

April 2021, Cairo – On 7 April 2021, World Health Day will be commemorated globally, under the theme “Together for a fairer, healthier world”. On this occasion, the World Health Organization (WHO) calls for urgent action to eliminate health inequities and mobilize action to attain better health for all and leave no one behind.

Inequities have always existed. Despite improvements in health outcomes globally and in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, these gains have not been shared equally across different countries or communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has had grave consequences for people already experiencing inequities. The pandemic has disproportionately impacted those people already socially, economically, or geographically disadvantaged, and evidence shows a worsening trend of disparities and inequity across the Region.

"Health is a fundamental human right. Every person deserves to live a healthy life regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, disability, economic situation or employment. Progress in tackling health disparities has been slow worldwide, including in the Region in which many countries are experiencing emergencies and conflict and we have the largest number of displaced people in the world," said Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO, Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

In addition to conflict, several factors contribute to inequities such as poverty, unemployment, environmental challenges, gender inequities, and most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. All of these factors and others have a negative affect on the provision of services to communities and ultimately on their health and well-being.

Working to tackle the root causes of inequity, last week, the WHO Regional Office launched the report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. "This report provides detailed analysis of inequities among and within countries of the Region and recommends fairer policies and actions to achieve health equity. I call on all our partners and stakeholders to take these recommendations forward and ensure that no one is left behind," added Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari.

On World Health Day 2021, WHO is calling on leaders to monitor health inequities and address their root causes to ensure that everyone has access to the living and working conditions that are conducive to good health and to quality health services where and when they need them, and to invest in primary health care to achieve health for all by all.

The WHO Regional Director noted that the regional “Vision 2023: Health for all by all: a call for action and solidarity”, was aligned with this year’s theme and that achieving health for all by all was essential to meet the challenges of today and to build the resilience of tomorrow.

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