



*Technical Polio professionals meeting in Damascus to discuss polio transition planning*

## HIGHLIGHTS

- A team of technical polio professionals from the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the Ministry of Health of Syria conducted a 3-day joint mission on polio transition planning. The team conducted various meetings with national counterparts, UN agencies and other stakeholders to assess the current situation, identify the needs and resources, maintain polio-essential functions, and strengthen routine immunization to maintain Syria’s polio-free status.
- 1 045 health staff were trained in different intervention areas through 37 capacity-building activities.
- More than 88 tonnes of medical, laboratory supplies; kits; PPEs; and cholera-related response supplies including oral rehydration salts (ORS), IV fluids, haemodialysis sessions, and printed IEC materials were dispatched to 34 MoH facilities, 4 MoHE hospitals, 6 NGOs, 1 INGOs, SARC and and 1 Inter-Agency convoy to Sarmada city in Idlib.

## Health Operational Update

### **Disease Surveillance and Outbreak Response**

- 1 294 out of 1 497 sentinel sites are reporting weekly with 85% completeness and 85% timeliness.
- 80% of alerts are responded to within 72 hours.

### **Cholera outbreak at the WoS level**

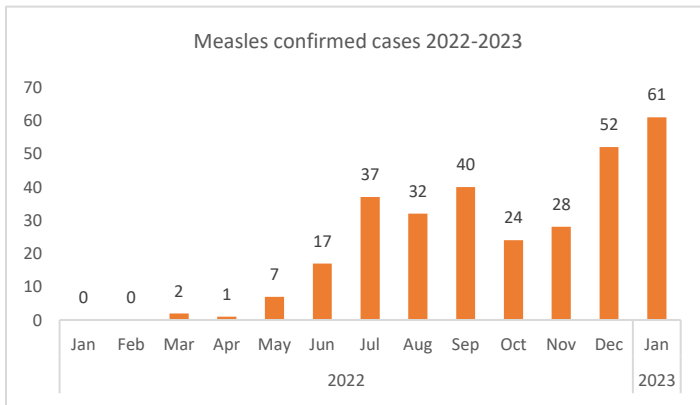
- Since the start of the outbreak on 25 August 2022 till 28 January 2023, a total of 88 060 acute watery diarrhea cases were reported across all areas of Syria, including 2 692 confirmed cholera cases and 101 associated deaths.
- On 29 November 2022, a shipment of two million doses of Oral Cholera Vaccines (OCV), funded by GAVI – the Vaccine Alliance – reached Damascus.
- A vaccination campaign focused on vulnerable areas in 4 governorates in north and north-east Syria (Aleppo, Al-Hasakeh, Deir-ez-Zor, and Ar-Raqqa) was launched in December and concluded on 5 January 2023, reaching 1.94 million people – 98% of those targeted in communities which had reported high numbers of cases and limited access to health facilities, clean water, and sanitation services.
- Overall, reported acute watery diarrhea (AWD) cases slightly decreased in January by 9% compared with cases reported in December (11 377 cases in January versus 12 562 cases in December) but some areas still

witnessed increases – mainly in northwest Syria where vaccination has not yet been rolled out.

- The trend in decreased cases can be attributed to several factors, including weather and seasonality, as well as cholera response interventions by the official authorities, WHO, and health and WASH partners. These include early detection of cases and laboratory testing; supporting case management of mild and severe cases through the provision of medicines, oral rehydration salts, and IV fluids; supporting the improvement of water supplies through distribution of chlorine tablets; supporting RCCE activities and awareness raising awareness; and finally, the provision of oral cholera vaccine in the high-risk areas in Aleppo, Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa, and Deir ez-Zor.

### **Measles cases**

- During January, a total of 1 140 suspected measles cases were reported through the EWARS system in 9 governorates; a 13 % increase in the number of reported measles cases compared to December 2022.
- 61 cases were confirmed as follows: Al-Hasakeh (29), Aleppo (15), Ar-Raqqa (2), Homs (1), and Deir ez-Zor (14).



