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Health Minister and WHO Representative visited a health center in rural Damascus on WHD 2023

## HIGHLIGHTS

- On 7 April 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) celebrated its 75th anniversary. As early as 1948, countries from all over the world came together and established WHO to promote health, keep the world safe, and serve the vulnerable so that all people could achieve the highest level of health and well-being. 'Health for All' emphasizes WHO's commitment to advancing global health and achieving universal health coverage by working with governments, communities, International organizations, foundations, advocates, researchers, and health care providers.
- A total of 2,880 health workers were trained in 112 capacity-building sessions in different intervention areas.
- Over 285 tonnes of medical, laboratory supplies, kits, personal protective equipment, cholera response supplies have been dispatched to 29 Ministry of Health facilities, six Ministry of Health hospitals, the Ministry of Education, six NGOs, two INGOs, four non-governmental hospitals, and the KRC, including oral rehydration salts (ORS), IV fluids, hemodialysis sessions, and printed IEC materials.

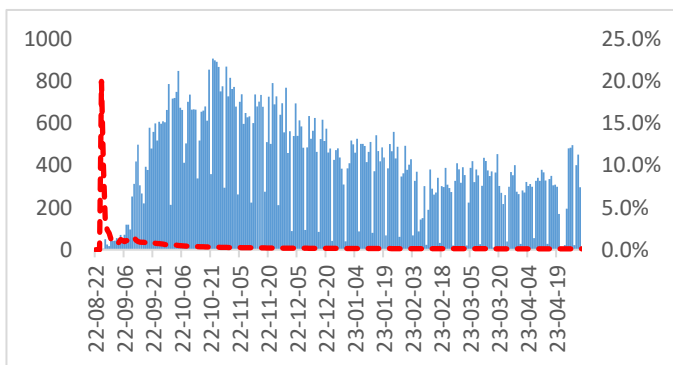
## Health Operational Update

### Disease Surveillance and Outbreak Response

- Out of 1532 sentinel sites, 1,294 presented weekly reports with 77% completeness and 75% timeliness. Response was provided to 80% of alerts within 72 hours.

#### Cholera outbreak at the WoS level

- In the period from 25 August 2022 to 30 April 2023, 123,800 suspected cases have been reported from all 14 governorates. Idlib, Aleppo, and Ar-Raqqa were the most impacted governorates to date.
- The estimated attack rate is 0.04 and that the number of cases fatalities within the affected areas is 0.1%, which is within the acceptable global standard.



- 5,650 stool samples were cultured, of which 983 were positive for the presence of vibrio cholera, which

represents a 17.3% positivity rate. Moreover, rapid diagnostic testing was conducted on 5,103 samples.

- A total of 5,242 rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs) were conducted, of which 1,922 were positive. As a whole, 36.6% of the cases are RDT-positive. Additionally, among IDPs, there were 10,578 suspected cases and nine associated deaths.

#### Measles cases

- During April 2023, a total of 1,321 suspected measles cases were reported through the EWARS system in 14 governorates. Measles-suspected cases decreased by 28% in April compared with cases reported in March (1,849).
- The number of confirmed measles cases in April was 99 distributed as follows: Aleppo (44), Rural Damascus (13), Deir Ez Zour (11), Damascus (10), Hasakeh (10), Tartous (4), Qunitera (4), Homs (2), Latakia (1). So far, the total confirmed measles cases in 2023 is 428.

#### Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI)

- In response to the ongoing measles outbreak, the Ministry of Health (MOH) conducted a small-scale Measles-Rubella (MR) vaccination campaign from 13 to 17 April, targeting children under the age of 12 in high-risk areas. More than 299,000 children received their MR vaccine, and 277,663 were provided with a vitamin A capsule.

- Different technical committee meetings were conducted during this month including the National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAG) Committee, Cold Chain Committee, Environmental Surveillance Committee, and Polio Follow-up Committee.
- The implementation of the EPI outreach mobile teams' activities is ongoing in all governorates to enhance the routine vaccination coverage in remote and high-risk areas.
- Capacity-building training on COVID-19 vaccination practices and data quality were implemented at the central and governorate level.
- 83,175 MHPSS-focused and specialized services were delivered at PHC centers, mental health specialized facilities, and outpatient clinics at the MoH level.
- 44,262 benefited from psychotropic medications and 64,966 benefited from MHPSS services at the PHC level.
- 36,005 MHPSS services were delivered to people in need at the community level through mobile outreach teams, in cooperation with WHO implementing partners.

