

Conflict and Deterioration of Health Care

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A widespread armed conflict between groups within states have been major causes of morbidity and mortality. Conflict obviously causes casualties (deaths and injuries) due to fighting, but also health consequences from the displacement of populations, the breakdown of health and social services, the heightened risk of disease transmission (outbreaks), widespread mental distress, and a deteriorating of malnutrition. Children and pregnant women are generally at risk and it is much worse if they are among the internally displaced and refugee populations.

In these lines, I will highlight the concern of conflict's impact on health in some Arab countries, which are currently suffering of continuous armed conflict and devastating the health and social services.

In Syria six years of bloody conflict left more than five million of people in sever need out of 13.5 million in total need assistance. There are 6.3 million displaced internally with severe lack in the basic services. The humanitarian needs overview report showed that 85% of the population live in poverty, and 69% of them are in extreme poverty. Around 12.8 million of people require health assistance inside the country [1]. The conflict in Yemen has left 18.8 million people in need of aid, around 10.3 million of them are in acute need. And 14.8 million people have difficulty to access to the healthcare. This ongoing armed conflict forced around 3 million of people to leave their homes looking for safe places in the country. More than sixty percent of the population lives in poverty. In term of access to safe drinking water and sanitation around 14.4 million people require some assistance [2].

The 2016 Health Resources Availability Mapping System (HeRAMS) survey carried out by WHO in Yemen covering 3,507 facilities showed that only 45% of health facilities are fully functional [3]. While in Syria the HeRAMS survey 2015 covered 254 health facilities and showed 85% of them are full function [4].

The deterioration is obviously noticed in the immunization coverage in Syria. There is a sharp decline in vaccination coverage by more than 35 % for all vaccines from 2010 to 2015. The coverage of measles and polio vaccines which have a substantial risk on the general health of the population declined in 2015 to around 53% and 50% respectively [5]. In Yemen although the sharp decline in the functionality of the health facilities, the immunization coverage was relatively stable, it does not show a big gap in the coverage during this conflict in compare to the pre-conflict situation. For instance, the measles vaccination coverage was 66% in 2010 and 67% in 2015. in case of polio vaccine, the data showed that the coverage has been reduced from 70% in 2010 to 63% in 2015 [6].

The current situation is causing a continuous deterioration health conditions for population in conflict countries. The impact will excide the national borders to carry the disease burdens within the region that includes many other countries under conflict. The Impact of conflict on health is growing to be a global concern that needs special academic focus to bring more evidence based-interventions.

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