## Trauma

- In January, jointly with UNFPA, WHO conducted a training on “Strengthening Women’s Health and the Clinical Management for GBV Survivors”, which aimed to scale up the capacity of Ministry of Health (MoH) and key NGO doctors in providing clinical management to survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), with a focus on trauma and disability in fragile, conflict-affected and vulnerable settings in Syria. The training also focused on a survivor-centered approach, GBV core concepts, and the interlinkages between sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and mental health (MH) in terms of the health response to violence against women, girls, men, and boys, including through the analysis of perceptions and beliefs affecting healthcare. The training targeted MoH frontline health workers and RH heads of departments centrally, and peripherally, as well as NGO RH, GBV focal points, and program leads.
- WHO and MoH conducted a three-day consultative meeting attended by 25 participants from concerned ministries and NGOs, including the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Local Administration and Environment, Ministry of Transport, Civil Defence, Syrian Arabic Red Crescent (SARC), and Syrian Association for Preventing Road Accidents. The participants discussed the fifth global report on road safety and WHO's regional approach to the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030.
- Over 40 760 treatments with life-saving medicines, 105 trauma and emergency surgery kits (TESK), and different types of medical equipment/supplies (oxygen concentrators, oxygen cylinders, pulse oximeters) were delivered to health partners in

Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Quneitra, Rural Damascus, Al-Hasakeh, Deir ez-Zor, Dara’a, and As-Sweida. These deliveries are part of WHO’s continuous effort to enhance the capacity of public health facilities for timely and appropriate responses to life-saving interventions.

- Additionally, 31 persons with disabilities benefited from different types of assistive devices that were delivered to health partners.

## EPI

- The routine immunization coverage for 2022 (released recently) showed a drop in Penta 3 coverage from 75% in 2021 to 64% in 2022. A major decline was also reported in the measles mumps rubella 1<sup>st</sup> dose (MMR1) vaccine from 76% in 2021 to 57% in 2022 due to a shortage of vaccines during 2022. The data is considered preliminary until now. Furthermore, the measles-rubella (MR) campaign coverage survey, finalized in January 2023, showed a coverage of 81% at the national level compared to 87% as per administrative campaign data.
- Outreach/mobile teams continued their activities as planned in all targeted governorates to reach unreached children.

## Primary Health Care

- WHO attended and facilitated the participation of the Ministry of Health's Tobacco Control Focal Point in the virtual regional meeting on the Global Alliance for Tobacco Control (GATC). The background, mission, and work of GATC were introduced, and a brief orientation on how to join the Alliance's new GATC Community was provided.
- Two joint WHO and UNICEF trainings on AWD case management with RCCE components were conducted, targeting 50 doctors and health care workers in Al-Hasakeh, targeting private doctors and NGOs.
- Two 10kVA/1 phase electricity generators were provided to DoH primary health care centers (PHCCs) in Hama (Wadi Al-Oyon PHCC and Al Hawarneh PHCC).

## Secondary Health Care and Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)

- To sustain safe healthcare service delivery, personal protection equipment (PPE), and IPC supplies were

dispatched to different health partners across the country, including MoH. 32 000 masks, 83 000 surgical masks, and 357 100 examination gloves were distributed.

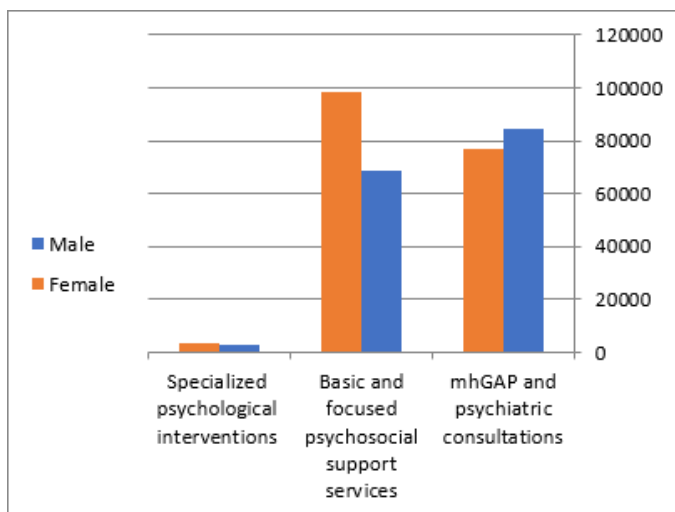
- Five portable ventilators were dispatched to the Ambulance and Emergency Department at the MoH and SARC in Damascus.
- One 10kVA/3 phase electricity generator was delivered to support the haemodialysis department at Al-Assad Hospital in Deir ez-Zor.

