

Press release and statement

IPPF Member Association amongst first responders, providing reproductive care to survivors of the earthquake in Syria

Thursday, 9th February London, 2022

On Monday 6th February, catastrophic earthquakes hit Türkiye and Syria. Within hours, our local member association, the Syrian Family Planning Association (SFPA), was among the first responders assisting and evacuating people to safe shelter and accommodation in Syria.

Dr. Lama Mouakea, Executive Director, Syrian Family Planning Association said: “In the aftermath of Monday’s earthquake, at least two hospitals have collapsed, three of our clinics have been damaged, and many health services have been disrupted. This will have an immediate, and dire, impact on women and girls. The catastrophic earthquake combined with the harsh winter makes our response even more critical. We have already sent mobile clinics to the areas affected to provide immediate healthcare.”

Dr. Mouakea added: “Women and girls who are being moved into shelters in several areas, such as Aleppo and Idlib, may be subjected to violence or sexual abuse, so the medical and psycho-social service needs are great. We know of one devastating case of a mother giving birth to a baby while buried beneath rubble, who later sadly passed away. So getting pregnant women to safe spaces to deliver their babies is now essential. Our staff visit these areas continuously every week, so are already familiar with the communities and areas that are hardest hit. SFPA has been here before the earthquake providing humanitarian aid and will continue to serve these communities as they recover from this latest disaster.”

Whilst also responding to other immediate needs, SFPA is ensuring sexual and reproductive healthcare is on the agenda as a critical component of the response, especially for women, girls and marginalized communities.

[Three in five](#) preventable maternal deaths occur during natural disasters, and [one in five](#) women is likely to be pregnant during a crisis. Without access to reproductive healthcare, women and girls will suffer severe consequences, including miscarriage, premature labour, complications from unassisted deliveries and increased exposure to sexual and domestic violence, sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion and even death.

Julie Taft, Humanitarian Director, International Planned Parenthood Federation said:

“IPPF is deeply saddened to hear of the news of the devastating earthquake in Türkiye and Syria. Our deepest condolences go out to the families who lost loved ones and whose homes were destroyed. Our member association in Syria has already started responding with mobile health clinics, and we stand ready to support the ongoing response efforts of our local partners in their delivery of vital, and lifesaving, sexual and reproductive healthcare to women, girls, and marginalized populations.”

Twelve years of war and sanctions have left Syria’s infrastructure, including healthcare systems, battered. A crippling economic crisis has also driven humanitarian needs to record levels. SFPA has been responding throughout these interlinked crises ensuring continued sexual and reproductive healthcare services through their mobile and static clinics.

Dr Alvaro Bermejo, Director-General of IPPF said:

“It is amongst one of the most devastating natural disasters we have seen in recent times. The focus of all actors must be squarely on the needs of the people, particularly women and girls and those who are more vulnerable. It is not time to play geopolitics when women are giving birth amidst the devastation. It is time to focus on getting aid and support to where it is needed, now. It is not only the rubble that must be removed, but also any obstacle put in place by those in positions of power, locally, nationally or internationally.”

For media enquiries, please contact Karmen Ivey on kivey@ippf.org or media@ippf.org

Further information

About the International Planned Parenthood Federation

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is a global service provider and advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all.

For over 65 years, IPPF through its 118 Member Associations and 15 partners, has delivered high-quality sexual and reproductive healthcare and helped advance sexual rights, especially for people with intersectional and diverse needs that are currently unmet. Our Member Associations and partners are independent organizations that are

locally owned, which means the support and care they provide is informed by local expertise and context.

We advocate for a world where people are provided with the information they need to make informed decisions about their sexual health and bodies. We stand up and fight for sexual and reproductive rights, and against those who seek to deny people their human right to bodily autonomy and freedom. We deliver care that is rooted in rights, respect, and dignity - no matter what.

About the Syrian Family Planning Association

The Syrian Family Planning Association was created in 1974. SFPA branches distribute all over Syria in 13 governorates (Syria has 14 governorates, but Al Raqa is still out of government control). SFPA is running several projects related to sexual reproductive health, focusing on maternal and child health, gender-based violence and counselling services.

The SFPA service delivery points in the 13th governorates are as follows:

- 43 paediatric static clinics.
- 29 mobile team paediatricians.
- 14 mobile teams for malnutrition screening.
- 38 RH static clinics.
- 25 medical RH mobile teams.
- 1 obstetric and delivery hospital.
- 1 mammogram.
- 18 women and girls safe spaces (WGSS)
- 24 PSS mobile teams supporting WGSS.
- 12 youth centers.

The framework of SFPA activities focuses on the following fields:

- SRH, Sexual reproductive health
- GBV, gender-based violence
- Child health
- Malnutrition prevention for pregnant women and children under 5.

The number of SFPA volunteers is around 650, and the number of SFPA employees is about 980.