

Médecins du Monde International Network and Mehad call for urgent action to prevent funding cuts from halting essential health programmes in Syria

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Médecins du Monde (Mdm) and Mehad urgently warn that funding cuts for Syria risk forcing humanitarian actors to choose between life-saving interventions and shutting down essential health programmes. An unprecedented 16.7 million people in Syria need assistance this year, representing over 75% of the population. As humanitarian actors are often the only providers of healthcare, reduced funding means that access to healthcare will be severely limited. Mental health and sexual and reproductive health interventions are particularly at risk.

Funding Shortfall

This year, financial support pledged by the international community at the 8th Brussels Conference has fallen significantly short, amounting to only 18% of the funding required for the Syria Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). Consequently, humanitarian organizations will be forced to suspend life-saving operations. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), only 16.3% of the health needs outlined in the Syria HRP had been funded by the end of the first semester of 2024. The situation remains dire with recent escalations in violence, failing infrastructure, and growing humanitarian needs. OCHA has recently estimated that nearly 160 health facilities, including 46 hospitals, will be forced to suspend operations if no additional funding is secured. By August 2024, up to 200 out of 350 health facilities in north-west Syria will be affected.

Critical Impact on Health Services

The funding gap is forcing humanitarian actors to prioritize life-saving interventions over other critical aid programmes such as Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH). In north-west Syria, there is no alternative government service provider or capaci-

ty to take over health services. The region is isolated from the rest of Syria and entirely dependent on humanitarian organizations for healthcare provision. Therefore, when a facility closes due to funding cuts, there is no interim government body to maintain operations, leaving the community without essential medical services.

A study conducted by Mehad in August 2023 on a population of 1,537 people in north-west Syria found high levels of need for MHPSS, with suicidal ideation notably prevalent in Jisr al-Shughur District (22.91% of participants).

In the districts of Afrin, Harim, and Idlib, where one of the Médecins du Monde teams operates, the healthcare situation has been severely impacted. According to an OCHA report updated in May 2024, over 100 health facilities, including 32 hospitals, had already halted their services by the end of June. The Health Cluster has expressed concerns that, without adequate funding, up to 50% of the remaining operational health facilities in north-west Syria could either fully or partially shut down by December 2024. MdM Türkiye's most recent multi-sectoral needs assessment report found that 80% of community members identified MdM as their main primary healthcare provider, while only 3% felt that local health authorities met their health needs. This underscores the critical importance of funding for non-state actors.

In north-east Syria, another region with MdM operations, many health facilities rely heavily on NGO support, with local health authorities managing only 37.8% of them. Without this support, these centres often lack the necessary resources and staff. In 2023, according to the Humanitarian Needs Overview, nearly one in five people reported being unable to access essential healthcare. In addition, there are serious shortages of essential medicines, whose prices have risen considerably over the last two years. As a result, a large proportion of the population has no access to essential healthcare, exacerbating the urgent need for increased funding.

MdM Türkiye serves as the primary healthcare provider for the majority of the community here. Without sufficient funding, we risk being unable to meet these needs, leaving many without access to essential medical care. It is vital for the international community to recognize the urgency and extend their support.

*Dr. Mohammad Faris, MdM Türkiye
Programme Medical Manager*

After a surge of attention following the February 2023 earthquake, institutional funds quickly dried up for the north-west, while the humanitarian situation remains extremely concerning. Without a rapid new influx of funds from international donors, we will soon be unable to meet these vital needs.

*Osamah Alhoussin, Programmes
Manager for north-west Syria*

Call to Action

Médecins du Monde and Mehad are calling for an urgent increase in donor support to meet health needs and ensure that everyone can live in dignity. Every human being has the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health through universal access to quality health services. The international community must act now to prevent further closures of health facilities and ensure that the Syrian people continue to have access to essential health services.

ABOUT MÉDECINS DU MONDE'S WORK IN SYRIA



Médecins du Monde started its activities in Syria in 2008, providing Primary Health Care services in Aleppo Governorate in partnership with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), before the beginning of the conflict. With the outbreak of hostilities, Médecins du Monde adapted its response to better address the needs of the Syrian population. During the thirteen years of the Syrian conflict, MdM has engaged in numerous medical humanitarian activities to assist those suffering from the war. The complexity of the conflict – with numerous actors, limited access, direct attacks on healthcare personnel and facilities, and massive needs – has resulted in an equally complex response. MdM implements activities directly or through partnerships with local actors in Syria and in nearby countries with Syrian refugees.

ABOUT MEHAD mehad

Mehad is a French health and international solidarity NGO created in 2011 as the result of the determination of a group of doctors to respond to the urgent need to provide healthcare to the populations affected by the war in Syria and in the neighbouring countries. Mehad now manages around 40 healthcare facilities in the country and has faced the ongoing challenge of providing access to healthcare in a war-torn environment since the conflict began. Mehad's core mission is to engage constructively with local actors to ensure good quality care and long-term social development for vulnerable populations. With an in-depth understanding of population needs and longstanding partnership relationships, the NGO has developed unique expertise in addressing local emergency, health, and development issues.

Contact us

Valentin Grünwald, Médecins du Monde Network Advocacy Coordinator

@ valentin.grunwald@medecinsdumonde.net