



IN THIS ISSUE

- > WHO continues its support to health system resilience
- > A National HazMat team is formed
- > Immunization Services assessed and EPI strategy
- > Last rounds of polio mop up campaigns

WHO continues its support to health system resilience

The EU continues its support to WHO to reinforce health system resilience through the EU neighborhood project “Enhancing access to non-communicable diseases and mental health services at the level of primary health care for vulnerable Syrian refugees and Lebanese communities in Lebanon response to the Syrian crisis”. This 2.4 million euros project will be implemented by WHO Lebanon, and aims to enhance access to non-communicable diseases and mental health services at the level of primary healthcare (PHC) for vulnerable Syrian refugees and Lebanese communities in Lebanon. Sufficient supplies of chronic medications will be made available at 440 PHC centers that participate in the MOPH/YMCA program of chronic medications. And at least 30 PHC centers within the MoPH, PHC network will have fully integrated mental health services with a referral and monitoring system in place. A mental health registry system will also be developed and piloted.



Boxes of medications delivered to the MOPH warehouse in Karantina

A National HazMat team is formed

In view of the current instability in Lebanon's neighboring countries, the risk of exposure to hazards has increased. In this respect, WHO Lebanon proposed to train health staff on the medical management of potential cases exposed to these hazards, in addition to public health measures required to manage such risks. Moreover, such capacity building is required as part of the International Health Regulations (IHR).

In September 2015, a decision was taken by the MOPH with the support of WHO to create a National HAZMAT Medical Team to be able to effectively play its role and responsibilities as a member in the Lebanese National CBRN team launched by the Prime Minister Mr. Tammam Salam, with the European CBRN Center of Excellence under the name of “Project 34”.

The overall goal of the project was to improve the preparedness and response capability of the Ministry of Health to deal with any potential threats generated from hazard incidents including chemical, biological, nuclear and radiological materials.

Thirteen training sessions were conducted between 16 November and 22 December for 242 participants from the Civil Defense, the Medical Team and the Lebanese Red Cross. The objectives of the trainings were to: create a multisectorial Hazmat team with different disciplines at the national level



to face any CBRN event in Lebanon, ready 24/24 to respond to CBRN hazards exposures. In addition to the advanced training, WHO provided advanced level of personal protective equipment for the Hazmat team.



Participants in action during the simulation training sessions.

Immunization Delivery Services needs assessed and EPI strategy drafted

As part of WHO's efforts to support the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) in reinforcing routine immunization and cold chain management, a WHO-UNICEF-MoPH immunization support team was established to reinforce quality of vaccine management in healthcare facilities that provide vaccination services and to assess further support needed to the MoPH Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) program.

Accordingly, the team visited 25 out of the 26 Qada physicians. During those visits, the approximate number of children vaccinated from the year 2012 onwards was estimated and ways to improve the reporting system of the healthcare centers that provide vaccination services - be it private or public, were proposed, and the needs of the Qadas including the need for capacity building were assessed.

WHO also organized an EPI mission to establish a five-year EPI strategy. The mission objectives were to conduct an EPI situation assessment to develop a clear understanding of the country needs for EPI program reinforcement. A first draft of the situation analysis and strategic directions was proposed to the MOPH EPI team. A final consensus meeting with stakeholders is planned before end of April 2016.



Vaccinator carrying the polio vaccine during the "tent-to-tent" vaccination campaign, informal settlement of Syrian refugees, Bekaa Valley, Lebanon.

Last rounds of polio mop up campaigns

The Ministry of Public Health, with support from WHO and UNICEF, conducted the last supplementary polio vaccination campaigns as part of the continued efforts to keep children in Lebanon safe from Polio. The first seven-day campaign, started on 25 January, during which 143,784 children (Lebanese, Syrian and other) under 5 years were vaccinated out of a 150,522 target achieving 96% coverage, regardless of nationality. The second round took place between 22 and 29 February in high risk selected districts around the country.

The campaigns targeted children who might have been missed by the vaccination during the previous immunization rounds.

The campaigns followed several rounds of polio vaccination campaigns that have reached almost 590,000 children under five, around 98.4% of the target group. The campaigns are part of the largest immunization response in the Middle East aiming to prevent the spread and circulation of polio in the region after the outbreak observed in Syria and Iraq in 2013.



During February polio mop up campaign in Beirut suburbs.
(Photo credit: Al Waquedi/A.)

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