Awareness is key to flatten COVID infection curve in Iraq

Baghdad, Iraq, 29 June 2020: The World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Health, today kicked off a major COVID-19 awareness campaign targeting high risk and affected areas in the Iraqi capital Baghdad.

The campaign is planned to cover 10 heavily populated areas for a period of 4-weeks (29 June-28 July) and will mobilize more than 250 community male/female volunteers to ensure the delivery of critical Information, Education and Communications (IEC) messages to approximately 6 million people living in these areas.

“Health is the responsibility of all, and raising people’s awareness is instrumental to containing the aggressive spread of pandemics like COVID 19,” said Dr. Adham R. Ismail, WHO Representative in Iraq. “WHO, the ministry of health, partners, and donors are all one hand in fighting COVID, and until a vaccine is produced, we have to unite our efforts to flatten the curve and keep our communities healthy and safe,” he added.

The campaign includes using mobile screens, booths, and mobile medical clinics to display WHO educational videos and audio messages on a variety of protection and disinfection measures. State and private radio and TV channels will support the campaign with daily messages for one month, in addition to the direct distribution of personal protection packages containing masks, hand sanitizers, campaign slogan T-shirts and caps, COVID-19 awareness flyers and other educational materials, all targeting pedestrians in public places and main streets and bazaars.

Iraq recently reported a significant increase in numbers of infected cases in Baghdad mainly after the ease of the lockdown countrywide. Iraqi health authorities reports related the scale-up in infection numbers to the increase in testing capacity and active surveillance activities in one part, and to the poor adherenace of people in crowded districts to prevention and protection measures recommended by WHO and MOH, including good hand hygiene, social distancing, and mask-wearing.

The campaign includes support from key religious figures who mobilized thousands of mosques in main capital cities and districts to disseminate audio messages. “With no cure yet but prevention, we have to continue educating our people on the importance of following the health advice of WHO and national health institutions to save our lives and protect our health workers,”
a cleric attending the campaign opening in Sadir City, where the vast slums of eastern Baghdad are located, commented.

“WHO is aware of the challenging impact of the lockdown and movement restrictions on the limited and daily income-families in many areas in Baghdad. However, the organization urges all individuals to follow safety measures and wear masks in gatherings and public places, keep hands clean, and ensure social distancing to stop transmission of the virus,” Dr. Adham stressed.

WHO would like to extend its thanks to the Government of Kuwait and the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) for co-funding this campaign, and to WHO’s implementing partner United Iraqi Medical Society (UIMS) NGO for supporting its implementation.

###

Useful links:


For more information, contact:

-Ajyal Sultany, WHO Communications Officer, [sultanya@who.int](mailto:sultanya@who.int), +9647740 892 878