

REDUCING CONFLICT BY IMPROVING HEALTHCARE SERVICES TO VULNERABLE LEBANESE AND SYRIAN REFUGEES



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LEBANON UPDATE

Agencies and the Government of Lebanon had requested US\$ 2.1 billion in the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) launched on 15 December 2014. As of 25 June 2015, agencies reported to have received US\$ 420 million (20% of the requirements).

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Instrument for Stability (IfS) project – worth EUR 20 million - is one of the largest institutional and community support projects in Lebanon;
- Essential medications for chronic diseases were distributed in 435 PHCs, with the aim to serve a total of 150,000 patients;
- 100,000 insulin vials were distributed in PHCs, benefiting 500 Lebanese diabetic patients;
- 6,200 pieces of medical equipment were provided to 180 primary healthcare centers across Lebanon;
- Eight negative pressure rooms for isolation of with potential infectious diseases were set up in five different hospitals;
- Health experts updated Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the response and surveillance of 43 selected diseases and hazards.

The Project



At a PHC-affiliated dispensary, a healthcare provider gives a pregnancy card to Lebanese woman for antenatal care monitoring.

Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) in Lebanon have witnessed an increase in demand for services since the start of the Syria crisis, coupled with budget constraints and limited resources.

Demand for vaccines, reproductive care, and chronic medication has increased with the exponential surge in the size of communities across Lebanon – namely women and children, who form 79 percent of the overall refugee population.

With the heightened demand, the PHCs workload has spiked, stretching their capacity to respond.

In the summer of 2013, the European Union (EU) funded the ‘Instrument for Stability’ (IfS) project that was developed by UNHCR together with the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), and the World Health Organization (WHO) in partnership with UNICEF, International Relief and Development (IRD), and International Alert.

The aim of the project was to reduce rising tensions between refugee and host communities by providing strategic support to the public health system in Lebanon.

Worth EUR 20 million, the project was launched in January 2014 and stretches into mid-2015.

The Instrument for Stability (IfS) project is one of the largest institutional and community support projects in Lebanon

Building the Capacity of Primary Healthcare Centres

Support to PHCs includes a wide range of initiatives from rehabilitation efforts, the provision of training to healthcare providers, staff deployment, and the procurement of medical equipment, clinical supplies, non-communicable disease (NCD) early detection kits, vaccines, and office supplies in up to 180 MOPH-affiliated PHCs, dispensaries, and Social Development Centres run by the Ministry of Social Affairs across Lebanon.

Provision of Medications and Medical Equipment

From the start of the IfS project, 6,200 pieces of medical equipment were provided to 180 PHCs across Lebanon. This has assisted the centres to absorb a 40 percent increase in the number of people accessing health services.

A total of eight water laboratories were established in eight different government hospitals across Lebanon to allow for the monitoring of water microbiology and alert for any potential water-borne infectious disease outbreaks. Training was in turn provided to laboratory and municipality staff on the modalities for the testing of potable water in addition to water sampling techniques.

Eight negative pressure rooms for isolation care for patients with potential infectious diseases were also set up in five different hospitals. These pressure rooms help isolate airborne diseases through the technical containment of the air flow and pressure in the rooms of patient with highly hazardous infectious diseases.

Stocks of free-of-charge vaccines were made available in 700 PHCs and dispensaries along with solar fridges to allow for safe cold chain storage and preempt electricity-cuts-related problems.

Essential medications for chronic diseases were distributed in 435 PHCs, with the aim to serve a total of 150,000 patients suffering from hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, dyslipidemias, diabetes, asthma, mental health and other chronic health conditions.

Eight water laboratories were established in eight different government hospitals across Lebanon

Essential medications for chronic diseases were distributed in 435 PHCs, with the aim to serve a total of 150,000 patients



A pharmacist assisting a patient with medication for a non-communicable disease at a PHC-based pharmacy in Shouwaifat.

100,000 insulin vials were distributed in PHCs, benefiting 500 Lebanese diabetic patients

From 2014 to date, over 100,000 insulin vials were distributed in PHCs, benefiting 500 Lebanese diabetic patients. Stocks of acute medications were distributed in 200 PHCs, tuberculosis medications were delivered to MOPH to support its National Tuberculosis Programme.

