

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 have delivered the following support.

Health workers are #NotATarget. World Humanitarian Day 2017 on 19 August marked the protection of civilians, aid workers and all those affected by conflicts around the world through the #NotATarget campaign. WHO focused specifically on attacks on health care, a major violation of international law, which is unacceptably on the rise.

Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, over 800 health staff have been killed in more than 500 recorded attacks. Many more Syrian doctors, nurses and midwives have fled abroad and many are now refugees in Turkey. Those who enrolled in the Syrian Refugee Health Programme, a joint initiative of WHO and the Ministry of Health of Turkey, have been trained on delivering health services according to the Turkish system and are now working again at refugee health centres providing health services to Syrian refugees in their own language. Two of them describe what it means to witness attacks on health care.



Saadullah Alahmad (left) and Ahlam Alali (right) are Syrian doctors who fled to Turkey. They both experienced attacks on health care. Photo: WHO/Z. Vapur

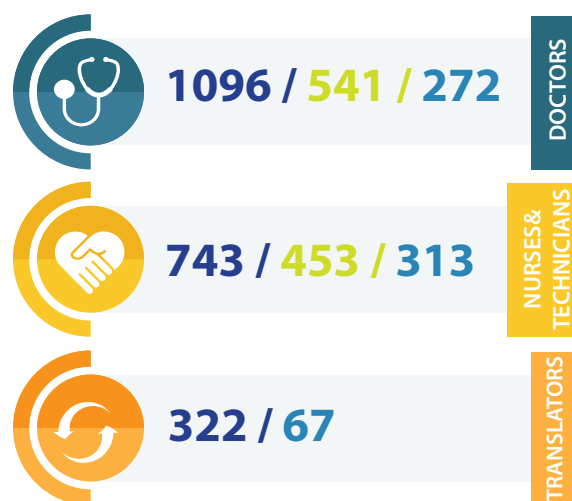
Saadullah Alahmad, a general practitioner (GP) from Aleppo, was chief physician for 12 health care centres in Syria employing about 200 people. When Aleppo was besieged, “people were wounded and I was not able to intervene because there was no equipment,” he says. “Armed groups were receiving and distributing the medicines. Hospitals and health centres were constantly targeted, and health workers were victims”. Eventually, Saadullah managed to flee to Turkey, where he is now working again as a GP. “After I started the WHO trainings, I felt that I was human, valuable and I did not earn this diploma for nothing!”

Ahlam Alali, a paediatrician, worked in a state hospital in Syria for 15 years and managed the haemolytic anemia centre in Raqqa for one year. “Until Raqqa was safe, I was part of a team that provided free health care services as well as moral and material support”, remembers Ahlam. “When bombing started, I decided to come to Turkey. We were continuously raided from armed men in the hospital. They came to our offices and decided about treatment. The hospital that I worked in was bombed twice and then closed.” After attending the WHO training courses, Ahlam has now resumed her work. “I really miss my old life”, she says, but adds: “I am happy in Turkey. I am a paediatrician and I love my job”.

The Syrian Refugee Health Program 2018-19.

The WHO Country Office in Turkey, the Turkish Ministry of Health and other Turkish health institutions discussed strategic, innovative and effective future directions of the Syrian Refugee Health Programme for 2018–2019 in Trabzon on 3–6 August 2017.

Ministry representatives noted that they look forward to see the seven refugee health training centres fully operational soon and thanked WHO for collaborating with the national Public Health Institute, stressing that dialogue with WHO will continue.



Syrian health staff trained in January-August 2017 within the Syrian Refugee Health Programme

- Staff who completed classroom training.
- Staff who completed on-the-job training.
- Staff hired by the Ministry of Health.

Funding

As of August 2017, WHO has received US\$ 12.5 million from donors out of a total of US\$ 19 million needed to help Syrian refugees in Turkey since the beginning of the Syrian crisis.

Donors

As of August 2017, WHO programmes in Turkey are 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 have delivered the following support.

Polio. WHO's Gaziantep field office helped to fight a polio outbreak in northeast Syria. The office provided technical support and funded independent monitoring as teams vaccinated more than 100 000 children.

Routine vaccination. Regular vaccination programmes have restarted this year in more than 35 centres in northern Syria, after being disrupted by conflict. Tens of thousands of children can now go to fixed sites for immunization against measles, tuberculosis, diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and other vaccine-preventable disease. WHO partners monitor the immunization programmes to ensure quality.

Health workers are #NotATarget.



As a contribution to World Humanitarian Day 2017, WHO brought a Syrian doctor, refugee in Turkey, at a UN event in Gaziantep to talk about attacks on health care in northwest Syria (above); and disseminated images gathered by health partners for the #NotATarget campaign (right). Photo (L to R): WHO/Radysh; Turkey Health Cluster.

Gender inclusion. WHO held a workshop for male leaders of Syrian medical groups to explore perceptions that might prevent health facilities in northern Syria sending their female health staff to medical training courses. The goal is to increase the number of female Syrian doctors and nurses at WHO-sponsored medical training courses where professionals upgrade their skills.

Medical supplies. WHO shipped 66 tonnes of trauma kits, surgical equipment, medicines and other supplies to northern Syria. The supplies, worth US\$ 25 000, will help patients at health facilities in Aleppo, Idlib, Hama, and Lattakia.

"We're using a system-wide approach, not a temporary solution, to make the health system resilient."

Dr Jamshed Tanoli, Health Cluster Coordinator

WHO financially supported ambulances and emergency services at two hospitals, a mental health facility, and four first aid points in northwest Syria. More than 10 000 people received emergency, surgery and mental health services because of these programmes.



Funding

As of August 2017, WHO had received US\$ 16.2 million out of a total of US\$ 63 million needed for its work in northern Syria in 2017.

Donors

As of August 2017, WHO programmes in northern Syria are being funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development, ECHO, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs pooled funds, and the governments of the People's Republic of China, Japan, Kuwait and Norway.