Over the last six months, the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic has continued to deteriorate. In addition to a death toll that has already surpassed 80,000 persons, there are and estimated 400,000 people injured, including children, and 6.8 million in need of humanitarian aid. The health system is severely disrupted, compromising the provision of primary and secondary health care, including the referral of injured patients, treatment of chronic diseases, maternal and child health services, vaccination and nutrition programmes as well as communicable disease control.

Public health concerns

Disrupted health services
- 57% of public hospitals affected; 37% out of service and 20% damaged.
- Access to care is also hampered by road blocks and hostilities.
- There is a lack of qualified medical expertise particularly for trauma, anaesthesia and specialized laboratory personnel, particularly in areas experiencing high levels of violence.

Severe shortage of medicines
- Local production of medicines has fallen by 90%. Life-saving medicines such as anaesthetics, analgesics, antibiotics, intravenous fluids and medicines for the treatment of chronic diseases are in short supply.
- Country-wide, US$ 900 million is needed to purchase essential drugs for 12 months, including US$ 467 million for life saving medicines.

Increased risk of infectious diseases
- Outbreak risks have increased due to factors such as overcrowding, deterioration in water supply, sanitation and waste management, as well as disruption to vaccination and vector control. The EWARS already indicates increased cases of acute diarrhoea, typhoid, hepatitis A, measles, and cutaneous leishmaniasis.

Increased risk to children and mothers
- The average vaccination coverage rate was 81.5% for all vaccines over 2008-2011. This fell to 70% in 2012.
- Safe delivery of babies has become a challenge due to the difficulties in accessing health facilities.
WHO activities and achievements

Four priority areas have been identified to provide health assistance to both government- and opposition-controlled areas:

Monitoring and surveillance
- The Early Warning and Response System (EWARS) has 154 sentinel sites (to be expanded soon to 350) reporting from across the country. EWARS enables quick detection and response to disease outbreaks
- WHO collaborates with the Ministry of Health and health authorities in the 14 governorates to regularly report on the status of health facility infrastructure, services and medicine stocks
- Health NGOs report regularly on number of consultations and treatments, distribution of medicines and supplies
- WHO supply tracking system monitors distribution and provision of health kits, medicines and supplies

Needs assessment and planning
- An Essential Medicines List has been developed, reflecting disease profiles, current gaps and critical needs. This list supports planning for procurement and distribution of medicines
- Health partners have developed a disease outbreak response plan to address rising risks in the summer months

Coordination
- Regular coordination of health activities through the Health Working Group
- Decentralized presence through a hub in Homs and national focal points in Aleppo, Derezzor, Hassakeh, Idlib and soon in Daraa

Improving the delivery of health care
- Implementation agreements with 27 NGOs to reach vulnerable populations for trauma and primary health care through health centres and mobile clinics. This arrangement facilitates the distribution of emergency supplies, and provision of technical support and health services to all governorates

Funding needs for WHO projects in the revised SHARP 2013

- Strengthen trauma and referral management SYR-13/H/57245/122
- Support health information management and coordination SYR-13/CSS/57248/122
- Support delivery of primary health care SYR-13/H/57246/122
- Support delivery of secondary and tertiary health care SYR-13/H/57247/122
- Support mental health services SYR-13/H/57249/122
- Strengthen the capacity for health response SYR-13/H/57244/122
- Rehabilitation and restoration of damaged/non-functional health facilities in affected areas to full operational capacity SYR-13/H/57243/122
- Restoration of water supply, sanitation, solid waste, hygiene and drainage services in health care facilities and hospitals SYR-13/WS/57241/122
- Expand nutritional support services SYR-13/H/57242/122
- Safety and security for humanitarian assistance SYR-13/S/57240/122

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