Success story 1 – The people of Al-Aolah area in Najra – Hajja finally got a functioning health unit

Najra district, December 2019

The people from Al-Aolah area in Najra district in Hajja used to have only an abandoned uncompleted building as health unit. The building skeleton had not been touched since 2011, leaving many people of Al-Aolah area with no access to health services.

This situation is not exclusive for Hajja governorate. Many health facilities in Yemen are only partially functioning or non-functioning. Per INTERSOS Rapid Assessment conducted in 2017, in Hajja governorate, 80% of the health facilities were found only partially or not functioning.

Providing a functional health unit and accessible health services, in Hajja governorate, was one of the objectives of the UNICEF funded project implemented by INTERSOS, and the project aimed to provide integrated health and nutrition services through supporting existing health facilities. It is estimated that about 78,000 people benefited directly from this project (18% men, 30% women, 26% boys and 26% girls).

At the beginning of the project in early 2019, INTERSOS, through coordination with community leaders, managed to work temporarily from a private building provided by a community leader, until the rehabilitation of the health unit was completed, providing primary health care services health and cholera response services.

INTERSOS, starting from March 2019, equipped the temporary health unit with solar system, vaccination fridge, furniture, medical and non-medical equipment, drugs and IPC material in order to be able to deliver EPHC & ORC services.

In August 2019, INTERSOS signed the contract with the contractor to start rehabilitation of Al-Aolah health unit and by November 2019 the rehabilitation work were included, including the set-up of solar system and equipment (moved from the temporary facility).

On 1 December 2019, an opening ceremony was conducted for Al-Aolah health unit as a dedicated and a fully functioning health unit that serves not the population of Al-Aolah and its surrounding areas.
Success story 2 - Setting up a DTC in Al-Aman (Najra – Hajja) to fight the cholera outbreak

Al-Aman, in the center of Najra district, in Hajja governorate, hosts a large number of IDPs who fled the ongoing violence in adjacent areas. There is only a small health unit in Al-Aman area and it is always overcrowded with patients seeking health services, especially with the outbreak of diseases such as cholera and dengue fever. What make things worse is that the nearest hospital to refer critical and complicated cases to is about one hour away in distance.

Hajja governorate is one of the top 5 governorates hosting displaced people: producing IDPs and hosting them at the same time. The conflict and displacement led to a virtual collapse of an already precarious service provision prior to the war (water, health, education, electricity, sanitation and municipal services).

INTERSOS, supported by its partner UNICEF, worked on building a hangar (12*7m), to be used as Diagnosis and Treatment Center (DTC). The construction of the hangar was completed by October 2019. INTERSOS installed all the medical and non-medical equipment in the newly build DTC and also provided for the solar system. By 22 October 2019, the DTC started to received and treated AWD cases according to the national protocol.

Al-Aman DTC in Narja (in addition to a DTC set-up in Al-Qubri in Sharas) provided a qualitative response to the disease outbreaks in the area and immediate assistance to about 3,180 AWD cases by the end of 2019 (718 Men, 680 Women, 921 Boys and 861 Girls).

During construction of hangar
Success 3 – Trained community health volunteer and health workers fighting cholera and AWD

On 6 December 2019, one of INTERSOS’s Community Health Volunteer referred a 4-year-old girl, called Ashar from Najra district, Hajja governorate to Al-Aman DTC. Ashar was suffering for 3 days from acute watery diarrhea (AWD) when referred. Her skin was molded indicating she was suffering of dehydration.

The medical doctor at the DTC received Ashar and examined her. He evaluated her condition and made diagnosed her with AWD before admitting and registering her to start treatment per the national protocol for treating AWD.

Al-Aman DTC center was established by INTERSOS in October 2019 to provide preventive, investigative and therapeutic services for AWD cases. INTERSOS conducted Cholera training for the health workers of DTCs. The training covered the Cholera management, prevention and infection control topics, according to the national protocol for Cholera training.

Ashar got treatment for 5 hours, at the DTC, till her condition improved and she was discharged with a treatment plan to be followed at home.
Success story 4 - Hard to reach is not out of reached

INTERSOS supported three health facilities in Sharas district (Al-Reqa, Al-Balad and Sa’adan health units) to ensure providing people’ access to health services in hard-to-reach areas.

