



# Mehad Program, Screening for MUAC and Anaemia

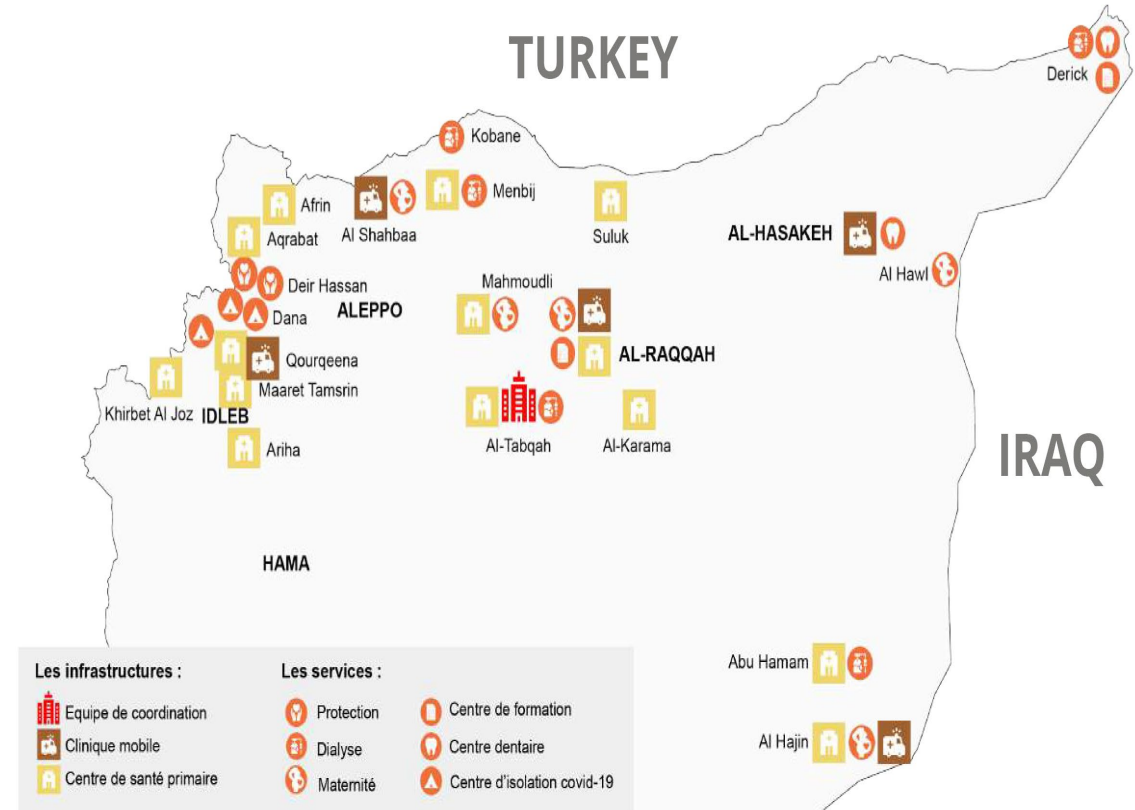
Dr. Taha Alomar

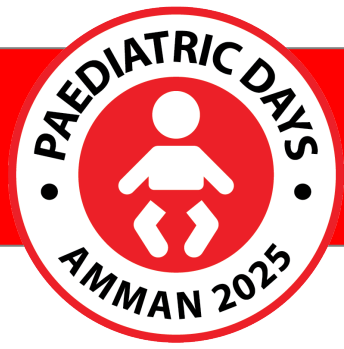
Head of Health Department – MEHAD Syria



# Mehad

- Mehad is a French NGO dedicated to healthcare and operating in Syria since 2011, expanding to Ukraine in 2022, Palestine and Yemen in 2024.
- In Syria, Mehad provides primary, secondary, and specialized health services, primarily in Northern Syria, with expansion in 2025 to whole of Syria





# Context and Rationale for Screening Program in Syria

- Prolonged conflict which disrupted healthcare systems across Syria.
- Limited access: infrastructure damage, funding shortages, security issues resulting in non-functional facilities and uneven distribution.
- Disparities in healthcare quality across regions and health providers.
- High prevalence of anemia: 1 in 4 women of reproductive age, and higher rates among teenage girls (1 in 2)
- Wasting among women and girls: prevalence above 5% in seven governorates and up to 10% in parts of northern Syria.



