

**BI-WEEKLY
SITUATION REPORT
WHOLE OF SYRIA**

Issue 16 | 16 – 31 August 2021











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1. COVID-19 Update

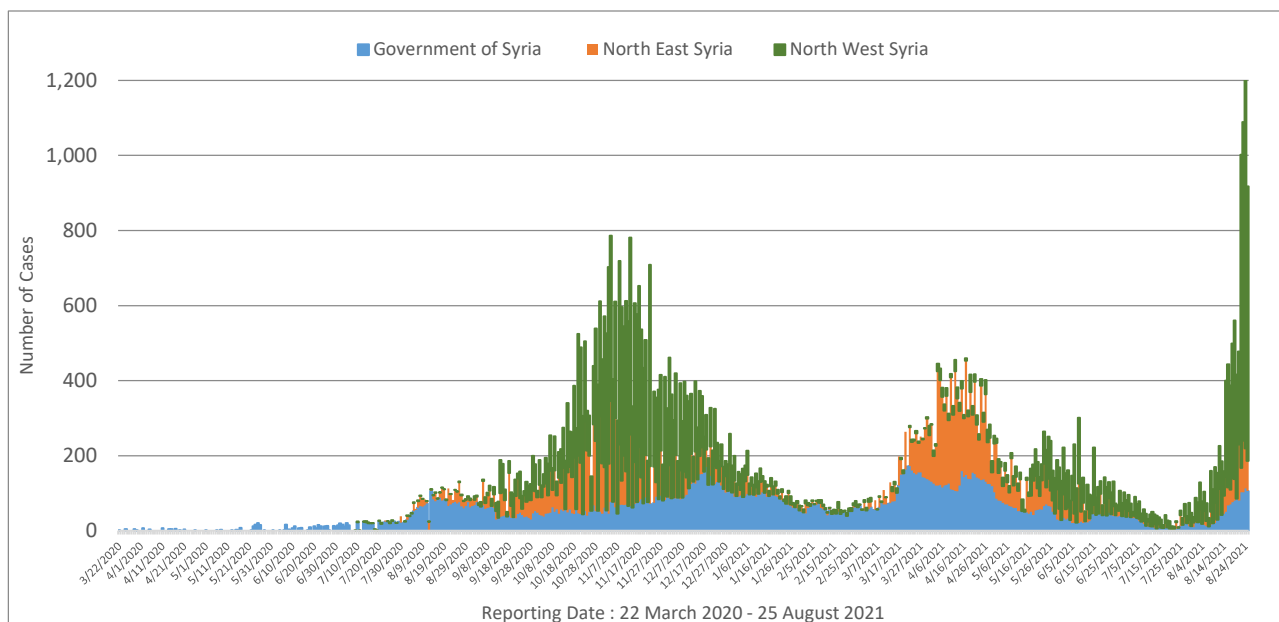
1.1 COVID-19 Statistical Summary at Whole of Syria Level

As of 25 August 2021

	79,771	Total cases (of which 4,869 health workers)
	27,944	Active cases
	48,321	Recovered cases
	3,506	Deaths
	4.4%	Case Fatality Rate (CFR)
	15	COVID-19 functional laboratories
	334,497	COVID-19 tests carried out
	1,579	Testing rate per 100 000 population
	377	Incidence rate per 100 000 population (highest in Al-Hasakeh: 1,039)
	23.2%	Test positivity rate

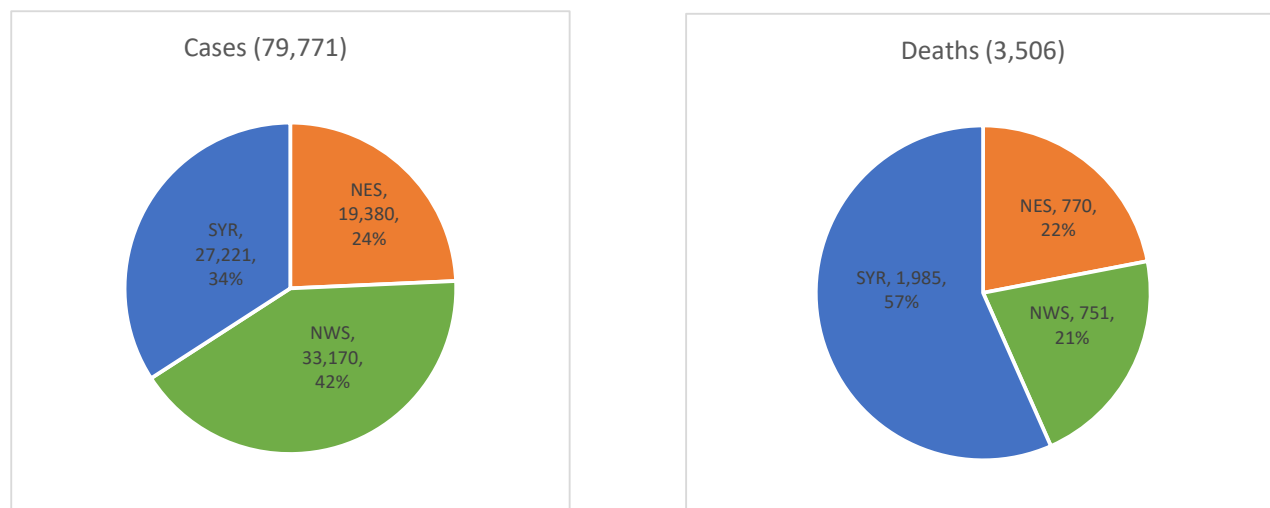
1.2 Daily Distribution of COVID-19 Cases at Whole of Syria Level

