



30 April 2014 - The number of people injured and disabled in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to rise in [2013](#) . The year was marked by unprecedented suffering of the Syrian people, with more than a third of all Syrian families affected by the continuing conflict.

The [2013 annual report](#) by the WHO on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic warns of serious problems in the health sector and a critical lack of basic health services. Whether in government-controlled or contested areas; urban or rural: contexts vary, but stories converge. The Syrian people have lived through horrors: a doctor operating on a baby with light from a mobile telephone, a girl severely burned in a massive explosion.

Those not directly wounded also suffered from the conflict's harsh effects. Health services have been greatly disrupted and many people are unable to receive essential medicines to treat chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer or high-blood pressure. Nearly three-quarters of the country's hospitals have been damaged, and almost half of those have ceased to function altogether.

This breakdown of public health services has been dramatically illustrated by the re-emergence of polio in Syria, which had been polio-free since 1995. With safe water supplies one third of pre-crisis levels, thousands of people have been exposed to diarrhoeal diseases.

Cooperating with its partners, the WHO has adopted approaches to ensure immediate results

and promote long-term sustainability. WHO's work monitoring and responding to communicable diseases serves to illustrate the progress made. Thanks to these efforts, the Early Warning and Response System (EWARS) is gaining momentum. Over 441 surveillance sites throughout the country are now reporting regularly through EWARS. Almost one third of these sites are in opposition-controlled areas.

EWARS covers the entire population: the young and the old, the internally displaced, refugees from neighbouring countries, and local communities. Through EWARS, rapid response teams have managed to avert or contain outbreaks of acute jaundice syndrome, measles, typhoid fever, polio, bloody and acute watery diarrhoea, hepatitis A and brucellosis, potentially saving tens of thousands of lives. However, continued work on the ground is required. With deteriorating food security, the population's nutritional status and resilience have declined. The physical and mental health impact of the crisis will be felt for generations to come.

UNRIC related links:

UNRIC's backgrounder on the [Syrian Arab Republic](#)

UNRIC's article on the [humanitarian situation](#) in Syria

UNRIC's article on [children in Syria](#)

UNRIC's article on [progress of peace talks](#)