



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

NOTE FOR THE PRESS



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**Note for the Media WHO/17
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URGENT FUNDS NEEDED FOR HEALTH FOR THE LEBANESE PEOPLE

WHO appeals for US\$ 32.4 million as part of UN appeal

Geneva- Today WHO is appealing for funds for the health of the people of Lebanon, who require urgent and secure access to health care.

To date, the current conflict has resulted in more than 1200 injured and 346 killed. Several hundred thousand people have fled their homes, including to neighbouring Syria. Insecurity in South Lebanon, the destruction of bridges, roads and other infrastructure, and lack of electricity are threatening people's health.

The injured need access to equipped, safe and functioning hospitals. Those who are displaced need access to clean water, sanitation, immunization and other services. People who are chronically ill, with diabetes or heart disease require continued access to their life-saving medicines. Particularly vulnerable are the wounded, women and children, the elderly and the chronically ill. Access to health care, food, shelter, water and sanitation are all critical lifelines.

The WHO, on behalf of the partners working on health issues, is requesting US\$ 32.4 million to serve the health needs of 800,000 people over the next three months. This includes joint actions and activities with partners including UNICEF, UNFPA and UNRWA. For WHO-specific activities, WHO is requesting almost US\$ 14 million. This appeal is part of the total United Nations' Flash Appeal for Lebanon, which seeks a total of US\$ 150 million.

"As more people are displaced and as more infrastructure is destroyed, the health needs will grow. International concern for the people caught in this conflict is high. Funding from the international community for health will save lives and reduce suffering," said Dr Ala' Din Alwan, the WHO Director-Generals' Representative for Health Action in Crises.

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WHO is leading the "health cluster"- the coordination body for health action in this crisis, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH). The funds will increase the health cluster support to the MoH in tackling several vital areas of health:

- Coordinate the humanitarian response in the health sector;
- Assess the health impact, damage to health infrastructure and emergency needs of the health systems;
- Monitor the health threats and risks, including the enhancement of the disease early warning surveillance and response systems;
- Address gaps in health services delivery and support in the re-establishment of essential and emergency medical, public health and environment health services;
- Establish mobile health care units and strengthen functional health centres capable of delivering maternal and child health, reproductive health, mental health services and chronic disease management;
- Urgent immunization services campaigns for internally displaced people, and host communities if needed;
- Establishment and maintenance of vaccine storage and the vaccine cold chain.

Current priorities are to ensure safe evacuation for the injured to hospitals where their injuries may be treated. WHO is tracking medicines and surgical supplies, and warns that it is difficult to move these into the areas where they are needed. Safe water and sanitation is also urgent for those who are displaced and living in about 110 different public locations. To lower the risks of diarrhoeal and other water-borne diseases, WHO with its partners is distributing chlorine to disinfect water. WHO has also strengthened its presence in the region by sending several experts. As many as 150 000 people are thought to have crossed the border into Syria. WHO is set to assist the Syrian authorities meet the health needs of these people too.

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