26 October 2016 – The World Health Organization, together with national health authorities and health cluster partners, have accelerated preparedness and response measures for internally displaced persons from Mosul by prepositioning 46 mobile medical clinics, 45 mobile health teams and 26 ambulances in a number of prioritized areas around the country. Life-saving medicines and supplies for more than 350 000 beneficiaries have also been prepositioned, including chronic disease medicines, diarrhoeal disease medicines, and trauma and surgical supplies. Additional essential medicines are being delivered from WHO's logistics hub in Dubai, and are also being procured locally.

To scale up national health capacity, a total of 90 medical staff from affected governorates have been trained by WHO on mass casualty management, with a special focus on treatment and decontamination of people who might be exposed to chemicals agents. WHO and national health authorities have also expanded the disease early warning and response capacities of new health facilities established to respond to the health needs of newly displaced populations.

"More than 1.5 million people living in Mosul have had no to little access to humanitarian aid since June 2014, and living and health conditions are expected to have significantly deteriorated. Limited safe water and sanitation services have increased the risk of outbreaks, and children have not been vaccinated in more than two years," said Mr Altaf Musani, WHO Representative in Iraq. "Humanitarian needs are expected to increase significantly, and the predicted exodus from Mosul over the coming days and weeks could spark yet another health crisis in Iraq."

According to contingency plans, WHO and the humanitarian community estimate that of the 700 000 people fleeing Mosul city and surrounding areas, more than 200 000 people will require emergency health services. These include an estimated 40 000 people who will require urgent interventions and subsequent hospital care due to trauma and injury, more than 90 000 children requiring vaccinations, and some 8000 pregnant women requiring maternal health and newborn services. A significant number of people will also require mental health services.

To date, safe routes for civilian movements remain limited. As of October 25, almost 10 500 people have been newly displaced and are mainly living within host communities. WHO and health partners are providing front-line health care services, including vaccinations for children, reproductive health services, referral services and physiological first aid through mobile medical clinics. Medical supplies are being replenished as needed, and hospitals and clinics in towns near the front lines have been provided with surgical kits and medical equipment.

As the numbers of displaced persons increase over the coming days and weeks, it is imperative that emergency life-saving health services are available to those who need them. As part of the Mosul Flash Appeal for Preparedness, US$ 35 million was requested by WHO and health cluster partners to cover preparedness activities in anticipation of the projected population displacement. Of this amount, only US$ 16 million (45%) has so far been received.

"The challenges facing WHO and partners are enormous. Unless urgent action is taken by the international donor community to support an effective and timely response, the people of Mosul, who are already deprived of basic health services, will be exposed to further health risks and undue suffering," said Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

http://www.emro.who.int/media/news/who-and-partners-gear-up-to-safeguard-lives-of-displaced-persons-fleeing-mosul.html