

Lebanon Crisis

Health Cluster Bulletin

Friday 1 September 2006

The Lebanon Crisis Health Cluster Bulletin aims to give an overview of the health activities conducted by the health cluster partners in the areas affected by the latest conflict in Lebanon. It compiles health information received from the different organizations working in Beirut, South Lebanon, South Beirut, and the Bekaa valley.

The Health Cluster Bulletin is issued every Friday.



Picture: WHO/Lebanon

WHO laboratory assessment in the hospital in Hermel, identified as the reference public health laboratory for Hermel district.
29 August 2006

Highlights

- Health interventions are shifting from relief interventions to early recovery actions aiming at the rehabilitation of the health system in the south. Therefore, the coordination among the various actors is essential.
- There is widespread consensus that the basic needs in terms of availability of essential drugs are met. Additional drugs donations should be carefully evaluated and agreed on with local authorities.
- Health facilities in South Lebanon and in the Bekaa Valley, East Lebanon, report an increasing number in casualties due to Unexploded Ordnances (UXOs).
- Public health risks of overcrowding and insufficient accommodation of the returned population staying in tents and with family members and neighbours in the affected areas continue to be an issue of concern.
- No outbreaks of diseases have been reported to the Ministry of Public Health.

Situation Overview

- The official casualty figures due to landmines/UXOs/cluster bombs from the National Demining Office are 44 injured and 12 killed, of which 16 children injured and two children killed.
- The Higher Relief Committee reports that large numbers of returnees are residing in tents, put up in the surroundings of their destroyed dwellings, as well as with neighbours or relatives. In Ghanduriyah, where approximately 90% of the homes have been damaged and water and electricity supply are not available, already 60% of the population has returned. In Baalbeck, over 4,000 people are reportedly living with relatives and friends.
- Oil spill clean up procedures are ongoing; a Danish team removed 250 cubic meter of oil from the harbour at Byblos. The team continues to train Lebanese officials on the use of equipment to continue cleaning operations. The oil spill, which polluted 150 km of coastline in Lebanon, also affected 20 km of the Syrian coastline.
- According to official estimates from the Lebanese government, still 12,000 displaced people from South Lebanon are staying in Beirut, Jbeil, Kesrouane, and El Meten in North Lebanon, as well as 2,000 in Syria. According to Caritas, the total number in Beirut maybe up to 35,000.

- ICRC reports that water shortages during the weeks of hostilities have caused extensive damage to crops and killed thousands of cattle. ICRC urges for the rapid restoration of drinking water supply and is currently focusing on the mobilization of generators to provide local pumping capacity. Most affected are Kham, Hasbaya, Bent Jbeil, and Wazzani.

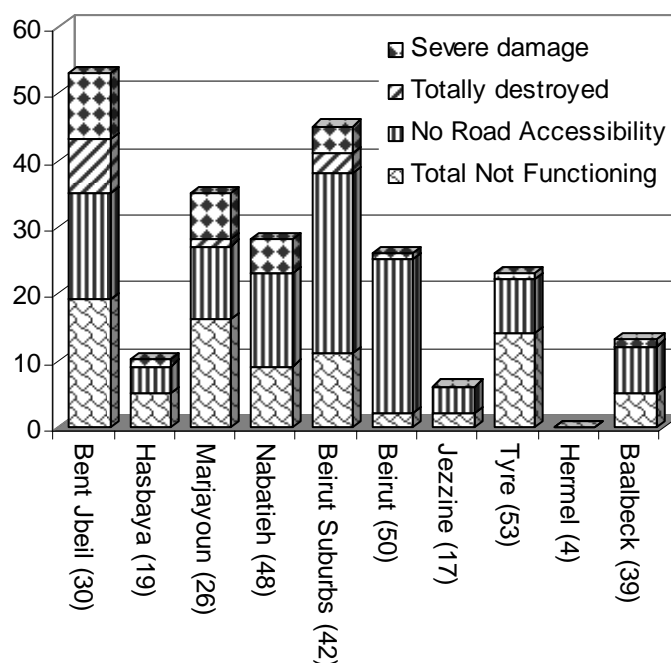
Health Response to the Humanitarian Crisis

National and international Health Cluster partners are providing support in four core areas:

1. Assessment and monitoring

- Joint UN assessments were carried out in more than 25 villages in South Lebanon to evaluate the damage and needs, as well as the effectiveness of the aid distribution. One of the main conclusions is the need for sufficient quantity and quality water in the most destroyed areas such as Bent Jbeil, Ayta Chaab, and Aytaroun.
- WHO conducted a comprehensive assessment of the main public health laboratories in Hermel, Baalbeck, Nabatieh, and Jezzine. Preliminary results show that both public and private hospitals are well equipped for rapid testing of disease samples. However, there is still a need for consumables, reagents, and laboratories supplies.
- Rumour verification conducted by WHO into a number of diarrhoeal cases reported from Yanouh village revealed no significant increase in cases in comparison to the normal seasonal trend. Results of water sample testing by local water authority are pending.
- Conclusions of the health facilities damage assessment conducted by WHO and the Ministry of Health show that 25% of the health facilities in the most affected areas of South Lebanon are not functioning, as 4% are totally destroyed, and 9% severely damaged. The following graph shows the status of health facilities per district.