22 March 2020 – 25 August 2021 (n = 70,446)



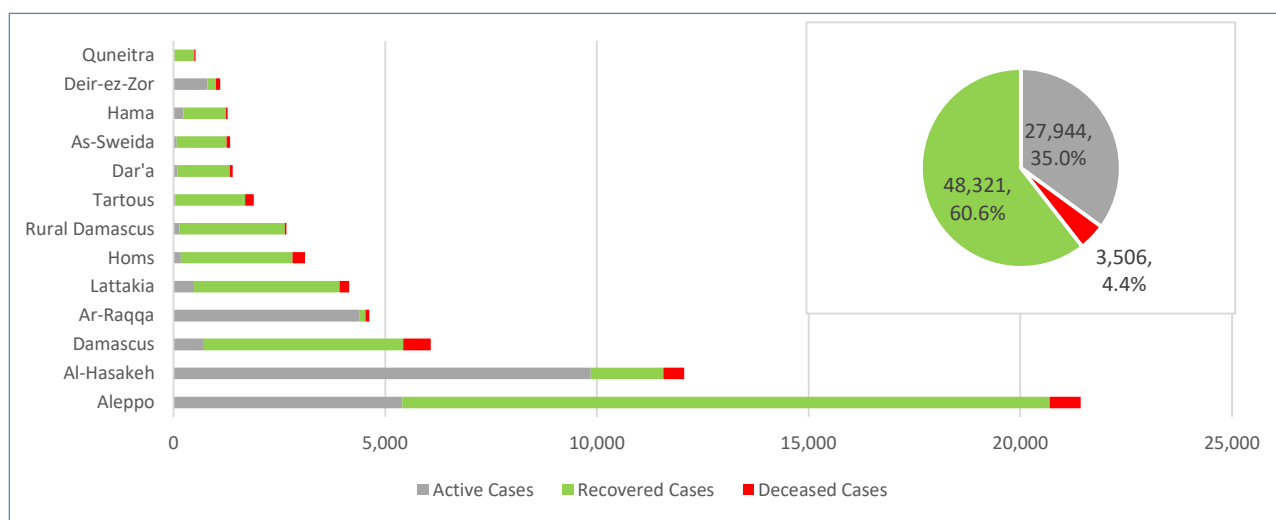
1.3 Distribution of COVID-19 Cases and Deaths at Whole of Syria Level

22 March 2020 – 25 August 2021



1.4 Distribution of COVID-19 Cases and Deaths by Governorate

22 March 2020 – 25 August 2021



2. WHO Syria Response

2.1. Points of Entry (PoE)

MoH and WHO are equipping the medical point at Abu Kamal in Deir-ez-Zor with medical devices and furniture to enable the provision of health services to travellers. WHO is also establishing a medical point at Jubousiya ground-crossing in Homs and another at Judeidet Yabous in Rural Damascus, rehabilitating spaces and equipping them with medical devices.

2.2. Environmental Health

During the reporting period, 96 water samples were tested in five villages (Western Tal Istabl, Al-Salhiah, Tal Faour, Al-Faory, Northern Sbaihah) in the south-east of Aleppo, while 47 samples were tested in 18 districts of Rural Damascus and 50 samples in 4 subdistricts of Deir-ez-Zor and Al Bukamal in Deir-ez-Zor. A further 1 187 samples

were tested in NES - Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa, and Deir-ez-Zor, including eight IDPs camps and collective shelters – of which 18 were from ice blocks at Al-Hol and Areeshah camps. Contaminants were detected in 83 water sources in Rural Aleppo, 32 water sources in Rural Damascus, 80 sources in NES.

In Deir-Ez-Zor, a total of 50 water samples were collected from water tanks and tankers in three subdistricts (Deir-ez-Zor, Al Mayadin, Al Bukamak) between 14 and 17 August. Of them, only 42% (21) were found to be safe for drinking. The *Entamoeba coli italics* bacteria was detected in four of 11 samples on which culture tests were performed. *E. coli* was also detected in all 10 samples collected from Deir-ez-Zor on 16 August and analysed at the laboratories of the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment, with support from WHO. *Salmonella* was isolated in three of those samples.