# Implementing MUAC and Anaemia Screening

- Implementing MUAC measurement and anemia screening across primary and secondary healthcare facilities
- Implemented in 2025 through 4 PHCs, 1 CEmONC facility, and 1 mobile clinic
- Aim: Maximize screening opportunities and early detection of malnutrition and anemia





# Pillars of the Screening Program

**Systematic MUAC and Anemia Screening**

**Capacity Building of HCWs**

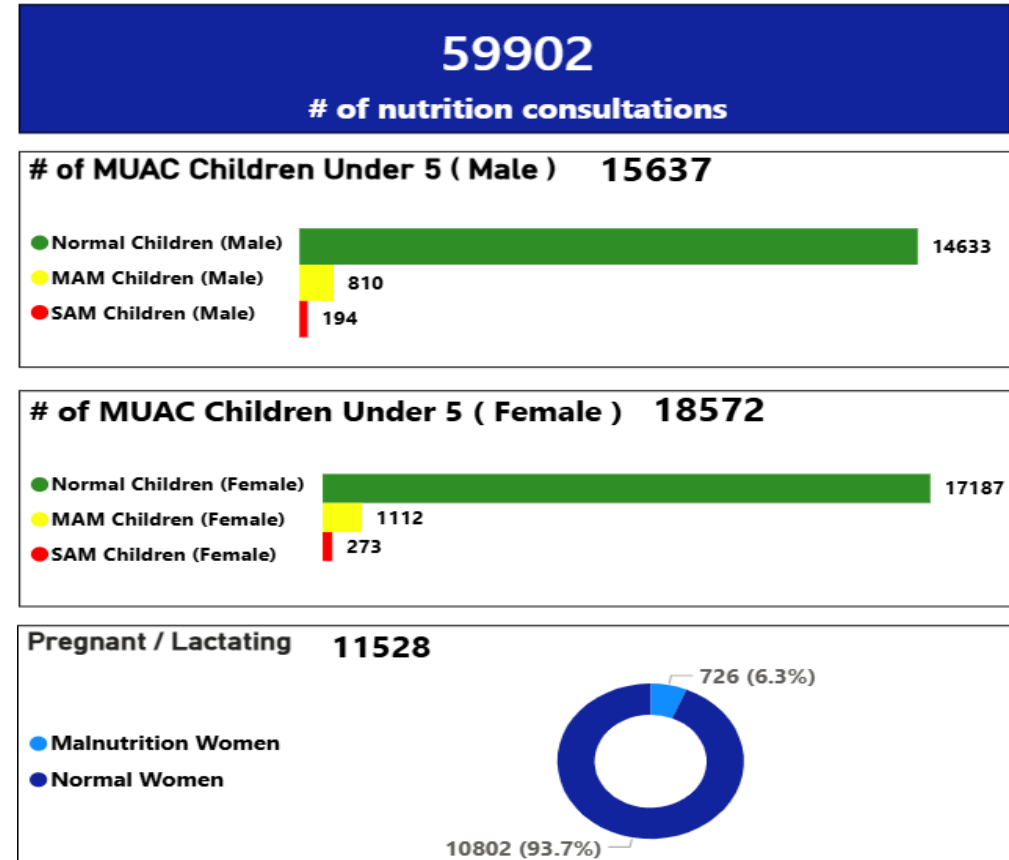
**Community-based interventions**

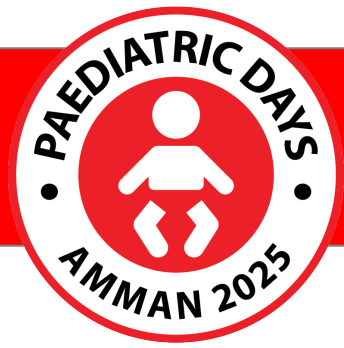
**Tailored Interventions and Follow-up**