Over 10,000 ampules of Glucantime for the treatment of leishmaniasis were delivered to 12 leishmania clinics run by MOPH allowing for the treatment of nearly 1,100 patients in 2014.

In order to prevent and contain waterborne disease outbreaks, 325 chlorine barrels were delivered to MOPH in Beirut while 258 barrels were distributed across Lebanon.

Building the Capacity of Healthcare Personnel

Since the start of the project, doctors, pharmacists, social workers and healthcare providers have been trained on a myriad of healthcare issues.

This includes the proper management and use of medications, the management of childhood illnesses, emergency obstetric care, neonatal resuscitation and stabilization, as well as the clinical management of common primary healthcare diseases.

The project also focused on improving the management of non-communicable diseases. Training was provided on risk assessment and early detection of hypertension and diabetes. Early detection kits of non-communicable diseases were delivered in PHCs to serve over 25,000 patients.

100 healthcare staff in 60 facilities across Lebanon were trained on communication skills and stress management in order to help them cope with the increased workload

Training on mental healthcare was provided in 48 primary healthcare centres with 106 Lebanese healthcare providers

In addition, over 100 healthcare staff in 60 facilities across Lebanon were trained on communication skills and stress management in order to help them cope with the increased workload and in turn reduce the conflict.

A total of 81 staff were recruited and supported to assist the MOPH and PHCs to meet rising healthcare needs (51 staff working at the MOPH and governorates, 30 nurses and midwives were recruited in PHCs).

Mother and Child Care

The “Mother and Child Care” programme was developed to allow pregnant Lebanese women and children who do not have any form of health coverage to benefit from a comprehensive package of free-of-charge healthcare services. The initiative was first implemented in Wadi Khaled and expanded in 2014 to reach Lebanese mothers in Rashaya, Tripoli, and Beirut. Over 350 pregnant women are currently benefiting from this programme that will run through September this year.

Mental Health

Assessments have shown that there was also a need for an improvement of mental healthcare services to vulnerable Lebanese. Training on mental healthcare was provided in 48 PHCs with 106 Lebanese healthcare providers (doctors, nurses, social workers, etc). The training sessions focused on assessment, management, follow-up and referral of mental health patients to the appropriate specialized healthcare providers.

Communicable Disease Monitoring: Early Warning and Response

In Lebanon, standard prevention, treatment and care procedures, that allow healthcare providers to tailor the medical response to the disease in question, needed revision and enhancement.

In order to meet this gap, health experts from academic institutions as well as international organizations developed and / or updated Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the response and surveillance of 43 selected diseases and hazards including hepatitis A, B, C, D, E, leishmaniasis, leprosy, malaria, measles, and cholera.

Newly developed surveillance guidelines - on how to detect, report and track epidemiology threats - have also been developed to be distributed to hospitals, medical centers, private clinics, laboratories, schools and epidemiology surveillance unit and response teams. MOPH official surveillance reporting and investigation forms were also updated to be disseminated to hospitals, medical centers, private clinics, laboratories, and schools.

Close to 1,700 health educators from private and public schools were trained on school-based surveillance and response.

In addition, 133 members of the MOPH surveillance and response teams, the Lebanese airport's healthcare team, and the heads of healthcare departments in various Governorates across Lebanon have been trained on the developed SOPs. Public health inspectors and MOPH staff were also trained on food safety and standard food sampling and inspection.

Baseline and Endline Surveys

In 2014, UNHCR contracted the Research Center at La Sagesse University to conduct a baseline survey in relation to IfS with the aim to understand the perceptions and viewpoints of the Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees with regard to primary health services available to them.

Main findings include reported shortages in specific medications (namely chronic medications) and equipment in some PHCs, a discrepancy between assistance received by Syrian refugees and host communities who reportedly had less access to subsidized primary care, and a notable increase in the consumption of a number of subsidized medications between 2010 and 2014 as well as the number of patients trying to access PHCs.

An endline survey is currently underway and should be finalized by mid-July. The results will help capture the impact of the IfS project and the support that has been extended since 2014 to the primary healthcare system in Lebanon. Results will be disseminated in due course.

Partners

The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), UNHCR, WHO, UNICEF, IRD, International Alert.

Donors



European Union