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Current major event

Cholera preparedness in Northern Syria

As a part of cholera preparedness activities, the WHO Country office, Turkey, in collaboration with the WHO EMRO and EURO, three-day workshop on surveillance and response to water borne diseases (WBD) was held in Gaziantep, Turkey from 8 - 10 April 2019.

Editorial note

The objective of the training workshop was to enhance capacity of humanitarian emergency actors working in Northern Syria to ensure that they are adequately equipped with relevant skills and knowledge for timely and optimal response to water borne diseases, cholera in particular. Optimal response is critical for ensuring low morbidity and mortality due to these diseases among vulnerable displaced and host populations in Northern regions of Syria.

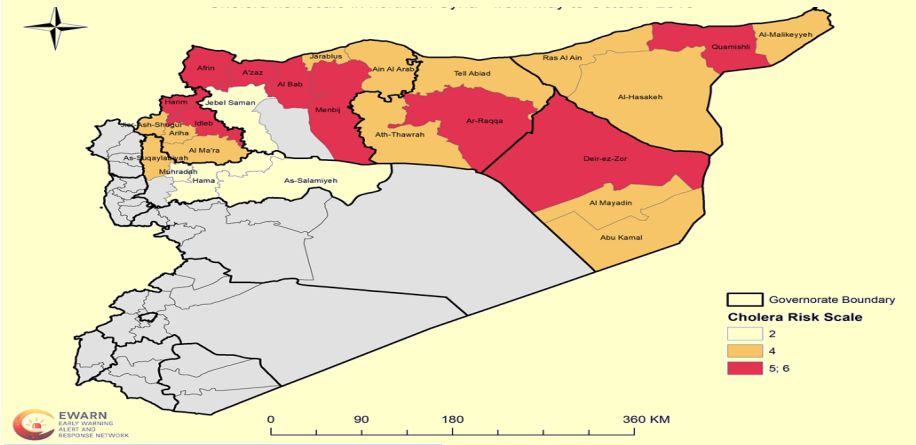
A total of 26 health professionals participated in the training workshop. They included 17 health programme managers responsible for surveillance and case management at health facility level; 5 data managers for Early Warning Alert and Response Network (EWARN); and 4 water and sanitation officers from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) serving displaced and host communities affected by the ongoing conflict in Northern Syria. The ongoing civil war has led to massive population displacement both within the country and across international borders to neighboring countries since early spring of 2011 when the conflict began. Displaced populations are at risk of outbreak of water borne diseases due to poor access to safe water and sanitation facilities; poor hygiene conditions and severe disruption of healthcare services. Majority of the displaced population live in internally displaced population (IDP) Camps, with little or no access to basic social services.

The three-day workshop addressed surveillance of WBDs through EWARN; essential preparedness components; principles and steps of outbreak investigation; and key components of outbreak response including the role of multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms in enhancing a common and synergistic approach among stakeholders; the role of early warning disease surveillance and laboratory investigation; principles of case management including setting up cholera treatment centers; and logistic support and management of essential supplies. Other key areas that were addressed included risk communication and community engagement; benefit of using oral cholera vaccine; and the role of environmental health especially water, food safety, sanitation and waste management in prevention and control of outbreaks of water borne disease with a special focus on cholera.

The training approach was based on participatory problem-solving methods including practical exercises based on recent field experiences. It was constructed on best practice standards, and lessons learnt from recent outbreaks WBD in the region such as the ongoing outbreak of cholera in Yemen. As evidenced by improved scores in pre – and post- the end of the training workshop, trainees acquired relevant skills and knowledge needed to cascade the training to health workers under their supervision, and to respond effectively to disease outbreaks.

Other ongoing preparedness supported by WHO and partners include review of the cholera preparedness and response plans, and emergency contingency planning including prepositioning of diarrheal kits and relevant supplies.

Cholera risk scale in northern Syria, form May to October 2018



Recent cholera outbreaks in the region

Country	Year	Description
Yemen *	2019	194,595 sup. Cases
		406 Deaths
		0.21% CFR
Somalia ^	2019	7005 sup. Cases
		46 Deaths
		0.66%CFR

*Data from 1 Jan to 7 April 2019

^ Data from week 49– 2017 to week 13 2019

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

MERS in Saudi Arabia; **MERS** in Oman; **cholera** in Somalia; **cholera** in Yemen; **Multidrug-resistant typhoid fever** in Pakistan.

Current public health events of concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), **CFR** %]

Avian influenza: 2006-2017	
Egypt (A/H5N1)	[359 (122), 33.98%]
Egypt (A/H9N2)	[4 (0)]
Ebola virus disease (EVD): 2018-2019	
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	[1 146 (721), 62.91%]
Cholera: 2017-2019	
Somalia	[7 005 (46) , 0.65%]
Yemen	[1 618 203 (3 213), 0.19%]
Diphtheria: 2018-2019	
Yemen	[3 524 (203), 5.76%]
Bangladesh	[8 545 (45), 0.52%]
MERS: 2012-2019	
Saudi Arabia	[2 007(749), 37.31%]
Oman	[24 (7), 29.16%]
Multidrug-resistant typhoid fever: 2016-2019	
Pakistan	[6 780 (0)]