### **Primary Health Care (PHC) and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)**

- The WHO participated in the regional meeting on country experiences developing Universal Health Coverage (UHC), and the Essential Package of Health Services, in Amman, Jordan, between 4 and 5 April.

### **Secondary and Tertiary Health Care (STHC)**

- As part of the earthquake emergency response program, 50 health workers from the Directorate of Health (DOH) in Hama and Latakia governorates received training on emergency preparedness and response for the hospital sector during emergencies and outbreaks.

### **Trauma Care**

- 50 MoH health workers from Homs, Hama, Idlib, and Damascus received training in Major Incident Medical Management and Support (MIMMS), First Aid, and Basic Life Support (BLS).
- 75 health workers from Damascus, including prosthetics and orthotics technicians, physiotherapists, and physiatrists, participated in a training program on disabilities and rehabilitation at the Ministry of Health (MoH) center of prosthetics and rehabilitation.

### **Invention, Prevention, and Control (IPC)**

- A rapid assessment of cholera treatment centers and units within hospitals was conducted on April 12 for 25 health workers at the central and DOH levels.
- WHO, in close in coordination with the MoH provided Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs), 150,000 medical masks, and 50,000 gloves to the Ministry of Education to be used during the national exams.

### **Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS)**

### **Nutrition and Child Health**

- In March 2023, 941 health centers across the country screened 100,222 children under-five for malnutrition
- A total of 2,003 cases of global acute malnutrition were identified and referred for treatment, including 454 severe cases of acute malnutrition (SAM) and 1,549 moderate cases of acute malnutrition (MAM).

### **International Health Regulations (IHR)**

- WHO, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) collaborated to develop the proposal for Pandemic Fund. Accordingly, the Ministry of Health and WHO held a meeting on 14 April and designated technical teams to focus on country priorities. Follow-up meetings will be conducted with UN partners and related ministries.

### **Communicable Diseases - TB & HIV**

- In collaboration with the Global Fund and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), WHO secured 16 GeneXpert machines for the MoH along with all related accessories. These newly delivered devices can perform molecular biology testing using 10-color PCR techniques and are capable detect multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) for second-line antimicrobial resistance. In addition, 5,050 diagnostic kits were delivered to MOH following a stock-out period of approximately 10 months due to challenges with sanctions.
- TB mobile clinics operate in three governorates (Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zor, and Rural Damascus).
- Over 720 beneficiaries attended 42 TB awareness sessions and 350 suspected cases were tested for TB, with 15 confirmed.
- As part of the earthquake response, WHO, in collaboration with the Aleppo DoH, completed active TB case-finding targeting vulnerable populations living in collective shelters. 1,750 suspected cases were tested, 48 of which were confirmed.

- At the same time, WHO supported awareness sessions that reached more than 25,000 beneficiaries in 77 shelters.
- One TB case was detected at Al-Hol camp in northeast Syria (NES) and was referred to Al-Hikma Hospital. The case was enrolled in the national TB program and provided the necessary treatment. Close contacts were found to be negative for TB and were provided with TB prophylactic treatment.
- In addition, DOH and the central public health laboratory are investigating one case detected in the same camp as a positive for HIV by RDTs. With Global Fund support, WHO provides the necessary medicines and diagnostics for HIV.

### Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)

- On 24 April, Syria launched its national deworming campaign, targeting 3 million children. WHO supported the delivery of 3 million tablets to the Ministry of Education's health directorates, as well as a workshop to raise awareness among school-age children about soil-transmitted helminthiasis, hygiene, and prevention measures. [Link](#)