WHO teams visited the Basira and Sur subdistricts of Deir-ez-Zor between 17 and 20 August, visiting 25 neighbourhoods where an increase of acute diarrhoea cases have been observed. The teams visited water stations and households, conducted tests of 54 samples from various water sources, including water stations. 19 of the samples (35.2%) were found to be unsafe to drink. WHO continues coordinating with authorities and partners to improve the quality of drinking water in those high-risk areas.

2.3. Routine Immunization

During the last four months of the year the Ministry of Health will be intensifying efforts to boost immunity among children in Syria in order to protect against deadly vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs) among the escalating number of cases of COVID-19 and mitigate the decline in routine immunization experienced during the pandemic. Subsequently, the following activities have been agreed upon by the national immunization technical advisory group (NITAG), the minister and partners:

1. One nationwide polio campaign will be conducted in October 2021 and target 2.8 million children under the age of 5 years of age using the bivalent oral polio vaccine (bOPV);
2. A National Immunization Week will be held in November 2021 in all 14 governorates of Syria to boost EPI coverage using multi-antigens.

The EPI Routine Immunization activities are ongoing according to prearranged plans. Fixed and mobile vaccination sites are functioning across all areas controlled by GoS and the Self Administration. The Periodic Intensification of Routine Immunization (PIRI) was recently finalized in Deir-ez-Zor (east of the Euphrates) and Ar-Raqqa governorates. More than 48 000 eligible children were vaccinated, among them more than 4 000 nomads and those living in temporary settlements.

2.4. COVID-19 Vaccination

Second doses of the AZ COVISHIELD vaccine were administered nationwide between 13 July and 23 August 2021.

A total of 370 215 doses of different vaccines have been administered to date to 218 985 people across Syria. One percent of the total population has received at least one dose and 0.8% are now “fully” vaccinated.

An extensive WHO and UNICEF supported outreach campaign in media promoting COVID-19 vaccination began on 25 August 2021.

COVID-19 Post Introduction Evaluation (cPIE) activities are ongoing in all governorates. Discussions have been held to review lessons learned during the first stages of the vaccine rollout and consider future activities and solutions.

2.5. Primary Health Care and Non-Communicable Diseases

WHO attended a virtual regional webinar titled 'Allying for Tobacco Control' on 18-19 August. Another titled 'Tobacco Control Impact Dialogue - CO level' was attended on 25 August.

With WHO support, MOH completed data collection as part of a private sector assessment in Damascus, Homs, Aleppo, Dar’a and Lattakia. The data is now being analysed.

2.6. Secondary and Tertiary Health Care (STHC)

100 HCWs and frontline workers from NES attended training workshops on infection, protection and control (IPC) in the context of COVID-19. Attendees included members of the doctors’ syndicate, the dentists’ syndicate, DOH Al-Hasakeh, and Quamishli Hospital. An additional 30 school health staff in the governorate of Deir-ez-Zor received training on protocols for a safe return to school.



WHO supports the delivery of training in NES on IPC within the context of COVID-19

2.7. Trauma

WHO has delivered over 83 787 treatments of life-saving medicines and more than 160 different types of surgical and trauma kits - supporting around 10 615 trauma cases - to health partners in the governorates of Damascus, Aleppo, Lattakia, Homs, Tartous and Al-Hasakeh. These deliveries are part of efforts to enhance the capacity of public health facilities to deliver timely and appropriate responses to emergency cases, including cases of COVID-19, as well as part of the WHO rapid response to the current emergency situation in Dar’a. Physiotherapy equipment has also been delivered to the DOH centre in Jib Al Jandali, Homs, recently renovated by WHO.

125 health workers from Damascus, Tartous, Lattakia, and Dar’a attended training sessions in burn management, immediate life support and ventilator management, risk management and evacuation of buildings, and management of ICU patients. Attendees included doctors, nurses, and anaesthesia technicians working in isolation centres, intensive care units and emergency departments. In addition, one hundred fifty prosthetic and orthotic technicians, physiotherapists, and physiatrists in Damascus received training. The sessions focused on: disability and rehabilitation, the utilization of biomechanics in understanding and analysing amputations, rehabilitation of spinal cord injuries, rehabilitation of amputees, the national register, components and preparation stages, modern mobility assistive devices, inclusive accessibility, and building procedures and preparation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.8. Mental Health (MH)

Twenty WHO supported MHPSS projects are ongoing nationwide; mapped through the MHPSS referral pathway, followed technically by MH unit and experts to ensure the highest standards of service delivery.

Individuals in Aleppo, Homs and Hama have benefitted from the delivery of 675 MHPSS services and sessions, including basic tele-support.

