

Focus on Health

Primary Health Care of Internally Displaced Persons, Refugees and Host Communities

Challenge

Since the onset of the Syrian crisis and the advance of the so-called 'Islamic State', approximately 750,000 internally displaced persons and 100,000 Syrians have sought refuge in Dohuk Province in the autonomous region of Kurdistan in Northern Iraq. Many are traumatised after what they have witnessed during their escape, and many are disabled. Due to the large-scale immigration, the health care system is heavily overburdened. There are shortages of medical equipment as well as trained personnel. On their own, Kurdish authorities lack the resources to ensure the medical and psychosocial care for the affected persons.

Our approach

In cooperation with the Directorate of Health and the responsible authorities, the project team works on ensuring primary health care for internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and the inhabitants of the host communities. The main objective is to reinforce health service capacities and to improve emergency medical care.

Six primary health care (PHC) centres were already constructed and equipped in 2015. Four of these centres get further support to secure basic health care for internally displaced persons. For this purpose, GIZ contracted international and local NGOs to run these centres in close cooperation with the Directorate of Health. Numerous staff members of the PHC centres and the NGOs have been recruited among the internally displaced persons and refugees. The PHC centres provide free services for camp residents as well as the surrounding communities.

To extend the range of services, necessary equipment is provided. For instance, a maternity health unit was established in the PHC centre in Camp Kabarto and equipped with modern medical devices, improving the situation in overloaded nearby hospitals where women usually give birth. More than 860 deliveries have been carried out at the centre since August 2016.

Based on an analysis, training courses are provided to the medical staff and offer appropriate support.

To improve emergency treatment, the project team provides assistance to the emergency care unit at Azadi Teaching Hospital in Dohuk. The infrastructure has been extended and the capacity increased from 20 to 130 beds to better respond to emergency medical treatment such as accidents, heart attacks or strokes.

The psychosocial support to internally displaced persons and refugees will continue. Together with the committee installed by the Directorate of Health, the project team develops a strategy to improve psychosocial support. In addition, medical staff will be trained accordingly. Capacities of psychosocial support shall be available for up to 130,000 people.

Project Name	Improvement of the health care system for internally displaced people, refugees and people from the host communities in Dohuk Province in North Iraq
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Project Region	Dohuk
National Partner	Ministry of Planning, Kurdistan Region of Iraq; Directorate of Health, Kurdistan Region of Iraq
Duration	05/2016 – 04/2021

The benefits

With the support of the four primary health care centres in four IDP camps, basic health service is temporarily ensured for more than 325,000 internally displaced people. Moreover, health service is offered 24/7 and 75 work places will be preserved.

With the substantial extension of the emergency unit of the Azadi Teaching Hospital, capacities have been increased from 20 to 130 beds. The hospital is also operating with a new oxygen supply



Photo left: Dr. Amira Haussain measures the blood pressure of her patient.

Photo right: Dr. Noor Melhum, gynecologist in the maternity unit in the PHC Kabarto Camp, operates the incubator.

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Photo left: Training of Junior Health Workers.

Photo right: Dispensing of medication at the PHC in Kabarto Camp.

system. The project team will initiate a hospital partnership between the Azadi Teaching Hospital and a German or European university clinic. New cooperation between the University of Dohuk medical department and equivalent German departments is emerging. This partnership will promote the development of medical training and research in the region.

Furthermore, to guarantee the professional disposal of medical waste, the project team has installed a microwave shredder at the Hospital in Amediya.

The dentist unit, an integral part of the Dohuk University, received 13 dental chairs. This modern equipment provides the best preconditions for educating dental practitioners.

The increased number of patients in hospitals requires an adaptation of the working process. 22 professionals from the district, hospital and directorates management received a four-month training course in health care management. Another six persons were trained in health care information systems. In addition, 677 health staff working at primary health care centers in Duhok were trained.

People with disabilities have been supported with required prosthetic and movement aids fitting their needs. 139 patients have received new prosthetic limbs, 73 received orthotic devices, 511 received assistive devices and the old devices of 821 patients were maintained.

Another main activity of the project is the psychological support of internally displaced persons and refugees. 225 medical specialists have completed a three-month training programme in psychological counselling. A further 1,377 people from the medical, educational and social sectors have been trained in psychological first aid. Since 2016, more than 161,000 people have benefitted from improved psychosocial support.

Case Study: Saving a Newborn

May 2016: In her tent at Camp Shariya, a young mother gives birth to a five-kilogramme baby. The birth was not easy and she visits the camp's health station with her son for aftercare. Just having arrived, the medical staff discovers serious health issues in her son; his heart stops beating.

The doctors act immediately: With the help of an oxygen apparatus for infants they manage to revive him and initiate emergency care. They refer the stabilised baby to the hospital in Dohuk, from which he is released after a full recovery a few days later. The mother is overjoyed: 'Thanks to the modern equipment, the doctors at the health station were able to save my son's life. I cannot express how thankful I am!'

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