warda visited the centre for the first time, and met up with the NCD team, she was signed up in their registry after a proper examination, tests and a consultation. With a specific card she’s been given, she now gets free medication.

“At times, when the medicines haven’t been available at the health centre pharmacy, I’ve had to buy my drugs from a private pharmacy”, she says.

Like millions of other people in northwest Syria, Warda has been displaced by the fighting. The majority of those that have had to leave their homes so seek safety from the violence, are women and children.

“I once lived a stable life in in the city of Atareb in Aleppo governorate, but after my husband

passed away, my situation and well-being got worse. And having to live in a camp, after the bombing of my city, my condition deteriorated further", Warda explains.

After Warda started to pay regular visits to the NCD team in the health centre, her foot has started to heal. "I just hope things will become more stable so I can return home to Atareb", Warda remarks.

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