6 February 2024, Cairo, Egypt – A US$ 10 million agreement signed today by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief) will provide more than one million people in Gaza with access to emergency life-saving health services.

“The collaboration between WHO and KSrelief signifies a strategic, coordinated response to addressing urgent health needs in Gaza,” said Dr Hanan Balkhy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. “KSrelief’s generous commitment will enable WHO to continue bolstering the health system, ensuring that people displaced by ongoing violence have access to lifesaving health care.”

The project, which will be implemented over a 12-month period, will support 30 primary health care centers and 10 hospitals and ambulances across Gaza with essential medicines, medical supplies and disposables, and fuel. Approximately one million internally displaced people and those living within the catchment area of the targeted health facilities stand to benefit from this project.

Recent hostilities in Gaza have strained the health system and exacerbated challenges such as shortages in essential services, clean water, food, and fuel. In just four months, almost 28,000 people have been killed, and almost 67,000 people injured. More than 1.7 million people have been displaced, the majority living in overcrowded shelters. Ambulance access is hindered, disease surveillance disrupted, and inadequate water and sanitation have increased the spread of infectious disease outbreaks.

“KSrelief is committed to alleviating the suffering of people affected by emergencies across the Region. The deterioration of the humanitarian and health situation in Gaza has reached unprecedented levels,” said Dr Abdullah Al Rabeeah, KSrelief Supervisor General. “The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, represented by KSrelief, will continue to support WHO in its tireless efforts to help people in need of urgent health services in Gaza.” Representing KSrelief at the signing event with WHO were Eng. Ahmed Albaiz, Assistant Supervisor of KSrelief’s General Operations and Programmes, and Dr Abdullah Al Moallem, Director of KSrelief’s Health Department.

WHO’s operational plan for Gaza focuses on sustaining essential health services, supporting hospitals and primary health centers through medical supplies, coordinating deployment of emergency medical teams, establishing temporary field hospitals, strengthening referral pathways, and supporting public health surveillance, disease prevention and control. Aligned with the United Nations Flash Appeal, the plan targets priority areas of the Health and Nutrition component. Immediate attention is essential for procuring and distributing essential health supplies to address the crisis in Gaza.

As Health Cluster Lead Agency, WHO collaborates with partners, including health authorities and UNRWA, to maintain health services through effective supply chain management. Leveraging established systems, WHO facilitates the procurement, storage, and delivery of medical supplies to vulnerable communities.

“Despite a severely shrinking space for the humanitarian and health response in Gaza, WHO and partners remain committed to reaching all people with the aid they desperately need,” added Dr Balkhy. “Ultimately, what is needed is sustained access into and across the Strip for the urgent delivery of aid, and an end to the hostilities, so that together with all people in Gaza, we can embark on the long road to wellbeing and recovery.”

WHO and KSrelief have a long-standing partnership responding to crises in WHO’s Eastern

Mediterranean Region. In 2022-23, WHO implemented KSrelief-funded projects in three emergency-affected countries (Yemen, Iraq, and Somalia) with contributions of over US$ 26 million.

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