The project also activated outdoor services conducted by health workers, to ensure that people living in isolated mountainous areas and in long-distance from the health units also could benefit from the health units’ services.

The outdoor services were launched in November 2019, for one day per week in the different areas. In the last 2 months of implementation there was a significant improvement in the number of beneficiaries reached with OPD, Reproductive health (ANC/PNC), vaccination and nutrition awareness.

Moreover, a network of Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) ensured continuous outreach services: identification, referral and follow-up of the patients, in addition to health and nutrition awareness, combined with screening for malnutrition and deworming.
Success story 5 - Volunteering is supporting the community

INTERSOS activated the role of Community Health Volunteers in raising community awareness on Health, Nutrition and Disease Outbreaks, as part of INTERSOS’ project, funded by its partner UNICEF, and to support 4 health facilities in Hajja governorate.

24 community health volunteers (6 CHVs for each supported health unit) from districts that are not covered by CHVs) was one of the project activities. The training covered topic such as triage-based referral, community mobilization, nutrition, Communication for Development and first aid.

After CHVs training, INTERSOS activated CHVs role in raising health awareness of community by conducting sessions on main health topics such as Cholera disease, Diphtheria disease, personal hygiene, Immunization, IYCF, Childhood illnesses, SAM/MAM prevention and care. In addition, the CHVs conducted malnutrition screening and case finding in the catchment area and referred the malnourished cases to the targeted HF.

During one of the sessions conducted on personal hygiene/hand washing practices, INTERSOS CHVs found a 5-years old girl accompanying her mother. She observed and quickly copied the CHV demonstrating how to wash hands. Mashael, having understood the importance of hand washing in prevention of spread of disease, immediately started to explain to her friends how to wash hands too.

Mashael imitating the CHV instructor and showing her friends how to wash hands
INTERSOS established a network of Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) that supported existing health facilities in Hajja governorate. The main task of the CHV is to conduct outreach activities for all the catchment population of the targeted health facilities.

Among other responsibilities CHVs conduct home visits for screening and referral of beneficiaries to the targeted health facility for health and nutrition services.

On 20 August 2019, INTERSOS CHVs referred a malnourished 2-year old boy, named Samer, from Souq Al-Sabt village. Samer was continuously crying and his MUAC was only 11 cm.

One of the CHVs explained the child’s condition to the mother, educated her on IYCF practices and referred the mother with her child to Al-Reqa health unit, one of the health facilities supported under the INTERSOS-UNICEF project aiming to provide emergency primary health services through supporting of 4 existing health facilities in 2 districts in Hajja governorate.

The mother brought Samer the next day to the health unit. The nurse-nutritionist received the case and evaluated his nutritional status by anthropometric measurements, Samer was diagnosed as severely acute malnourished (SAM).

The appetite test for Samer was positive, so the boy was admitted and recorded in the Outpatient Therapeutic Program to get free of charge nutrition services. Plumpy-Nut and routine medications were given to Samer and weekly follow up visits were conducted by CHVs to the child at home and the child was also called weekly for follow up in the health unit by the nurse nutritionist.

Samer’s status improved and three weeks later he was fully recovered.
Story 7 – Volunteers help to save children’s lives in Al-Kubri area – Sharas district

On 21 November 2019, the CHVs examined a 10-months baby girl called Retaj, from Sharas district. Retaj’s mother was complaining that her baby girl was suffering from acute watery diarrhea since 2 days. Her skin was molded indicating she was dehydrated.

The CHV talked with her mother about Retaj’s condition and referred her to Al-Kubri DTC for treatment.

Al-Kubri DTC was one of two DTC set up by the project in the centers of two districts in Hajja governorate to provide an easy access to diagnosis and treatment of cholera and other epidemiological outbreaks.

Al-Kubri DTC was supported with maintenance to its water sanitation network, distribution of drugs, medical and non-medical equipment and the installation of solar power system. Capacity building was done for all health staff to ensure the empowerment and sustainability after the project closure.

Retaj’s mother brought her baby to the DTC. The medical doctor received the case and evaluated her condition. Retaj was suffering of AWD and was admitted in the DTC. The treatment process started according to the national protocol for treating AWD.

5 hours later, the girl’s condition improved and Retaj was discharged with the free of charge drugs to continue the treatment at home.