WHO, with MoH, MoE and different implementing partners, including health partners in NES, delivered 36 capacity-building activities, targeting health professionals, school health workers and community workers. Sessions focused on the Mental Health GAP (mhGAP GUI and community toolkit) programme, psychological first aid, basic psychosocial skills for COVID-19 responders, first line support, and tele-MHPSS basic counselling in the context of the pandemic.

WHO supported the delivery of around 896 activities in 45 different communities in the governorates of Aleppo, Homs and Hama within the ongoing RCCE & MHPSS campaign, in the context of the COVID-19 response. The campaign targeted children, the elderly, parents and care givers and included the provision of basic tele-counselling services.



WHO supports RCCE & MHPSS campaigns in Aleppo governorate

2.9. Health Systems

Meetings are ongoing between WHO and the Centre for Strategic Health Studies to discuss potential technical support to the centre in light of its new role and a history of positive collaboration with the Organization.

WHO supports RCCE & MHPSS campaigns in Aleppo governorate

WHO continues supporting the Ministry of Health in developing a strategy for local NGO engagement in the health sector, considering their important and valuable role to date. The collection of data for a study on the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 for the Health Chapter is now complete.

2.10. Nutrition

Nutrition surveillance data collected from 926 health centres indicates that a total of 79 748 nutrition related services were delivered in the month of June. Data from 21 stabilization centres for the same month indicates that 138 patients were admitted for nutrition related treatments, of which 41 in Aleppo.

Ten thousand six hundred thirty four home visits were conducted in July as part of the new-born care at home programme across Syria. Meanwhile, nutrition surveillance conducted by MOH detected 10 788 cases of malnutrition and documented treatment of 90 990 patients through the integrated management of childhood illnesses (IMCI).

2.11. External Relations and Communication

A mass media campaign to promote vaccination against COVID-19 was launched officially by the Ministry of Health with the support of WHO and UNICEF. Messaging was delivered through some selected TV and radio channels, as well as social media platforms.

WHO worked closely with social media influencers to monitor people’s acceptance of the vaccine, as well as their observance of COVID-19 preventive measures, in order to identify gaps and challenges on the ground and develop key health messages accordingly.

WHO developed key health messages regarding COVID-19 and the safe reopening of schools, sharing them with the Ministry of Education.

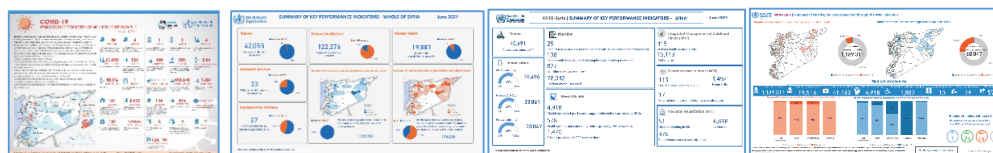


WHO Representative met with relevant social sector ministers, such as the Ministers of Information, Local Administration and Environment, Higher Education, Social Affairs and Labour, and Education to discuss about the expanded partnership on health issues through the broader determinants of health.

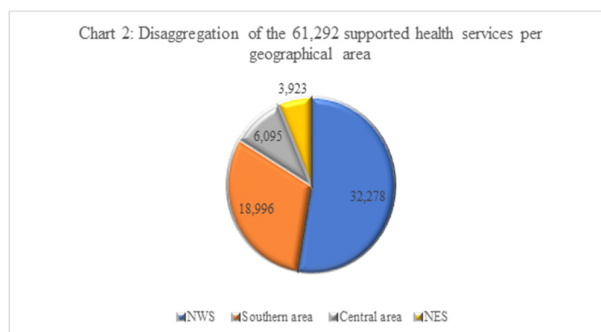
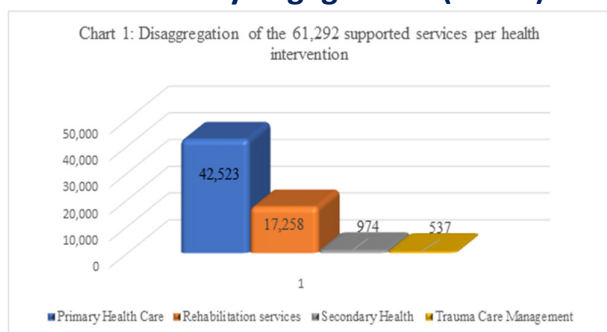
2.12. Information Products and Related Activities

Information products and activities delivered include:

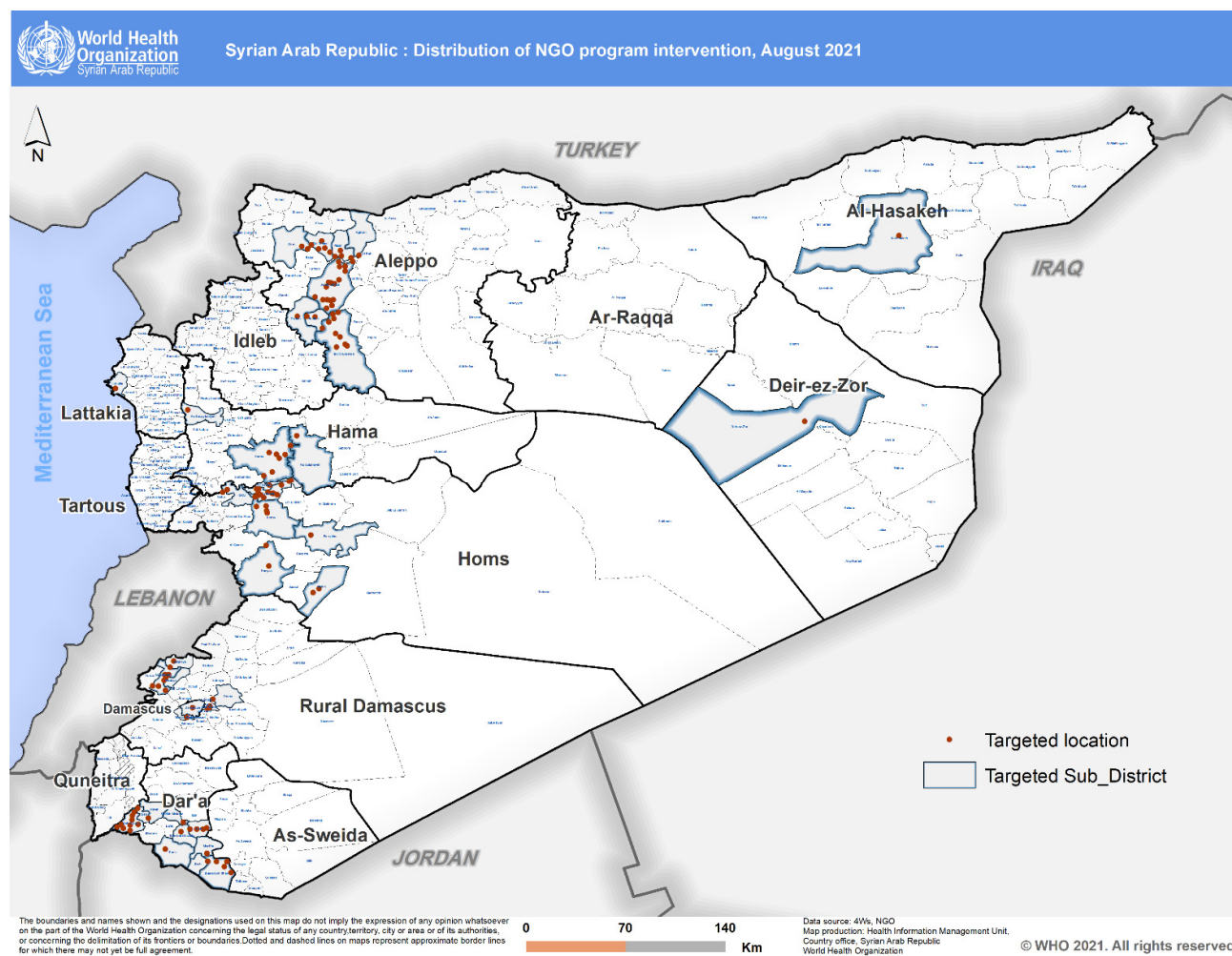
- Health Sector COVID-19 response monitoring (Jan to July 2021).
- Flash Update # 55 regarding the recent incident against As-Sweida public hospital (Zaid Ash-Shariti) (16 Aug 2021).
- Summary of key performance indicators (June 2021) for WoS and WCO-Syria.
- (Health Sector & WHO) 4Ws snapshots across Syria (June 2021).
- Updated COVID-19 dashboard and online item tracking system.



2.13. Community Engagement (NGOs)

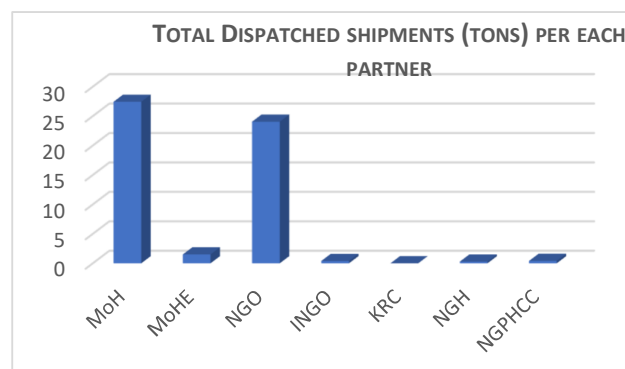
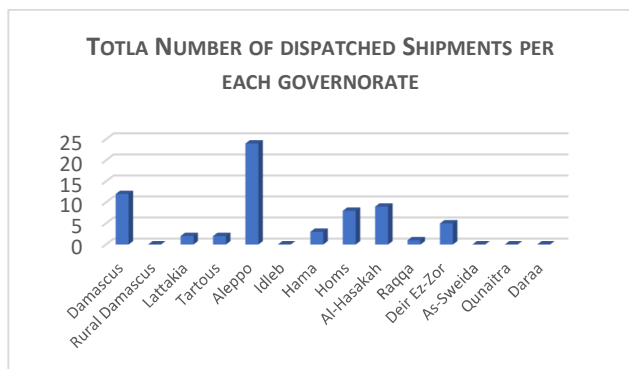


WHO supports 14 implementing partners to strengthen the health response in different areas across Syria.



