

IN FOCUS

Improving health care services in Lebanon in the context of the Syrian crisis: the EU/IfS programme

As of 30 April 2014, UNHCR has recorded 1,044,898 displaced Syrians in Lebanon. This represents close to 20% of the total population inside the country. This context has created tensions between refugees and host communities due to competition for already scarce resources especially in the health sector. The European Union is responding by mobilizing its Instrument for Stability (IfS) to provide humanitarian assistance through WHO Lebanon. The overall objective of this action is reduction of tension between Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees.

In this respect, the action aims to reinforce the EU's objective in Lebanon of strengthening the State institutions' credibility through an improved delivery of basic services to the citizens – in this case by being able to provide for the health needs of its most vulnerable population.

The overall objective of this action is reduction of tension between Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees, and this is done through several action points.

- Reinforce the capacity of the Ministry of Public Health in terms of communicable diseases monitoring, early warning and response. This component will focus on: providing surveillance support; reinforcing response capacity; and infrastructure support to laboratories in public hospitals.
- Reinforce the capacity of the Ministry to deliver quality primary health care and maternal and child health care. The focus is in: supplying primary health care centres with equipment and supplies; and capacity-building among health care providers.
- Reinforce the capacity of the Ministry in sustaining the provision of chronic medications.
- Increase the capacity of programme partners and other humanitarian actors to implement programmes using a conflict sensitive approach.

The theory of change which underpins this project is that by increasing the availability and quality of health services, particularly in areas which have traditionally not enjoyed a high level of state-provided services and are currently experiencing the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis, tensions between host and refugee communities will be reduced. The programme takes an approach which focuses on increasing the capacity of Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health to respond to identified needs in a manner that is sustainable and contributes to the longer term goal of strengthening the Lebanese state to respond to the

WHO steps up preparedness for diarrhoeal disease epidemics among Syrian refugees in Lebanon

09 July 2014 - WHO has supported the stepping up of the MOPH epidemic preparedness efforts in Lebanon in view of increased risk of cholera and other epidemic diarrhoeal diseases during the summer months. The huge increase in the number of Syrian refugees has over-stretched the water and sanitation, housing and health care systems in Lebanon. The overcrowded living and environmental sanitation conditions of the informal tented settlements as well as limited access of these refugees to health care have increased the risk of diarrhoeal disease outbreaks among this refugee population as well as the host community. The risk is further accentuated as the country is expected to face a severe water shortage this summer, particularly in the areas where the unregistered Syrian refugees are living, due to the unusually low precipitation during the past winter. An early rainy season may also amplify the seasonal occurrence of diarrhoeal diseases in the country.



One of the programme's objectives is to increase the capacity of primary health care centres



Efforts have been stepped up to improve public health preparedness to mitigate the risk of cholera



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NEWS

Ebola Preparedness in Lebanon

To date, no confirmed Ebola cases have been reported in Lebanon. While the risk of Ebola coming to Lebanon is low, it is important to put in place the precautionary measures. Beside nationals of affected countries, there are nearly 20,000 Lebanese living and working in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, who might travel frequently to and from these affected countries.

The Ministry of Public Health has been pro-active in preparing for Ebola, in terms of improving the surveillance of traveler and raising professional and public awareness about the deadly virus. In collaboration with the national Airport authorities the government has set up facilities at the airport to manage traveler showing symptoms of the disease such as fever, weakness or bleeding. In coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a national decree has been issued to all Lebanese Embassies informing the Lebanese Diaspora of the decision of the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) to treat any Lebanese affected by Ebola virus if he/she wishes so in Lebanon.

With the support of WHO and UNHCR, an isolation ward is under construction at Rafic Hariri University Hospital designated for possible Ebola cases. Hospitals with more than 100 beds have been instructed by MoPH to prepare an isolation ward for response to possible cases. The Ministry has already initiated a series of trainings for healthcare workers on infection control at health care settings in collaboration with WHO and has provided them with related guidebooks. A set of training on safe transportation of patients with Ebola virus infection has been completed with support of WHO, targeting mainly for first responders in health care, namely field surveillance teams, Civil Defense and Red Cross teams. WHO Lebanon has provided a stock of personal protective equipment (PPEs) to the MOPH, and is currently procuring additional more advanced 200 sets of PPEs to the MOPH, Civil Defense and Red Cross teams.



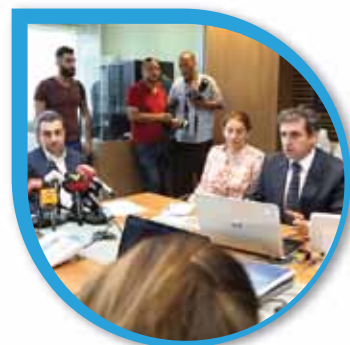
Series of trainings for healthcare workers on infection control

Emergency Operations Center (EOC) launch

Beirut, 8 July 2014 – The Lebanese Minister of Public Health Wael Abu Faour launched the newly established Emergency Operations Center (EOC) supported by WHO at the Rafic Hariri governmental hospital.

