



World Health Organization

Middle East Crisis Donor Alert:

WHO's appeal to support immediate relief operations
18 July 2006

A. Summary

- As of 12 July 2006, border skirmishes in the Middle East have transformed into a large scale conflict between warring factions with significant human toll and massive displacement. In Lebanon, bombing of Beirut and the South of Lebanon has forced over 400,000 people to flee their homes, and led to serious disruption of essential services posing a serious challenge to the Lebanese authorities in ensuring appropriate shelter, food, safe drinking water and health care for the affected.
- Lebanon is currently experiencing demographic, economic and epidemiological transitions; a polarized, double disease burden – diseases of affluence (diabetes, hypertension, kidney and heart ailments, cancer) coupled with infectious and communicable diseases – poses challenging demands on health systems and increases the complexity of delivery of health care in the current conflict.
- Planning and mobilization is already underway in WHO to establish surge capacities in the Country Office in Damascus and to provide situation and health assessments and support to the Ministry of Health (MOH) and other humanitarian health partners in Lebanon to reduce avoidable mortality and morbidity and to ensure safe and ready access to health services. WHO emergency response team comprising health, logistics and security experts, are already in Beirut to conduct situational assessments in conjunction with other UN partners and ensure coordination of health activities.
- In order to effectively support the Lebanese MOH with human resources, essential drugs and consumables and logistical support over the coming six months, WHO's needs for the current crisis are estimated at **US\$ 4.5 million**.

B. Current Situation Analysis

- Violence in Lebanon is escalating and extending to new areas. Large scale bombing of South Beirut and South Lebanon has destroyed roads, bridges and seriously curtailed communications and access. Bombing continues and according to data received by the Ministry of Health casualties so far total 207 dead and 570 wounded.
- The Ministry of Health fears that 1,000,000 people could be displaced by the crisis. This could pose a serious challenge in ensuring appropriate shelter, food, safe drinking water and medical attention.
- More than 34,000 displaced people are housed in schools while over 400,000 people have found shelter in the homes of family members or in secondary residences in remote, mountainous areas. The latter, although more safe and secure are however without access to health care, especially worrying for those chronically ill and requiring continuous supply of medications.
- Due to the destruction of infrastructure and insecurity, the provision of basic health and sanitation services – immunization, antenatal care, trash/waste removal, etc. – to the majority of the population has also been curtailed posing increasing risks of disease outbreaks.

C. WHO Response to Date

The WHO is providing support in four areas:

1. *Assessment and monitoring*

- A WHO Emergency Team is already in Lebanon, where he is expected to join the UN Team to initiate the situation assessment in Beirut. The team includes a Health Adviser, and logistics and security experts from WHO.

- Strategic Health Operations Centres (SHOC) have been activated at WHO Geneva and the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO) to facilitate efficient response.
- In addition to existing capacity in the Region, WHO are in process of strengthening response capacities, in neighboring countries, in order to lead the WHO relief effort.
- WHO Lebanon staff are conducting preliminary assessment of needs in close collaboration with the national health authorities.

2. Health coordination

- WHO is closely coordinating with the Lebanese Ministry of Health, thanks to its already strong relationship. Furthermore, WHO is working closely with UNRWA, UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA and will support the ICRC and the Lebanese Red Cross. The priorities are: health, food, and shelter, and further needs related to the displaced in Beirut, as well as for the isolated, scattered pockets of population, and the stranded expatriates from poorer countries.

3. Filling health gaps

- WHO, in coordination with the Ministry of Health and UNICEF, will provide essential drugs for chronic diseases, emergency health kits, fortified nutritional packs, micronutrients and oral dehydration solutions to ensure proper child and maternal health.
- WHO is focusing on strengthening public health functions and on providing chlorine and essential drugs, while UNICEF is in the process of disseminating water purification kits/equipment.

4. Preserving and supporting local health systems

- The Ministry of Health and WHO have established a list of essential drugs to ensure availability of appropriate drugs for all chronic disease patients and children in the functioning Primary Health Care Centers.

D. Immediate Health Priorities and Needs for WHO

- WHO will be a key partner in the interagency rapid needs assessment mission which is currently being organized. Furthermore, WHO will support local health authorities in the coordination of relief efforts in the health sector.
- WHO will support the MOH in filling health gaps. Currently Lebanon's major priority is not conventional emergency medical supplies, but the provision of medications and other supplies/equipment for chronic diseases (like cardiovascular diseases, high blood pressure, dialysis and diabetes) as well as for childhood illnesses: interventions which are inherently costly and resource intensive to provide and sustain.
- Lack of safe drinking water for the displaced population in schools poses a serious health threat.
- Current rationing of fuel for ambulances and for hospital generators may further hamper the already limited emergency and ambulance services.
- Logistics support to ensure efficient management of humanitarian supplies needs to be in place.
- In order to effectively support the MOH, WHO's needs for the current crisis are estimated at **US\$4.5 million**. This figure is based upon initial assessments and is subject to change; furthermore this Donor Alert is presented to WHO health partners as a precursor to a consolidated UN Flash Appeal, expected in the coming days.

Regular updates are posted on the WHO website: <http://www.emro.who.int/eha>