The child during the treatment for AWD disease

The child after recovery became able to drink ORS solution
Success story 8 - Volunteers saves lives in Al-Rega area – Shares district

On 18 November 2019, a 10 years old boy reached to Al-Kubri DTC carried on the shoulders of his older brother. His name is Mokhtar. He knew about the DTC from the CHVs who checked him on that day during their outreach activities. Mokhtar was complaining of acute watery diarrhea during the last days. Mokhtar’s skin was molded indicating he was suffering of dehydration. The CHV advised the child and his brother to go directly to Al-Kubri DTC for treatment.

The medical doctor at the DTC received the case and evaluated his condition, and after that Mokhtar was diagnosed with AWD. He was admitted to the DTC. The treatment process started according to the national protocol for treating AWD diseases.

6 hours later, the child’s condition improved and Mokhtar was discharged with the drugs to be taken at home.

Mokhtar during the treatment for AWD.

The child after recovery became able to drink ORS solution.

The child discharged from DTC with drugs & ORS solution.
Success story 9 – Training of volunteers to ensure the empowerment and sustainability after the project closure

INTEROS activated a network of CHVs for outreach activity through home visits to screen and refer the beneficiaries to the supported health facility in the district. The CHVs outreach plan was developed to cover each population level to ensure to target the catchment population in the area.

On 24 October 2019, in Souq Al-Sabt Village, the CHVs found a 2.5-years old girl, called Asma, that was continuously crying and her MUAC was 11.3 cm. The CHV spoke with her mother about Asma’s condition and advised her to go to Al-Reqa health unit for treatment.

24 community health volunteers (6 CHVs for each supported health unit) from districts that were previously (prior to this project) not covered by CHVs) were provided with training on topics such as triage-based referral, community mobilization, nutrition, Communication for Development and first aid.

On the same day, the mother brought her child to the health unit. The nurse nutritionist received the case and evaluated her nutritional status by anthropometric measurements. Asma was diagnosed with SAM.

The appetite test for the child was positive, so the case was admitted to the Outpatient Therapeutic Program. Plumpy-Nut and routine medications were given to Asma. Her mother was given health and nutrition awareness. Weekly follow up visits were conducted by CHVs to the child at home and the child was also called weekly for follow up in the health unit by the nurse nutritionist.

Six weeks later, the child improved and Asma was discharged as cured.

Evaluation of the nutritional status of the child before treatment

Evaluation of the nutritional status of the child after treatment
Success story 10 - Renewed access to health service after the rehabilitation and fully fitting of the HC as DTC in Al-Reqa (Sharas – Hajja) increasing community resilience and sustainability.

On 17 July 2019, in Hemiat Village, the CHVs found a 2.5 years old boy, called Badr Al-Din. The child was continuously crying and his MUAC was 9.5 cm. Therefore, the CHV started to talked with his mother about Badr’s health condition and referred them to Al-Reqa for treatment.

Al-Reqa health unit is one of 4 health facilities that was supported through the project that was implemented by INTERSOS and funded by its partner UNICEF, aiming to provide emergency primary health services through supporting existing health facilities in 2 districts in Hajja.

On the next day, the mother brought Bader Al-Din to Al-Reqa health unit. The nurse-nutritionist received the case and evaluated his nutritional status by anthropometric measurements. Bader was diagnosed suffering from SAM.

The appetite test for the child was positive, so the case was admitted and recorded in the follow up cards and in the SAM case registry. Plumpy Nut and routine medications were given to him, and Badr’s mother was educated on health and nutrition messages and IYCF practices. Bader, also, got weekly follow up visits at home by CHVs and weekly follow ups were done in the health unit by the nurse-nutritionist.

Bader’s mother pointed out that her kids could not have such saving-life treatment before INTERSOS-UNICEF started the intervention in their area.

“Before project implementation, in our area, the situation was difficult and the most basic health services were not available” Badr’s mother said. “Many families had to travel for hours to reach the nearest health facilities. There were many children dying of diseases and epidemics, including malnutrition and cholera and it was extremely hard to assist a patients or to save a woman in the event of delivery,” she added.

Bader’s case improved in four weeks and he was discharged as cured from SAM.

“The services provided in DTC save him. Services are provided for everyone equally, free of charge, and in a wonderful way,” the mother said. “The staff treat us with respect and genuinely care” she added.