In compliance with the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005), Lebanon initiated the preparation for effective implementation of the guidelines to detect and report events that may constitute a potential public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC). In this context WHO assisted the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) in establishing the EOC. The EOC is a hub for health response operations in Lebanon during public health emergencies of national and international concern using state of the art information technology. EOC is part of the WHO's Global Alert and Response (GAR) and is linked to the Strategic Health Operations Center (SHOC) in Geneva and to a network of emergency operations centers around the world.

The EOC can be used in case of epidemic-prone, environmental, public health events caused by accidental or deliberate use of chemical, radio-nuclear and natural disasters, as it links the surveillance unit of the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) with the sentinel sites over Lebanon in a real time connection using DHIS2 application. It has been backed up with satellite to provide continuous connection if the landlines and internet fail in case of disaster.



The emergency operations centre will be a hub for operations in Lebanon

WHO provides 13 vehicles to the Ministry of Public Health

Beirut, 2 July - WHO Lebanon provided the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) with 13 vehicles with the support of the Kuwaiti emergency fund, in the context of emergency preparedness. These vehicles are intended to assist the network of primary health care centers, the surveillance unit, the communicable diseases unit and the TB control programme.

Risk to public health respect no boundaries and countries need to build strong capacities to respond to emerging threats. Lebanon is no exception where disease outbreaks may represent a real threat.

This step is part of the efforts that are made toward increasing the capacity of the MoPH to respond to emerging public health threats, in compliance with the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005).



WHO Lebanon provided the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health with 13 vehicles

WHO provides critical medicines to local health authorities

With a concerned host population comprising 1.2 million inhabitants and more than 1 million displaced Syrian since the outburst of the Syrian crisis in 2011, the Lebanese health system is heavily overburdened.

As part of its effort to alleviate the burden of the Syrian crisis on the health system, WHO continues to scale up its efforts to provide and distribute medical supplies and equipment to people in need across Lebanon through local authorities.

WHO has provided life-saving medicines, intravenous fluids and surgical supplies to support more than 500 000 people across Lebanon through agency-specific deliveries. In addition, WHO initiated the provision of chronic medications through the YMCA, for a total of 150,000 patients suffering from hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, dyslipidemias, diabetes, asthma, mental health and other chronic health conditions.



WHO provides medical supplies through local authorities

Mental health training in the context of the Syrian crisis in Lebanon

Aiming at integrating mental health into primary health care, WHO Lebanon has conducted a series of training between November and December 2013 on the mental health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) which seeks to improve access and care to services for people with mental health disorders by integrating services for mental health within primary health care centres.

With the advent of the Syrian crisis, Lebanon has witnessed a rise in its population by nearly one third. Refugees are hosted by local communities or in informal tented settlements, which accentuates the demand on the primary health care system to provide health services. Nongovernmental and international organizations and primary health care centres are reporting an increased demand for mental health services.

The adequate provision of mental health services remains a major challenge at primary health care centres (PHCs), with a severe shortage of psychiatrists, an increased need for referral to treatment/care and the lack of governmental hospitals for referrals.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health, WHO Lebanon launched a series of training on the mhGAP Intervention Guide (mhGAP-IG) which is a model guide developed by WHO in 2008 to facilitate the delivery of evidence-based interventions, both pharmacological and non-pharmacological, in non-specialized health-care settings. Twenty PHCs were trained, 37 health worker in total.

The next steps are to widen the reach of mhGAP-IG training to another 45 PHCs. After the advocacy efforts, the Ministry of Public Health has established a unit for mental health integration at the level of primary health care last May 2014.



Participants' initiation to the mhGAP-IG

Preventing reintroduction of Polio in Lebanon

As the threat of polio grows across the Eastern Mediterranean Region, the Ministry of Public Health of Lebanon launched several national polio immunization campaigns to prevent polio regaining a foothold in Lebanon after an absence of 13 years. Those campaigns are part of a multi-country regional drive to contain the spread of the highly infectious and incurable virus. The campaigns aim to immunize at least 600 000 children under-5 in Lebanon against polio.

During the campaigns, children received the vaccines for free at primary health centres, public and private schools and from their private doctors. Vaccinators also travelled door-to-door in areas deemed to be at particularly high risk: Akkar, Minieh-Danieh, Tripoli, Hermel, Baalbeck, Zahle, West Bekaa, Rachaiya, Bint Jubail, Sour, Marjaayoun, Ikleem-Karoub in Chouf and part of Beirut. In addition, mobile teams visited 1185 informal settlements nationwide to vaccinate Syrian refugees living there.