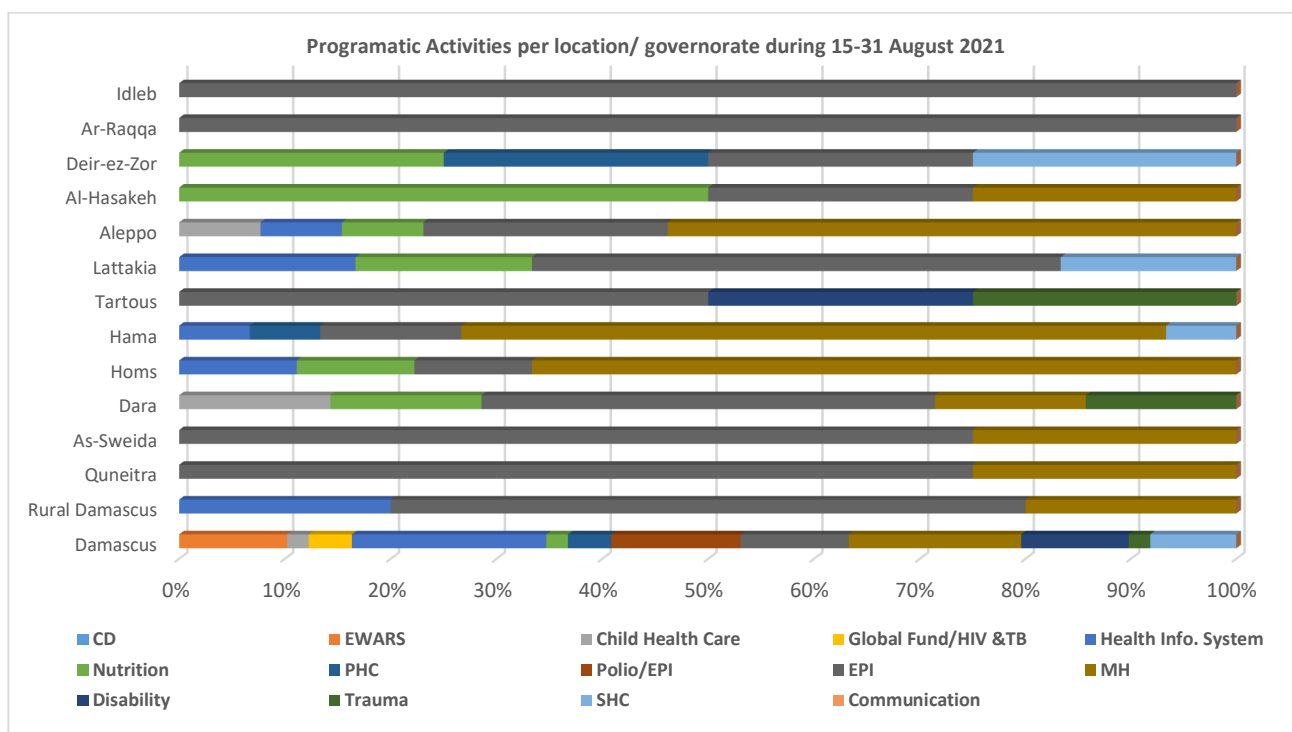
2.14. Operations Support and Logistics

WHO dispatched 50 080 tons of medical and lab supplies, kits, equipment, haemodialysis sessions and chlorine tablets to nine governorates. They were received by 15 MoH facilities, 3 MoHE facilities, 16 NGOs, 5 INGOs, NGH, NGPHCC & KRC and supported a total of 83 787 treatments and 10 615 trauma cases.



2.15. Capacity Building

WHO supported 129 activities for a total of 3 295 participants during the reporting period.



3. WHO Syria Sub-Office Response

3.1. Aleppo Sub-Office

During the reporting period a total of 39 976 health care services were provided at 5 primary health care centers (PHCs), 8 mobile medical teams (MMTs) and 2 trauma and rehabilitation centres, through three ongoing grant-supported programmes with WHO implementing partners.

An awareness campaign was launched on 1 August 2021, through which 14 community teams in Aleppo governorate are reaching out



Raising awareness campaign at the community level in Aleppo governorate

to beneficiaries with a focus on children, the elderly and caregivers in order to promote physical and mental health practices and measures associated with COVID-19.

