



## BRUSSELS VII CONFERENCE: Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region

### SIDE EVENT:

### “Working together towards a risk-informed, recovered and shock-resilient health system in Syria”

**Date:** 09 June 2023 14:30 – 16:00 (UTC+2)

**Co-hosts:** World Health Organization, The Republic of Austria, United Nations Population Fund

**Registration:** [https://who.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_GBv\\_eh69Sze0S64CCoCIMA](https://who.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_GBv_eh69Sze0S64CCoCIMA)

#### Background:

As shown in the Syrian Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) for 2023, the context in the Whole of Syria remains one of the world’s most complex humanitarian emergencies. Marking its twelfth year of protracted crisis, Syria’s humanitarian and economic indicators continue to deteriorate, basic services are falling, and since the end of 2022, the country has witnessed a cholera outbreak and several climatic shocks which worsened the already dire situation. Consequently, in 2023, 15.3 million people will require humanitarian assistance: the highest number of people in need since the beginning of the crisis. In the health sector, subdistricts classified as severity 5 (catastrophic) increased from 0 in 2022 to 21, while severity 4 (extreme) subdistricts rose from 32 in 2022 to 113.

Economic activities continue to shrink, and macroeconomic indicators are also in decline with persistent currency depreciation, skyrocketing inflation of commodities’ prices, and further erosion of people’s purchasing power. These combined factors are making life for the majority of Syrians unaffordable and increasing their dependence on humanitarian aid.

Amidst this backdrop, Syria experienced another disaster in February 2023 when a series of large earthquakes hit southern Türkiye and northern Syria, followed by thousands of aftershocks. Over 5900 people lost their lives and 11,200 were injured due to the earthquake. Hundreds of thousands more remain at risk for deterioration of health and well-being given the destruction of infrastructure - particularly water and sanitation, overcrowded shelter settings, and disrupted essential services, including healthcare. Currently, the UN in Syria estimates that the earthquake has resulted in 4 million people in dire need of assistance within Aleppo, Idlib, Hama, Latakia and Tartous governorates - some of which were already categorized as areas of severity scale of three or higher before the earthquake

On the other hand, although northeast Syria (NES) was not directly affected by the earthquake, 100% of sub-districts across NES are classified as areas of severity 4 and 5 and therefore are in dire need of humanitarian health services. Recurrence of hostilities remains a key driver of needs and potential displacement of the population. Several climatic shocks also have affected NES, such as low rainfall,

floods, etc, resulting in increased concentration of biological and chemical contaminants within drinking water and food, causing further deterioration of the epidemiological context and placing the population at heightened risk of spread of infectious diseases, including cholera.

In crises such as this, women and girls are disproportionately affected in comparison to their male counterparts, including reduced life expectancies, maternal mortality and morbidity, and gender-based violence. Of the 15.3 million people requiring assistance across Syria, there are an estimated 4.2 million women of reproductive age. This translates to more than 26,000 births each month - approximately 3900 of which will present with obstetric complications. This highlights the urgent need for essential medical supplies, and reliable access to life-saving and sustained reproductive health services.

The needs in Syria now are greater than ever: humanitarian actors, UN agencies and donors must join forces to support Syrians and ensure longer term, consolidated and sustained access to basic services – helping the population to restore their livelihoods and overcome the multiple challenges and shocks they have been experiencing for the past 12 years.

### **Proposed discussion points**

This event will provide an opportunity for panellists and participants to explore the interlinked nature of health and deepening socio-economic crisis by:

- Looking at the currently evolving context of Syria, the economic hardship with the ongoing disease outbreaks (e.g. cholera, measles), and increased humanitarian needs resulting from the most recent natural disaster;
- Raising awareness of the current needs and actions required to recover the health system to enable health service delivery in the context of socio-economic downturn and fragility;
- Highlighting innovations and best practices for outreach to communities towards equity in access to health and social services and the benefit of supporting localization;
- Inviting dialogue on a strategy to protect gains made in service provision and to ensure continued, unimpeded access to health services for those historically left furthest behind, including women and girls, infants and children, and those living with disabilities;
- Underscoring the vital need for humanitarian actors, UN agencies and donors to join hands in supporting all Syrians and ensuring access to basic services, de-linked from geographic and political interests – helping the population to restore their livelihoods and overcome the multiple challenges and shocks they have been experiencing for the past 12 years;
- Exploring opportunities for shared health sector priorities as part of a wider risk-informed all-inclusive early recovery and resilience agenda.

### **Agenda and format**

This side event will be 90-minute moderated panel discussion with speakers from WHO, UNFPA, Austria, MEDAIR. Speakers will include representatives from organizations/consortia from a range of geographical areas to present their organizational perspective on needs, priorities, challenges and practical steps.

### **Speakers**

- Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean
- Dr Iman Shankiti, WHO Representative in Syria
- Diana Garde, Head of the UNFPA Regional Humanitarian Hub for Syria and the Arab States
- H.E. Peter Krois, Ambassador of Austria in Damascus, Syria
- Raija-Liisa Schmidt-Teigen, Country Director, Medair Syria
- Rondi Anderson, Certified nurse midwife, UNFPA Syria Country Office

### **Intended audience**

All partners with active engagement in Syrian humanitarian support and interested stakeholders.

## Contact information

For any queries regarding this side event, please contact:

WHO Country Office in Syria	WHO Regional Office in Cairo	UNFPA Regional Humanitarian Hub for Syria and the Arab States
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