### Nutrition and Child Health

- In December 2022, 63 966 U5 children were screened for malnutrition in 941 health centres across the country.
- 1 506 cases of global acute malnutrition were detected (379 severe and 1 127 moderate).
- On 18 and 19 January 2023, concerned technical officers conducted the final review of the national code of breast milk substitutes, in cooperation with MoH and WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO).

### Mental Health (MH)

- Based on MoH data analysis, the 2022 MHPSS-supported services are as follows:



- A training package is to be finalized for MH officers and focal points at MoH. There is further discussion on building MHPSS personnel capacities in public mental health and community-based systems in all sectors.

- Two campaigns with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the School Health Directorate are in the final preparation stage. They will target children and caregivers at a national level, with topics such as examination anxiety and children with disabilities through the newly launched program “Caregiver Skill Training” (CST). All technical materials and communication messages have been developed and are ready for roll out.
- The MHPSS Technical Working Group coordination meeting was conducted, a work plan is being drafted, the MHPSS Minimum Service Package national plan is being revised, and there are plans to support UNRWA, UNHCR, UNFPA, and UNICEF in different technical areas upon request.

### Communicable Diseases

- Tuberculosis (TB) mobile clinics are functioning in three governorates (Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zour, and Rural Damascus). 1 710 beneficiaries benefited from 42 TB awareness sessions. In addition, 354 suspected cases were tested for TB, 20 of which were confirmed.
- A Spot-Check Mission to audit, assess, and document TB health service availability and provision in the COVID-19 context at facility and community levels was conducted in three main centres in Damascus, Aleppo, and Rural Damascus. The mission included field visits to the sites and a review of the data collected during the COVID-19 crisis (2019-2020). This activity was supported by the Global Fund (GF) based on a WHO agreement with IOM as a GF grant sub-recipient, and conducted by the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute as an auditing external entity for the implementation of GF projects.
- Through the Global Fund grant (Middle East Response 3), WHO has delivered laboratory supplies to the HIV reference laboratory to support about 600 CD4 analyses, which will enable the monitoring of treatment response for people living with HIV.
- WHO supported Al-Hasakeh DoH with 4 000 leishmaniasis ampoules in January.

### Communication

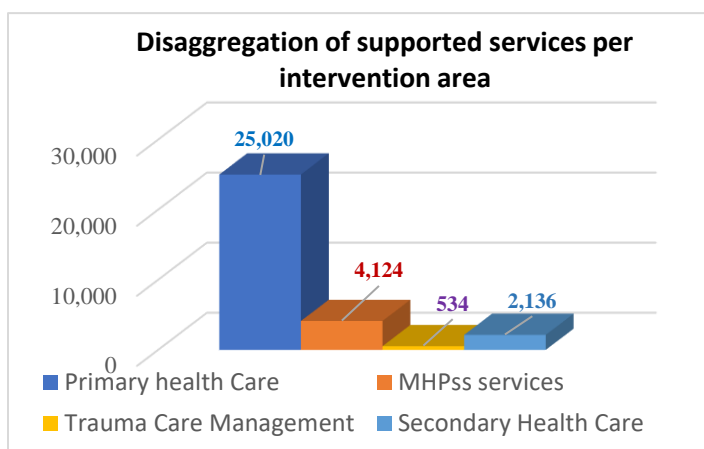
- WHO’s Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) team amplified social media messages on oral cholera vaccines, including their

safety and effectiveness, highlighting the ongoing cholera vaccination campaign taking place in selected governorates.

