A large shipment of WHO interagency emergency health kits is on its way to help meet immediate health needs in response to the recent intensification of fighting and shelling in the eastern part of Ukraine.

Thousands of civilians are living in subzero temperatures and many others are injured and urgently in need of life-saving medical care. The emergency health kits will address the health needs of over 300 000 patients for 3 months in Ukraine. Further suffering and loss of life can be expected if preventive and emergency response measures are not taken immediately.

Humanitarian funding is dropping

Despite soaring health needs, emergency response measures in eastern Ukraine continue to be plagued by severe shortages of humanitarian funding.

“The humanitarian situation is dire in the midst of winter as electricity, heat, water and basic services have been disrupted in large parts of Donetsk,” said Dr Marthe Everard, WHO Representative in Ukraine. “Our efforts are focused on ensuring civilians are protected from hostilities and have access to basic services, including essential health care.”

Addressing the needs of internally displaced people

The Government of Ukraine has organized voluntary medical evacuations for children and vulnerable residents of Avdiivka, a city north of Donetsk, but thousands more in the area may need to be evacuated in the coming weeks due to continued shelling and extreme cold.

WHO is working with the Government of Ukraine and health partners to ensure and coordinate timely delivery of the emergency health kits among hospitals and health clinics to respond to the needs of a wide range of patients – including preventive services such as immunization and the detection and treatment of common diseases – in government-controlled areas, non-government-controlled areas and buffer zones.

Cold weather worsens people’s conditions and health

Cold weather particularly threatens the health of patients, especially pregnant women and sick children, in hospitals that are cut off from electricity, water and central heating systems. Cold temperatures can also increase the risk of cardiovascular and respiratory health conditions, primarily in the elderly and young children with common colds, influenza and other health problems caused by severe bacterial and viral infections.

Together with other United Nations agencies and health partners, WHO is making efforts to reduce exposure to the cold and ensure access to heated shelters, regular hot meals and proper clothing.

http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/emergencies/pages/news/news/2017/02/health-needs-soar-as-fighting-flares-in-eastern-ukraine/_recache