Several shipments delivered to partners included over 3.4 tons of health and medical supplies including 11 348 doses of psychotropic medications.

3.2. Lattakia Sub-Office

WHO supported a workshop for public and private hospitals in Lattakia governorate with the aim of upgrading quality control and infection preventive measures (IPC) measures in line with international criteria for QC management.

A field visit to the COVID-19 lab in Lattakia facilitated the assessment of needs in parallel with the arrival of a PCR device and other lab equipment.

WHO met with the Lattakia directorate of health (DOH) head of health programmes and local NGOs, presenting a detailed report on the health situation in these areas and the top needs based on assessments during the ongoing health & MHPSS campaign in rural areas of Lattakia.



WHO- supported workshop for public and private hospitals in Lattakia governorate

3.3. Homs Sub-Office

With WHO support, the non-governmental organization (NGO) Lamset Shefa, in cooperation with the Family Wellbeing Center in Dar Al Kabera and two medical mobile teams in the north and east of Rural Homs, has been providing primary and secondary health care services and mental health and psychosocial support to people suffering from psychological distress and domestic violence. 5 005 beneficiaries received medical consultations, of which 87 were secondary, 136 were for trauma and 844 were Mental Health & Psycho social support (MHPSS) services.

An awareness campaign was initiated in Homs and Hama on 11 August at a community level to raise awareness and promote adherence to COVID-19 precautionary measures, as well as MHPSS. The campaign will run for two months and targets around 80 communities in east and north rural Salmiya, 24 locations in north Hama, and south Idlib district, a newly accessible area. Also targeted are areas in east Homs that are second destinations for Rukban returnees: 6 main locations with an official camp and 12 villages, and the Qusair district in west Homs that is home to returnees from Lebanon. Campaign teams are conducting multiple visits to each location to cover the huge gap of MH and health awareness services.



Awareness raising campaigns in rural Homs by WHO supported mobile medical teams

Approximately, 2 500 families, 5 000 children, and 1 000 elderly persons are expected to benefit from the campaign.

Mobile teams have reached more than 80 villages in rural Homs and Hama that do not have any medical services, targeting children, the elderly, parents and care givers, within the context of COVID-19 response.

The threat of a leishmaniasis outbreak is being addressed in Hama through a campaign that seeks to prevent, quickly detect and respond to the epidemic-prone disease. The vector control campaign is being run in areas of Hama with a high rate of leishmaniasis between 27 June and 31 October 2021. During the reporting period, 2 334 houses in 10 infected areas were sprayed.

3.4. Deir-Ez-Zor Sub-Office

In response to an increase in cases of acute diarrhoea recorded in the governorate of Deir-ez-Zor, WHO supported DoH and local NGOs in implementing a campaign of hygiene promotion, safe drinking water, and awareness of water and food borne diseases. The campaign, launched in rural communities on 21 August, targets about 10 000 households in the subdistricts of Muhassan, Khasham Al Tebni, Al Mayadin, Al Ashara, Al Jalaa and Al Bukamal through awareness raising sessions, and included distribution of more than 400 000 tablets of chlorine and more than 50 000 IEC materials and instructional leaflets. 132 community health workers and 12 supervisors have been deployed to support the 12-day campaign, which was preceded by a four-day training workshop.



3.5. Quamishli Sub-Office / Northeast Syria (NES)

WHO launched a new project in Quamishli to respond to the dire health needs in the region through 15 health provision points delivering health care services to the most vulnerable groups in camps and rural areas across NES. Health care services, including outpatient consultations, reproductive health services, mental health and provision of medicines will be delivered.

In response to the increased risk of water-borne diseases among vulnerable populations during the summer months, WHO continues to run awareness campaigns in Areesheh, Al-Hol and Abu Khashab camps, hosting community sessions and conducting household visits to promote key messages on handwashing, food safety practice, and water treatment. A total of 6 825 individuals were reached during the reporting period through individual visits to 106 households in the three internal displacement people (IDP) camps, during which information, education and communication (IEC) materials and chlorine tablets were distributed. The campaign, completed on 31 August, reached a total of more than 85 000 IDPs.



Raising awareness campaign in Al Hol camp

WHO continues providing life-saving treatment for cases of malnutrition identified at the camps. During the reporting period, malnutrition treatment centres receive 50 patients, 49 of which were discharged following treatment and recovery.

To enhance access to safe water and identify sources of pollution, WHO conducted a fifth monitoring mission in the eastern part of DZ, visiting 25 different areas.



Monitoring water quality in Al Hol camp

4. Northwest Syria

4.1. Primary Health Care (PHC)

WHO is currently supporting nearly 100 PHCs and MTs, of which 35 are fully supported, in northwest Syria through three integrated health service delivery networks, all of which are functional. The networks include a total of 80 PHCs. Harim PHC network, at Phase 7, includes 32 health facilities and provided 116 112 consultations in July. The current phase will be finalized by the end of September and so planning for Phase 8 has begun. The plan is to expand the network to include more health facilities and cover a larger population.