- The communications team provided visibility coverage for different health activities:
  - The conclusion of the Oral Cholera Vaccine Campaign, [Link](#).
  - The Polio transition mission to Syria, [Link](#)
  - The Czech Republic’s contribution to boosting WHO’s efforts in combating the cholera outbreak in Syria, [Link](#)
  - (TOT) on gender mainstreaming in health, [Link](#)

### Community Engagement (NGOs)

- Five contracted NGOs are providing primary and secondary healthcare services to people in need in underserved areas. NGOs are supporting 6 fixed health facilities, one hospital, and 2 mobile medical teams in Homs, Rural Damascus, and Al-Hasakeh, governorates.
- WHO partners provided 31 814 healthcare services:



### Pharmacy

- The National Medical Supply Chain (NMSC) assessment, including the development of a Logistics Management Information System (LMIS), started in January in collaboration with the MoH and a WHO consultant. The mission aims to provide high-level strategic support, review key NMSC functional processes, analyze the actual network design, warehousing, and distribution mechanisms, and advise on a potential national LMIS implementation.

- The rehabilitation of the Medicine Quality Control Lab, the sole reference lab in the country, was initiated.
- The field visits phase of the oxygen scale-up activities started, in coordination with the MoH team and WHO biomedical engineer. The activity aims to enhance oxygen availability in health facilities through oxygen data collection (Live Oxygen Platform).
- Along with the MoH, WHO finalized the list of priority needs of required medications for the next two quarters.

### Health Systems

- The 4th round of the Pulse Survey on the impact of COVID-19 on essential health services was facilitated with inputs from technical colleagues and MoH.
- The Health Systems Unit contributed to the Training of Trainers workshop on gender mainstreaming in health for health managers, using the WHO manual. A four-day training took place from 15-19 January, targeting 30 participants from MoH and aimed to build capacity in doing gender analysis as well as designing gender-sensitive activities. The ToT workshop is part of activities to mainstream gender in health systems, and a plan to cascade this to primary healthcare levels is under discussion.

### Health Sector Coordination

- Completed inventory of health sector projects funded for 2023.
- Finalized and disseminated the health sector Syria annual report for 2022.
- Disseminated 4W 2022 HRP health sector operational presence, November 2022.
- Updated health sector Syria on Aleppo mass casualty, COVID-19 national vaccination campaign, the repository of IEC, Deiz-ez-Zoir sub-national meeting; WHO Syria produced situation reports (7 different types).
- Produced and disseminated 2 integrated (Health, WASH, RCCE sectors) AWD/cholera Syria weekly situation reports, Damascus, 16 – 29 December 2022, 30 December 2022 – 12 January 2023, with 2 consolidated WoS AWD/cholera case distribution (3 sources of information) updates at a sub-district and community levels.

## WHO Syria Sub-Offices

### Aleppo

- Facilitated and participated in WHO Representative field mission to Aleppo Governorate, including visits to several healthcare facilities, and followed up on the implementation of WHO-supported activities in the city.
- A COVID-19 vaccination campaign was conducted for five days targeting the population over 18 years old in all health districts.
- Cholera vaccination post-campaign monitoring has been finalized and indicated a very good uptake by the targeted population.

### Latakia

- In collaboration with the DoH and Directorate of Water Resources, WHO conducted site visits to the water-monitoring labs in Latakia and Tartous to assess needs and provide support with diagnostic kits and operational requirements.
- WHO supported a 5-day COVID-19 vaccination campaign, during which 1 008 people in Latakia and 1 656 in Tartous received the vaccines.
- WHO also supported a joint campaign with UNICEF to enhance drinking water quality by providing 3 000 flyers on the appropriate use of aqua chlorine tabs.
- In January 2023, WHO supported a series of trainings and workshops for 102 healthcare workers in both Latakia and Tartous. Additionally, WHO supported Paediatrics Hospital in Latakia and Dreksh, Qadmous and Banyas Hospitals in Tartous with 0.2 tonnes of essential health supplies.

### Homs and Hama

- WHO, in partnership with the Alafia Fund NGO, provided 3 700 kidney dialysis sessions, 39 referrals for MRI, and 16 referrals for surgical interventions in Homs.
- The National COVID-19 vaccination campaign, integrated with routine vaccination, took place in Homs and Hama from 22-26 January 2023.
  - COVID-19: 9 275 people were vaccinated in Hama and 5 903 in Homs.