WHO supports the national Deworming campaign across Syria

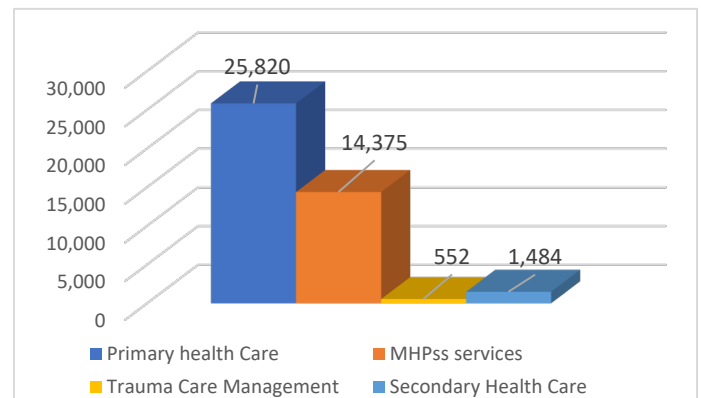
### Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) & Communications

- 150 community health responders were trained by WHO's RCCE team in Aleppo and Latakia. Health outreach teams were trained on their roles and responsibilities and the critical role they play in providing health education and information.
- On 7 April 2023 – World Health Day –WHO observed its 75th birthday. WHO Syria Country Office celebrated in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and other health partners. [link1](#) , [link2](#), [link3](#) , [link4](#)

- WHO provided visibility coverage for different health events and activities:
  - Standing with Syria: How the WHO and its partners deliver vital healthcare to communities devastated by the earthquake. [link](#)
  - WHO supported a 5-day workshop to develop primary healthcare national strategy with the participation of all relevant stakeholders. [link](#)
  - Information, education, and communication (IEC) materials on preventing fires and burns. [link](#)

### Community Engagement (NGOs)

- 15 implementing partners provided primary, secondary, trauma, rehabilitation, and MHPSS services to people in need to underserved populations. Across six governorates, 15 fixed health points, one hospital, and 28 mobile medical teams (MMTs) provided health care (Rural Damascus, Daraa, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, and Al-Hassakeh).
- A total of 42,231 healthcare services were supported.



Health services delivered by WHO-supported NGOs in April

### Health Systems

- During the first week of April, all stakeholders, including UN agencies, international NGOs, line ministries, and the Ministry of Health (MoH), participated in the second round of workshops to develop the national primary health care strategy for 2023-2027. A series of meetings were organized to discuss family health approaches and hospital referrals.
- With the support of the Department of Life Course, Maternal and Child Health at WHO Headquarters, as well as a representative from the American University of Beirut, the Knowledge Management session for April was held under the theme "Respectful Maternity Care with a Focus on Humanitarian Settings".

- On 11 April, an online presentation titled "Digital Health: Perspectives from Syria; A country in crisis" was presented as part of the international webinar "Health for All Through Digitally Enabled Efficient Health Care Systems in Middle Eastern and Central Asian Member States".
- As part of WHO policy on addressing sexual misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, and to maintain the safety of beneficiaries, WHO focal points for Prevention of and Response to Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (PRSEAH) conducted awareness sessions throughout the country.
- A quarterly overview of assistance provided to the health sector in Syria for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of health facilities across the country from 2020 to the end of March 2023 was compiled.
- The technical review of the SHF 2nd Reserve Allocation, which had a health sector funding envelope of USD \$4 million was finalized.
- The overview of the coordinated response actions during the first 30 days of the earthquake, followed up in March-April 2023 was updated, and remaining priority activities for May-December 2023 were identified.
- All health sector materials can be found at [link](#).

### Health Sector Coordination

- The bi-weekly health sector Syria earthquake response situation report (including the related 4W snapshot) covering 1-15 April 2023 was produced.
- The funding requirements for the health sector's response to the Syrian earthquake from May to December 2023 as part of the 2023 HRP revision were developed.
- The impact of underfunding on the health sector in Syria for 2023 was updated.
- A quarterly overview of support provided to the health sector in Syria, including the provision of medical equipment, from 2021 to 2023 was compiled.

## WHO Syria Sub-Offices

### Aleppo

- Through 15 supported mobile medical teams, WHO has provided health assistance to 73 collective shelters during the reporting period and 21,598 outpatient consultations were provided.
- 1,750 beneficiaries were reached with RCCE activities, in addition to 846 individuals that received awareness sessions on gender-based violence (GBV) topics.
- Essential services have been maintained, particularly for those who require treatment for non-communicable diseases. WHO delivered medications to cover more than 4,255 treatments to health facilities in the affected areas.
- WHO continues to monitor the quality of drinking water in Aleppo. 214 samples were tested from collective shelters, primary health care centers (PHCs), and villages, of which 15 showed bacterial contamination.