WHO staff administers oral polio vaccine for a young child

EVENTS

WHO supports launch of the Mother and Child Health Care initiative

The initiative which was inaugurated at Rashayya Public Hospital, is part of the Instrument for Stability (IfS) Project "Conflict Reduction through Improving Healthcare Services for the vulnerable population in Lebanon", funded by the European Union.

The "Mother and Child Health Care" initiative is led by the Ministry of Public Health and implemented by the World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the Makassed Philanthropic Organization. In Rashayya, the project will capacitate four primary healthcare centres linked to the Rashayya Governmental Hospital with full healthcare services for non-insured pregnant women living in the area, including antenatal and delivery services in addition to child healthcare and vaccination for children up to twenty four months of age.

WHO supports launch of national hepatitis awareness campaign

The Ministry of Public Health and the National Hepatitis Program launched in collaboration with WHO Lebanon the 2014 National Hepatitis Awareness campaign. Increased understanding and education among the local community is an essential first step in reducing the significant number of people being newly infected with hepatitis B and C every year as well as delivering the ultimate goal of eradicating these diseases.

Lebanon has put in place good hepatitis prevention and control measures. Hepatitis B vaccination is routinely given to all newborns and it is part of the childhood vaccinations. Health workers are all vaccinated for hepatitis B, too. Recently, in response to increased hepatitis A infections, an awareness campaign was launched to educate people on hygiene. And efforts to ensure safe water supplies are accelerated in particular in those areas most affected by water shortages and hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees. Moreover, treatment for hepatitis B and C is available and the government subsidizes treatment for poor people, based on nationally adapted guidebook developed with WHO support in 2012. It is also to note that the Lebanese MOPH has been very vigilant, along with all the blood banks in the country, in ensuring safe blood transfusion for more than two decades by now.

However, due to the crisis in Syria, a population of much more than one million additional people is in need of hepatitis prevention and control measures including vaccination, hygiene, infection control, safe blood transfusions, early diagnosis and treatment. This requires utmost commitment and support from all actors and partners involved.

On this occasion, the Ministry of Health announced that hepatitis B vaccination will be made available to non-governmental organizations providing services for populations at high risk of hepatitis transmission.

World No Tobacco Day 2014 awards ceremony

Every year, WHO recognizes individuals or organizations in each of the six WHO Regions for their accomplishments in the area of tobacco control. This year, Dr. Jamil Halabi, Head of the Healthy City Program Tobacco Control committee in Tripoli, Lebanon received the World No Tobacco Day 2014 award during a ceremony held on 1 July 2014 in Tripoli.

During the ceremony Dr. Hassan El-Bushra, WHO Lebanon Representative; Mr. FadiS-anan, the Director of Tobacco Control Program at the Ministry of Public Health; the president of the syndicate of physicians in the north and Dr. Jamil Halabi, the winner of the award for this year presented short speeches.

This ceremony was attended by H.E. the minister of Displaced, representatives of the main governmental institutions, NGOs mainly those working on Tobacco Control and the Community leaders in the city of Tripoli and the north of Lebanon.



The Ministry of Public Health with the EU and in partnership with WHO supports health care services in Rashayya



National Hepatitis Awareness campaign launch



World No Tobacco Day 2014 Awards Ceremony



Winners of the water conservation drawing contest

Water Conservation Workshop Al Sarafand

Al Sarafand – South Lebanon, 22 May 2014-A workshop organized jointly by the Embassy of Japan and the union of the municipalities in Sahel al Zahrani was held to mark the inauguration of the project providing water filtration systems to 14 public schools in Sahel al Zahrani funded by the Government of Japan. The project aims to provide safe drinking water to the children through the provision of the necessary water purification equipment. Moreover, the new taps outside each school's premise allow nearby residents to access safe drinking water.

The workshop was held in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Lebanese Center for Water Management and Conservation (LCWM). WHO Lebanon organized a puppet show in the themes of water and hygiene with its partner organization, the World Theater (Al masrah al aalamy). UNICEF facilitated the discussion and quiz concerning water conservation. Groups of students also made water filter crafts in order to understand how filters work.

Dr. Hassan El Bushra, WHO representative said "The children health is very important. School children could be an effective catalyst to increase awareness for water conservation and hygiene in local communities by sharing what they have learned in classrooms with their families."

WHO Lebanon launches its social media initiatives

WHO Lebanon is pleased to announce the creation of a number of social media accounts. Newly established WHO Lebanon Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter accounts have been created to complement our already established website page.

These pages give up to date information on all WHO programmes, events and initiatives. They also promote and advocate general health issues around Jordan, and the world as a whole. WHO Lebanon hopes to continue to initiate new communication techniques, including online videos, and radio podcasts.



WHO Lebanon Official Twitter account

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/wholeb

Twitter account: @WHOLEbanon

YouTube channel: www.youtube/user/WHOLEbanon



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