- Routine vaccination: 1 511 children in Hama and 851 children in Homs were reached.
- An assessment was conducted to determine the WASH needs for potential cholera response as follows:
  - Homs: in hospitals (Karm Al Loz, Al Zahra, and Ibn Al Waleed) in Homs City, Talkalakh and Al Mokharram Hospitals in Rural Homs, and cholera treatment centers (CTCs) in Homs City (Bab Alsbaa, Karm Alshami, Der Baalba, and Al Arman) and (Talkalakh, Al Mokharram, Al Qusair, Al Kabo, Sheen, Al Qaretein, and Alrasthan) in Rural Homs.
  - Hama: in hospitals in Hama City and Rural Hama (Hama National Hospital, Messiaf National Hospital, Al-Assad Medical Hospital, Sqailbiah Hospital, and Salameiah Hospital), CTCs in Hama City (Al Baroudiah and Al Nasr neighbourhood) and in Rural Hama (Al Sqailbiah, Salameiah, Soran, and Mahardeh).
- Seventy-one water samples were tested from nine locations in Homs, and nineteen were found to be bacterially contaminated from seven locations.

### Deir ez-Zor

- As part of the previously mentioned January 2023 integrated COVID-19 and routine immunization campaign, WHO supported the operational costs. MR vaccine was administered in areas where suspected measles cases were detected to increase coverage and reduce dropout cases.
- To strengthen MHPSS coordination in Deir-ez-Zor, separate meetings were held with partners to reinforce communication methods and develop tracking tools. Launch of a MHPSS sub-working group meeting is planned.
- Under HERAMS, a rapid health assessment was conducted at health facilities; the assessment included 44 PHCCs and identified the non-functioning PHCCs rehabilitated by other partners.

### Qamishli Hub / Northeast Syria (NES)

- The WHO team conducted daily missions from 2-5 January to different locations to supervise and monitor the OCV campaign, as follows: 5 January to

Al-Hasakah City; 4 January to Al-Hol camp; 3 January to Tal Berak and Al-Tweina Camp; 2 January to Al-Areesha and Al-Talae Camps.

- On 9 January, a WHO team conducted a mission to Al-Hasakah DOH to prepare for the post-OCV campaign independent monitoring survey. During the visit, the WHO team met the Director of Health and EPI manager and discussed different cross-cutting issues.
- Through an agreement with Al-Hikmeh Hospital, WHO is providing the needed support to the most vulnerable groups across NES, covering the gap in secondary healthcare. Within the reporting period, 644 supported cases were referred to Al-Hikmeh hospital (432 trauma cases and 212 secondary cases).
- In partnership with CCS NGO in NES, WHO continued to provide essential medical services through 4 PHCCs. The project provided PHC, secondary, trauma, and mental health services to the population most in need in four locations in NES, including Al-Hol camp, Tal Hamis and Rural Al-Hasakah City.
- In partnership with PAN Armenian, WHO supports the population most in need in Qamishli and Al-Hasakeh through four health facilities (two PHCCs and two MMTs in Qamishli and Hasakeh and the rural areas).
- The WHO-supported centres for malnutrition treatment received a total of 49 new cases in both

Al-Hikmeh and Al-Tabqa hospitals. 53 cases were discharged after being recovered.

- On the cholera response: surveillance activities continued with a regularly updated line list, RCCE activities, and the completion of a series of case management trainings.
- Additionally, the OCV campaign was concluded on 5 January with a coverage of 101%, or 399 948 people vaccinated, in Al-Hasakeh.
- The aforementioned January 2023 integrated COVID-19 and routine immunization campaign reached Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa and eastern Deir-ez-Zor; over 25 648 COVID-19 doses were administered in NES.
- During January, WHO surveillance team responded to the reported measles outbreak in Al-Hasakeh, conducting an investigation with an analysis focusing on camps, collecting and sending samples to Damascus CPHL, and developing and sharing a line list along with regular updates. In addition, with WHO support, DoH conducted a response campaign in Al-Areesha and Al-Talae camps.
- In January, 2 474 beneficiaries were reached through RCCE sessions while 1 993 IEC materials were distributed.
- Awareness sessions were conducted with technical support (trainings) by WHO through different channels, including EWARS focal points in camps and hospitals in Al-Hasakeh.