Graph 1: Status of health facilities assessed in total numbers (total number of health facilities per district is mentioned between brackets)



Source: WHO/MOH assessment

- The American University of Beirut is preparing a survey to assess the burden of chronic diseases among older adults, the prevalence of disabilities and the needs of older adults, in particular for medical supplies. Another survey to describe the types of injuries caused by the war, which will be based on hospital records and interviews, is in the pipeline.

2. Health coordination

- The weekly Health Cluster coordination meeting in Tyre was held on Tuesday with the participation of 15 health partners. The next Health Cluster coordination meeting in Beirut will take place tomorrow, Friday 1 September.
- The Lebanese Red Cross will be responsible for the medical evacuation and care of all UN staff working in Lebanon, as per a memorandum of understanding signed between the UN and the Lebanese Red Cross.
- The total amount of required funds for the health component as requested through the Revised Flash Appeal was drastically reduced from 31,981,200 USD to 12,121,363 USD, of which only 313,890 USD still needs to be filled.

3. Filling health gaps

- UNHCR has been distributing large quantities of relief items like blankets, mattresses, tents, lamps, jerry cans, soap bars, etc. on a daily basis to 40 of the most devastated villages in Nabatieh and Tyre districts, with another 20 villages to go next week.
- Save the Children is supporting the Imam Sadr Foundation clinic in Saddiqine in the provision of free healthcare for the affected population. In Save the Children advocacy programme for free primary health care delivery, it is supporting six primary health care facilities in South Lebanon and Nabatieh in partnership with the municipality and local NGOs.
- Mercy Corps delivered almost 15,000 litres of drinking water and more than 26,000 food rations to villages in Baalbeck, Nabatieh, and Marjayoun Cazas. In most of these villages, Mercy Corps was reportedly the first agency to deliver aid. Mercy Corps continues to support the Lebanese Organization for Social Training in Baalbeck in the rehabilitation of water and sanitation infrastructure, among others.
- ICRC installed a 10-tonne generator at the water-pumping station in Saddiqine (between Tyre and Bent Jbeil) to provide the population of more than 100 villages with 4,000 cubic meters of water a day. A total of 12,600 litres fuel was distributed for generators in El Mansouri, Majdel Zoun, Zebqin, and Jbal el Botom, as well as for the Wadi Jilo pumping station.
- WFP reports it has delivered food aid to approximately 565,000 people in Lebanon during and after their displacement.
- The Health Cluster in Tyre distributed two supplementary emergency health kits and one trauma kit to Marjayoun, Bent Jbeil and Nabatieh hospitals and basic kits to Beit Leif, Al Zahra, and Kfar Kila health centres.
- Premiere Urgence distributed 7,380 litres of bottled water supplied by UNICEF to Beit Leif.
- UNICEF distributed 14,720 litres of bottled water to Kham and Saddiqine.
- A disinfection campaign regarding rubble and debris is ongoing in South Lebanon in order to prevent breeding of rodents and insects. The campaign was initiated last Saturday in South Beirut between the Ministry of Public Health, WHO and municipalities. Similar intervention will occur in Bekaa.
- WHO distributed one New Emergency Health Kit (NEHK) to Marjayoun and Nabatieh hospitals, and one Trauma kit to Bent Jbeil hospital, as well as basic kits to Beit Leif, El Zahra, and Kafer Keela Health Centres. One NEHK provides essential drugs for 10,000 people over a period of three months and one trauma kit provides equipments for 100 surgical operations.
- WHO dispatched two basic kits and 13 doctor's kit to Merlin and the Islamic Health Society, for their health centres and mobile clinics in El Naqoura and Ait El Shaab respectively.

- As a part of the Early Warning and Response System (EWARS), WHO will provide reagents and other laboratory supplies to the public health laboratories of Hermel, Baalbeck, Nabatieh, and Jezzine as well as other identified reference laboratories in the various districts. This will allow the laboratories to perform the necessary testing to confirm suspected outbreaks.

4. Preserving and supporting local health systems

Lebanon

- EWARS training was conducted in Hermel, Nabatieh, and Jezzine, for over 60 doctors, nurses, and health workers from government and NGOs. EWARS aims to collect all available data on communicable diseases from health centres in Southern suburbs of Beirut, the south of Lebanon and Hermel and Baalbeck districts in order to respond quickly to possible disease outbreaks. In future, EWARS may be integrated in the existing surveillance system.
- The Canadian government donated two water purification units to public hospitals in Nabatieh and Tyre through WHO.

Syria

- A review meeting was held on 26 August with WHO, UNICEF and the Syrian Ministry of Health (MoH) to evaluate the emergency preparedness and response during the Lebanese crisis, lessons learned and recommendations to strengthen future preparedness. Recommendations included: to review of contingency plans; to undertake capacity building of the MoH national and local staff; to set up health and nutrition surveillance systems by the MoH with the support of UNICEF and WHO and, the establishment of mobile vaccination teams in all public health facilities near the border.

Action Required

- There is more need for coordination between humanitarian organizations in the distribution of aid, as well as in conducting assessments and information exchange.

World Health Organization

<http://www.leb.emro.who.int/>

<http://www.virtualhic.org>