# Systematic MUAC and Anemia Screening

- Integrate MUAC measurements and anemia testing as core components of routine ANC visits
- Timely entry of results through paper-based and electronic health records

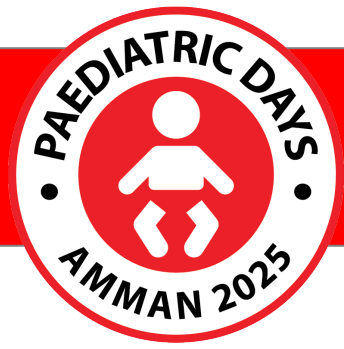




# Capacity Building for MUAC and Anemia Screening

- Comprehensive training program for all healthcare workers involved in program implementation (midwives, gynecologists, CHWs, Nutrition nurses, and supervisors)

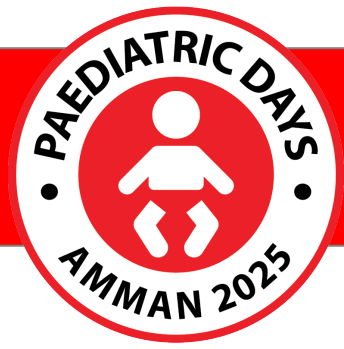




# Community-based Interventions

- Expand population coverage through community outreach and facility referrals
- A community health team affiliated with each health facility conducting household visits
- CHWs implement MUAC measurements and checklists to identify high-risk pregnancies during household visits

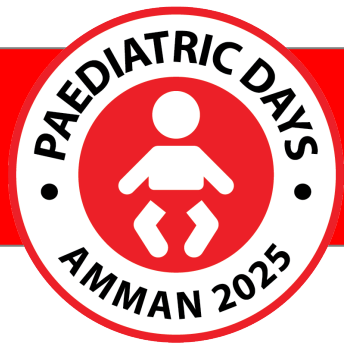




# Tailored Interventions and Follow-up

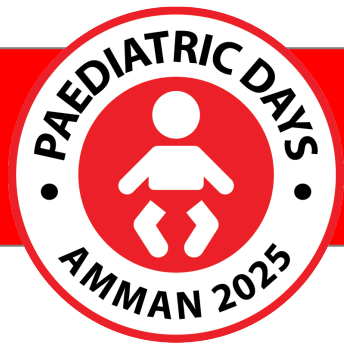
- Provide micronutrient supplementation and targeted anemia prevention and treatment for all pregnant women.
- Provide nutritional support and counseling for all pregnant women and treatment for diagnosed cases of acute malnutrition.
- Implement focused plan for follow up visits according to screening results





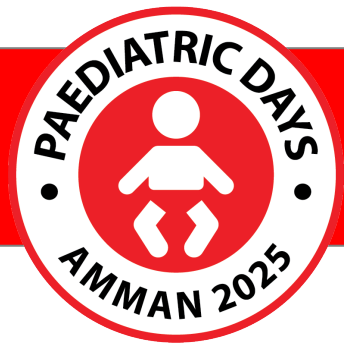
# Results

- Improved Coverage of Anemia and Malnutrition screening:
  - > 95% coverage for malnutrition and anemia screening at facility level
  - All pregnant women in the catchment areas of our facilities receive MUAC screening, awareness on ANC and pregnancy danger signs, and referral to health facilities
- Anemia at birth date < 7% (compared to 19% at first ANC visit to our facilities and 25% at the community level)
- Reduction in malnutrition rate of 33.6% (from 12.8% at first ANC to 8.5% at birth date)



# Successes with Intervention

- Integration into routine services such as antenatal care improves coverage
- Capacity building enhances staff competency and adherence
- Community outreach activities increase awareness and promote better health-seeking behaviors



# Challenges and Areas for Improvement

- **Challenges:**

- Fragmented health system with multiple health authorities and variations in service quality across regions and providers
- Lack of continuity of care across various healthcare entities and providers affecting patient outcomes
- Inconsistent funding leading to resource shortages and service gaps

- **Areas for Improvement:**

- Scale-up to a nationwide screening program, supported by the implementation of standardized protocols across the country
- Strengthen the integration between different healthcare entities to ensure continuum of patient care and follow-up