## Northwest Syria (NWS)

### Highlights

- In January, 93 routine vaccination centres have been fully functioning thanks to the work of 133 teams.
- The COVID-19 vaccination campaign continues, and 100 vaccination teams supported by WHO (60 mobile and 40 fixed) continue working at full capacity.
- As of 29 January 2023, 688 393 Syrians have received at least one dose of the vaccine, of which 289 733 received two doses, and 123 275 received, and “booster dose”. The overall result, 15.5% of the total population is vaccinated (32,3% of the target).
- Thanks to immense efforts for daily coordination; the Mentor Initiative offered leishmaniasis treatment

services; World Vision supported the early warning, alert, and response network (EWARN); Physicians Across Continents and AFAQ delivered hemodialysis services; AFAQ, SAMS, IDA, SEMA, SDI, Al Sham and UDER primary and secondary health care services; Bahar and HiHFAD delivered TB services; UOSSM provided crucial mental health support; RM Team monitored the WHO Supply Line; the Syrian Immunization Group made various vaccination services available – including for tuberculosis, polio, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B, measles, mumps, and COVID-19; the Assistance Coordination Unit provided daily nutritional surveillance services. This multi-partner approach proved highly

effective in delivering the best possible health care to the people of northwest Syria.

#### **Delivery of essential medicines supplies into northwest Syria**

- WHO cross-border transshipments continue. In January, WHO delivered eight trucks of humanitarian aid to NWS for a value of more than USD 1 million. Close to 300,000 Syrian patients will benefit from the treatment courses provided by the medicines and other health supplies.

#### **Disease Surveillance and Outbreak Response**

- Since the Early Warning, Alert, and Response Network (EWARN) laboratory in Jarablus confirmed the first cholera-positive case by culture in northwest Syria (NWS) on 19 September 2022, until 31 January 2023, a total of 44 223 AWD/suspected cholera cases (17 950 in Aleppo governorate and 26 273 in Idlib governorate) including 565 confirmed cases and 20 death cases, have been reported by EWARN.
- A total of 2 640 community health workers, social mobilizers, hygiene promoters, and camp managers have received one-day training on social mobilization for cholera response. Overall, 30 RCCE partners reportedly reached a total of 1 940 249 individuals (55% of the target) with cholera awareness messages via different modalities of RCCE activities.
- A total of 830 suspected measles cases were reported through the EWARN system during January in nonnorthwestyria. The number significantly increased compared with the previous month (255 cases in December 2022).
- WHO conducted Rapid Response Teams Training of Trainers, in coordination with EMRO for 58 participants with a multidisciplinary background.

#### **PHC**

- In coordination with MENTOR Initiative, WHO supported the clinical management of Cutaneous Leishmania cases in Northwest Syria.
- During January 2023, 2 535 cutaneous leishmaniases (CL) and 5 Visceral Leishmania (VL) cases were reported. All VL cases are from Idlib governorate: 1 in Ariha, 3 in Harim, and 1 in Jisr-Ash-Shugur.

#### **TB**

- WHO visited the GeneXpert lab in Antakya that was established in 2020 with full support from the WHO Gaziantep office to identify TB cases in samples obtained from NWS. By the end of 2022, WHO upgraded the lab with the new recommended extensively drug resistant (XDR) system to identify TB cases with resistance to second-line TB medication.
- During January, WHO evaluated the GeneXpert lab in the medical center linked to Antakya health directorate and the Referral TB lab in the hospital of Antakya University (MKU) and conducted a review of the university's referral TB lab, where advanced TB tests (culture and DST) are carried out on samples obtained from NWS. These services are unavailable in northwest Syria, and the discussions focused on the procedures followed during the diagnostic process, how the results were shared, and how to guarantee the ongoing availability of these vital services.



*The suicide prevention campaign in ZOGHARA camps*

#### **MH**

- The MHPSS Referral Pathway Dashboard for the first quarter of 2023 was updated and shared among various sectors as part of WHO's ongoing focus on fostering multi-sectoral coordination in providing MHPSS services in northwest Syria.
- During January, WHO worked with the global substance group targeting a total of 360 health staff including general practitioners, nurses, and CHWs. More than 1000 beneficiaries were supported by projects in areas including AlRayyan camp, Zoghara

camps, Idlib (Bdama and Janudiya subdistrict including Zof\Foz camps) as well as in Kherbat Aljaous.

- The provided services included MhGAP interventions, psychosocial support, awareness sessions, and the provision of suicide awareness materials.

## 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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