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Violence leaves 750,000 children in Mosul struggling to access basic health services

MOSUL, 6 February, 2018 – As many as 750,000 children in Mosul and surrounding areas are struggling to access basic health services. While violence has subsided, less than 10 percent of health facilities in Ninewah governorate are functioning at full capacity. Those that are operational are stretched to breaking point.

Three years of intense violence have devastated health facilities in Iraq. Over 60 health facilities have repeatedly come under attack since the escalation of violence in 2014, severely disrupting access to basic health services for children and families.

“The state of Iraq’s healthcare system is alarming. For pregnant women, newborn babies, and children, preventable and treatable conditions can quickly escalate into a matter of life and death,” said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF Representative in Iraq, who has just completed a visit to Al Khansa hospital in Mosul, the largest in the city. “Medical facilities are strained beyond capacity and there are critical shortages of life-saving medicines.”

UNICEF has stepped up its support to primary healthcare facilities to help the Government of Iraq provide critical health services so that children and families affected by violence and displacement can resume their lives.

In Mosul, UNICEF has rehabilitated the pediatric and nutritional wards of two hospital centres, provided refrigerators to store vaccines for up to 250,000 children, and supported vaccination campaigns to immunize all children under five years old. Most health centres in the governorate have also re-started vaccination services for children.

“As people start to return to their homes, it is essential that basic services like health, education, and specialized support for children impacted by violence are available,” said Hawkins.

The Reconstruction Conference for Iraq hosted by the State of Kuwait next week is a unique opportunity for the Government of Iraq and the international community to put children at the heart of reconstruction, including through increased budget allocations to services for children.

“What I saw in the hospitals in Mosul is both heartbreaking and inspiring. The ingenuity and dedication of health workers who are committed to giving newborn children the best possible start in life in the most challenging of circumstances is remarkable. They too deserve support so that they can continue to save lives,” added Hawkins.

UNICEF is appealing for US\$17 million to support rebuilding health facilities for children in Iraq in 2018.

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Notes to editors

The Reconstruction Conference for Iraq will be held in Kuwait City from 12-14 February.

On UNICEF support to health services for children:

- UNICEF has provided 160 refrigerators to store vaccines for children across Ninewa governorate
- Approximately half a million children in Ninewa have been vaccinated against Polio and Measles, and around 180,000 received Vitamin A supplementation as part of emergency nutritional care.
- Last year, UNICEF and partners reached 2.4 million vulnerable people displaced from their homes, including over 1 million children, with lifesaving packages of assistance containing water, food and hygiene items.

About UNICEF

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.

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