### Latakia

- WHO continues to provide essential health services in the earthquake-affected areas through its supported mobile medical teams.
- MHPSS sessions, including vocational and educational activities were provided to the families affected by the earthquake at the Sport City shelter in Latakia.



*WHO supported mobile teams providing MHPSS services to children in one of the IDP shelters in Latakia*

- In collaboration with other health partners, WHO celebrated World Health Day. The history of WHO, its establishment, mission, and vision were highlighted during the event.
- WHO provided capacity-building activities for 75 healthcare workers from Latakia and 55 from Tartous covering different intervention areas.
- 3.8 tonnes of essential health supplies were delivered to the main hospitals in Latakia and Tartous governorates.
- WHO supported the operating costs of a five-day multi-antigen vaccination campaign, in Latakia and Tartous aimed at children under five.

### Homs

- In response to the earthquake, WHO conducted an assessment of the collective shelters in rural Hama to ascertain the current situation and provide the needed support.
- PHC and MHPSS services were provided by MMTs to the earthquake-affected areas.

### Deir-ez-Zor

- WHO supported the operational cost of the measles campaign conducted in Deir-ez-Zor to enhance vaccine coverage across all areas of the governorate. The campaign lasted for 5 days and targeted the most affected areas.
- To enhance the diagnostic capacities for primary and secondary health care, WHO delivered medical equipment and consumables to the TB laboratory.
- A CT-scan was delivered to Al Assad Hospital; it will be in service in May 2023.
- In collaboration with the DoH and Directorate of Education (DoE), WHO concluded the MHPSS campaign conducted in Deir-ez-Zor and Al Mayadeen districts. 3,600 beneficiaries benefited from the services provided, including 30 schools with 1,750 students.

## Qamishli Hub / Northeast Syria (NES)

### Coordination

- WHO organized a meeting for Al-Hikmah Hospital staff in order to address the challenges of referrals while discharging patients back to the camp using KRC ambulances as well as the role of the KRC coordinator.

### MHPSS

- MHPSS services were provided according to the IASC MHPSS intervention pyramid in 95 locations by 13 supported NGOs.

### Pharmaceuticals:

- Five partners and one hospital in NES received 2 tonnes of essential medicine, VI fluids, leishmaniasis treatment, chlorine tablets, and consumables distributed by WHO.

### EWARS:

- Acute watery diarrhea (AWD) and measles cases in Al-Hasakeh governorate were investigated, visits were conducted to private and public hospitals, and line lists were updated.
- Based on the EWARS analysis, the top five morbidities in NES, as compared to March, are:
  - Influenza-like illness (ILI)/COVID-like illness (CLI) decreased 2933 vs. 3553 in March.
  - Acute diarrhea (AD) decreased 1249 vs. 1495.
  - Leishmaniasis decreased 103 vs. 208.
  - Worms increased 198 vs. 170.
  - Scabies decreased 69 vs. 93.

### Nutrition:

- WHO-supported centers for malnutrition treatment in Al Hikmeh and Al-Tabqa hospitals received 36 new cases.

### Immunization:

- As part of a collaboration with DoH Al-Hasakeh, a measles immunization campaign was conducted from 12-17 April targeting 5,700 children in Al Hol camp and the high-risk areas in Al-Hasakeh. More than 107 community workers were equipped with essential messages and techniques to raise awareness among camp residents regarding the critical importance of vaccinating their children to control the outbreak. By the end of the campaign, measles vaccination coverage has increased by more than four folds among children as a result of awareness-raising and community engagement.
- COVID-19 vaccination activities are ongoing as part of routine immunization activities.

### Secondary Healthcare:

- With the support of WHO, 676 beneficiaries were referred to Al Hikmeh Hospital for secondary and trauma services.
- Orientation sessions were provided on the WHO criteria for supporting referrals to Al-Hikmeh Hospital in three camps: Al-Hol, Roj, and Newroz.

### WASH:

- Water quality monitoring was conducted in 11 IDP camps, 39 collective shelters, and 17 drinking water stations in NES, where 551 samples were tested, and no contamination was detected.