4.2. Secondary Health Care

A request to cover gaps in laboratories supplies and consumables for three high case load hospitals - Bab-Al Salam, Shamarin and Idlib Internal Hospitals - has been received. Activities to support Al Dana COVID-19 designated hospital with ICU care services began on 12 August.

4.3. Non-Communicable Disease (NCD)

A Thalassaemia Task Force meeting held on 3 August resulted in agreement of a plan of action that includes: Thalassaemia Patient Registry for north west Syria (NWS); annual patient exams with cardiologists to prevent iron overload to the heart due to regular blood transfusion; an offer from MSF-F to provide preceptorship with Thalassaemia clinicians through online mentoring (an online workshop will be held on 8 September); creation of Thalassaemia ISD cards for all patients to better support patients who may become displaced.

4.4. Tuberculosis

The provision of services continues at three TB centres. While delivery at the Idlib and Afrin centres is smooth, many challenges are being faced at the Azaz centre run by SRD due to their new downsizing policy which is impacting staff numbers and working hours and limiting the capacity of the centre. The primary concern is loss of follow-up with TB patients, particularly as the highest number of MDR/TB cases are in Azaz and surrounding areas.

Two Molbio systems donated by IOM to the centres in Idlib and Afrin have arrived in Turkey. The systems will first be used to conduct 2 000 tests to screen for COVID-19 cases and later, in the coming months, be used to run 2 000 tests for TB, gradually replacing the GeneXpert system.

A total of 125 beneficiaries visited one of the three TB centres in the past week. Six were diagnosed with TB. 31 samples were sent to Antakya for GeneXpert testing, of which 8 came back positive. A new case of MDR/RR-TB has been detected. A total of 22 DR-TB cases have been detected to date.

4.5. Mental Health & Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

Due to a rise in the number of suicides, the MHPSS TWG agreed to revive the Suicide Prevention Task Force, of which WHO took the lead on 10 August. The Task Force acknowledges the need to provide training on the correct emergency response to patients admitted to ER after attempting suicide by taking an overdose of medications like paracetamol, aluminium phosphates, and ensuring proper counselling and safety. A total of 356 key health workers have received relevant training since January 2021.

4.6. COVID-19

At the request of partners, the COVID-19 Task Force met on 17 August 2021 to discuss the sharp increase in the incidence rate of COVID-19 cases in northwest Syria. The increase in the number of cases and hospital occupancy rate in ICU and inpatient beds was discussed and the Task Force focused on preparedness for a possible further increase that would further burden the health system. Action points were agreed upon and included: continuing to monitor the situation; increasing focus on RDT; working on a contingency plan for case management; scaling up IPC activities; and including VOC reporting on the COVID-19 dashboard.

As of 25 August, there have been 32 438 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in northwest Syria since the beginning of pandemic. A total of 23 879 recovered and 746 died as a result of the virus. The COVAX vaccination campaign began on 1 May. By 25 August, 67 508 doses had been administered, 3 280 of which in the past 24 hours. On 17 August, the second tranche of doses supplied through the COVAX system was delivered from Turkey into northwest Syria. The Syrian



The second shipment of AZ COVID-19 vaccine arrives to NWS

Immunization Group (SIG) received the 36 480 doses of the Astra Zeneca COVID-19 vaccine, manufactured in AstraZeneca AB in Sweden.

4.7. Immunization

Routine Immunization

All 93 EPI centres in northwest Syria (NWS) are functional, as are all 134 working teams. Approximately 13 578 children under the age of one are being targeted. 627 vaccination sessions were conducted this week, at an average of 4.7 sessions per team. During the month of June, 2 864 vaccination sessions were planned and 2 523 conducted (88%), 1 127 through fixed locations (45%) and 1,396 by mobile teams (55%).

All 622 members of the EPI teams attended training workshop by SIG on COVID-19 awareness, physical distancing and protective measures. A monitoring tool was developed to measure the observance of teams to WHO guidelines on physical distancing, PPE use and delivery of COVID-19 awareness messaging.

4.8. Supply

WHO distributed personal protection materials and 143 IPC kits, including: 1 071 face shields, 1.2 million examination gloves, 1 384 goggles, 82 956 gowns, 445 000 N95 masks and 360 000 surgical masks to 143 health facilities in order to sustain supplies for health workers over the next two months.

Vaccine Updates

For COVID-19 vaccine updates, please visit: [Update on COVID-19 Vaccination in Syria](#)

5. Useful Links

- [Syria Interactive Dashboards](#)
- [Syria Page in Health Cluster Site](#)
- [Syria Page in EMRO Site](#)
- [EMRO Dashboard](#)
- [COVID-19 Situation in EMRO Region Reports](#)

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