Health services for Syrian refugees in Turkey

As part of the whole-of-Syria approach, the WHO Country Office in Turkey and its field office in Gaziantep delivered the following support.

Reducing the risk of importing polio myelitis (polio) into Turkey. WHO’s Country Office in Turkey supported the Ministry of Health in securing 50,000 doses of inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) to boost the immunization of people aged over 15 years who planned to travel to and from Syria during the Eid Fitr holidays. The outbreak of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) in Syria since June 2017 had led to Turkey being declared at risk of importing the crippling disease. To reduce this risk, the Turkey Verification Committee of the Polio Eradication Programme recommended improving surveillance and boosting immunity among people at high risk. Vaccination for children aged under 15 years was covered with Turkey’s stocks.

Planning for refugee health activities in Turkey. Together with relevant Turkish institutions and partners, the WHO Country Office in Turkey initiated the development of a new Regional Refugee and Resilience plan for 2018–2019. A joint meeting focused on longer-term interventions to bolster the resilience of refugees and host communities while building the capacity of national systems. The health sector, led by WHO, identified action points concerning the training of 700 Syrian health professionals and the delegation of responsibilities in the refugee health training centres.

Supporting health services for refugees in Ankara. A refugee health centre (RHC) opened on 20 September 2017 in Ankara’s Altındağ district, where the refugee population density is highest. WHO provides technical and organizational support for the training of health professionals serving in these centres. The new centre, established within the largest EU-funded project for refugee health in Turkey, is one of the 42 extended RHCs that deliver specialized health services in addition to primary health care services. By October, around 100 RHCs had been opened throughout the country, out of a planned total of 180.

Funding

As of October 2017, WHO had received US$ 12.5 million from donors out of a total of US$ 19 million needed to help Syrian refugees in Turkey in 2017.

Donors

As of October 2017, WHO programmes in Turkey were being funded by European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration of the United States Department of State, and the governments of the People’s Republic of China, Kuwait and Norway.
Health services for northern Syria

As part of the whole-of-Syria approach, the WHO Country Office in Turkey and its field office in Gaziantep delivered the following support.

Responding to attacks on health care.
In mid-September, intense aerial bombing struck many sites in north-west Syria, including five primary health centres and 24 ambulances. More than 100 people died, hundreds were injured and thousands were forced from their homes. Attacks were reported on seven hospitals. In response, WHO’s field office in Gaziantep, Turkey, accelerated its regular cross-border shipment of trauma, surgery and burn kits and other medical supplies from Turkey to Syrian areas under attack.

Supplying medical equipment.
From Gaziantep, WHO and partners supported hospitals in the Idlib area by funding the supply and running costs of ambulances equipped with oxygen tanks, blood bags, defibrillators and other materials.

Conducting training. More than 600 health workers were trained by WHO’s field office in Gaziantep on different topics. Doctors and nurses from north-west Syria learnt how to treat emergency trauma cases and chemical exposure. More than 300 health workers were trained in preparation for a polio vaccination campaign in north-west Syria using IPV, and in turn trained a further 320 colleagues. Syrian health workers gained information on the use of supply kits for noncommunicable diseases, including hypertension and diabetes. Doctors and midwives in Idlib and Aleppo participated in a WHO course on mental health as part of the WHO Mental Health Gap Action programme.

Handling chemical exposure. More than 45 Syrian health care workers received WHO training in responding to chemical attacks and managing patients exposed to toxic chemicals. Doctors, nurses, paramedics and pharmacists came from north-west Syria for an advanced five-day training course, using protective equipment to practise detection, triage, decontamination and treatment.

Treating noncommunicable diseases. WHO shipped supply kits for chronic diseases into northern Syria to provide 10 000 treatments for patients suffering from hypertension, diabetes and other illnesses. WHO is also continuing its in-person and online courses to train Syrian doctors, nurses and other health staff in treating patients with chronic diseases.

Preparing for outbreaks. Syrian health staff learnt how to prepare for and handle a cholera outbreak in a four-day training course run by WHO and experts from the United States Centers for Disease Prevention and Control. The training focused on prevention and included a simulation exercise to set up a cholera treatment centre.

“During the simulation training where we set up a cholera treatment centre, I also learned things that will help me in other ways, like what kind of chlorine solution to use in disinfecting supplies.”

--Dr Sireen Masri, Specialist in internal medicine in Aleppo Local Health Directorates

Protecting from polio. With WHO support and monitoring, partner teams in north-west Syria have vaccinated more than 225 000 children with IPV.

The Turkey Country Office of WHO’s Regional Office for Europe serves the health needs of families in northern Syria as well as Syrian refugees living in Turkey.

Funding
As of October 2017, WHO had received US$ 17.8 million out of a total of US$ 63 million needed for its work in northern Syria in 2017.

Donors
WHO programmes in northern Syria are funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development, ECHO, OCHA pooled funds, the United States Agency for International Development and the governments of the People’s Republic of China, Japan, Kuwait and Norway.