- A total of 120,000 Chlorine tablets were distributed in Al Hasakeh city's southern neighborhoods, enough to cover more than 77,000 beneficiaries.

## Northwest Syria (NWS)

### Rapid Response to the Earthquake and Early Recovery Activities in Northwest Syria

- WHO collaborated with the NGO SEMA to establish an additional inpatient Cholera Treatment Center (CTC) in Jandairis, the city most heavily impacted by the earthquake in Syria. Nine CTCs are now available in Northwest Syria. Patients have access to treatment and isolation facilities 24/7 at the CTC. Additionally, the WHO has supported the establishment of nine new Oral Rehydration Points (ORPs) which will operate until September 2023. Cholera treatment facilities use these ORPs to treat patients with suspected cholera and dehydration. These ORPs are distributed as follows: two in Afrin, three in Al Bab, one in Alatareb, and three in A'zaz.



*WHO-supported Measles vaccination campaign in NWS*

- On 8 April, the WHO launched a measles and polio vaccination campaign for 800,000 children across all accessible areas of Northwest Syria. The 10-day, house-to-house campaign was made possible by more than 750 teams of vaccinators deployed on the ground. 768,785 children aged between 0 and 5 years vaccinated against polio (94% of the target), and 668,056 children aged between 6 and 59 months were vaccinated against measles (88% of the target).
- WHO thanks the 3,000 health workers who served their communities despite being personally affected by the earthquakes. While many lost relatives and homes, they remained committed to their work.

- WHO and GAVI explored opportunities to increase coverage by conducting additional measles vaccination campaigns in low-coverage areas due to the current measles outbreak. Campaigns will include children up to 10 years old.

### Delivery of essential medicines supplies into northwest Syria

- A total of 2,974,166 treatment courses have been provided by the WHO since February. Medicines for diabetics and hypertensives, dialysis medications, equipment, and consumables were among the items supplied.

### Disease Surveillance and Outbreak Response

- There are currently 225 sentinel sites contributing to the surveillance system. The completeness of reporting was 99% in Aleppo and 98% in Idlib, while timeliness was 86% in Aleppo and 96% in Idlib. All three Early Warning and Response Network (EWARN) labs in Northwest Syria are equipped to diagnose infectious diseases such as measles, rubella, Covid-19, and Vibrio Cholera, as well as Rotavirus (via Rapid Diagnostic Test, or RDT) and Adenovirus (via RDT) by the Syria Immunization group.
- 69,080 suspected cases of cholera were reported, 29,110 in Aleppo, and 39,970 in Idlib.
- To combat the leishmaniasis outbreak, WHO and its partners have mobilized 500 vials of Ambisome, a first-line drug for treating the disease.

### Health Information Systems

- In response to earthquake relief, the WHO established a data hub. Health information products and new features have been added, aimed at planning and mapping health services in NW. For more information, please access the information hub [link](#).

### RCCE

- In earthquake-affected areas, the WHO has continued to expand its risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) activities. During the reporting

period, WHO RCCE partners reached a total of 155,027 beneficiaries in 27 subdistricts, referring 698 suspected cholera cases and 3,611 other cases (including reproductive health, child health, internal medicine, and malnutrition cases) to the relevant facilities or services in the targeted communities.

- In addition, 240 community health workers, 60% of whom are women, received RCCE refresher training.

### **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)**

- 84 camps and 51 emergency shelters have expanded mental health and psychological support services since the earthquakes. In addition, WHO partners have:
  - Provided psychiatric outpatient care to 8,500 people and psychiatric inpatient care to 32 Syrians.

- Implemented detection and referral processes for 7,000 mental health cases in Northwest Syria.

- Reached 50,000 people with group awareness-raising sessions and provided psychosocial support activities to 18,000 children.

- With the support of the WHO, facilitated self-care sessions for 2,000 people and either peer or group support for 4,200 individuals.

- To increase the capacity for providing rapid support to earthquake victims, Psychological First Aid (PFA) training and orientation were delivered to 120 community health workers (CHWs) in Northwest Syria.

## Useful links

[HeRAMS public hospitals](#)

[HeRAMS public health centres](#)

[WHO-Syria Summary of HRP indicators reported through the 4Ws](#)

[WoS key performance indicators](#)

[MHPSS dashboard](#)

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