

Lebanon

Beirut Explosion & COVID-19

Situation Report #9



18 February 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

- Lebanon recorded its highest daily number of COVID-19 cases – 5,872 – on January 16, 2021.
- Project HOPE, in partnership with Rene Moawad Foundation (RMF), is distributing 32,000 KN95 masks and thousands of other essential personal protective equipment (PPE) to several hospitals and PHCs across Lebanon.
- Project HOPE donated 3,955 KN95 masks to Lebanese American University Medical Center's Rizk hospital, a leading academic medical facility at the forefront of the country's COVID-19 response.
- Project HOPE, in coordination with RMF, is facilitating donation of two Interagency Emergency Health Kits (IEHKs) to the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health (MoPH). Each kit will support 10,000 patients over three months.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

COVID-19 vaccine administration in Lebanon began on Feb 14, a day after 28,500 doses arrived in Beirut. Demand for vaccinations, however, is likely to far outstrip supply for the country's 6.9 million inhabitants in the months ahead.¹

Lebanon experienced a devastating surge in new COVID-19 cases at the beginning of the year that strained the health sector's resources—particularly hospital bed capacity and oxygen tank reserves. In February, as the MoPH rolled out vaccine management training to health workers, authorities extended a nationwide total lockdown (introduced on Jan 14) through Feb 22, after which restrictions will be lifted in 4 phases through Mar 22.

The daily influx of new COVID-19 cases remains very high. In the week of Feb 8 alone, 19,156 new cases were confirmed nationwide. Project HOPE's field team reports that the MoPH is working with health actors to increase bed capacity and supply of critical equipment while the curfew is in place.

The total lockdown has fueled protests, at times violent, across major cities as families struggle to meet basic needs in the face of a pandemic as well as economic and political crises. Prior to the outbreak, 60 percent of the country's population was food insecure and 30 percent was unemployed. Rampant corruption and poverty spurred protests in 2019 that continue today and an economic crisis in 2020 cost the Lebanese lira 90 percent of its value.

Last August, a massive port explosion in Beirut took 200 lives, injured thousands, and resulted in billions of dollars in infrastructure damage. The

Timeline: Lebanon in Crisis

2020

JAN

- Anti-government protests escalate
- New government is formed

FEB

- First COVID-19 case confirmed

APR

- Lira drops to 3,000 per USD

JUN

- Lira drops to 7,000 per USD

JUL

- Lira drops to 10,000 per USD

AUG

- Massive blast erupts in Beirut port
- New wave of protests begin
- Government resigns

2021

JAN

- COVID overwhelms health sector
- Nationwide total lockdown begins
- Protests start over total lockdown

FEB

- Total lockdown extended to Feb 22

subsequent political fallout led to resignation of the country's government as leaders scrambled to avoid blame for the devastation. A new government has yet to be established, further limiting the recovery efforts.

PROJECT HOPE RESPONSE

Project HOPE continues to provide immediate assistance to affected populations and health facilities in Beirut through the procurement and distribution of medicines, PPE, and medical and hygiene supplies in partnership with RMF.

With generous support from AT&T, Project HOPE is assisting two local NGOs, Amel Association and Boulghourjian Center, in providing Reproductive and Sexual Health services, Gender-Based Violence Case Management, and Psychosocial Support Services to vulnerable women and girls.

Project HOPE is also working to identify the most effective ways to address health service delivery gaps for vulnerable populations.

Medicine and Supply Distribution

Project HOPE is working very closely with its local partner, RMF, to distribute critically needed medical and hygiene supplies to local hospitals, medical centers, mobile clinics, and dispensaries, including providing:

- 3,955 KN95 masks to the Lebanese American University Medical Center's Rizk hospital, a leading academic medical facility at the forefront of the country's COVID-19 response.
- 32,000 KN95 masks, 50,000 disposable isolation gowns, 3,000 pairs of latex gloves, 190,000 shoe covers, and 190,000 caps, in coordination with RMF, to the following health facilities:
 - Karantina Government Hospital
 - Association D'entraide Sociale (RMF Dispensary)
 - Beirut Government Hospital
 - St. George Hospital
 - Rosary Sisters Hospital
 - Saydet Zgharta University Medical Center
- Two IEHKs to the MoPH. Issued by the World Health Organization (WHO), IEHKs include an array of pharmaceuticals and supplies to support provision of essential medical services in the early phase of an emergency. A single kit is designed to serve 10,000 people over three months.

To maximize the impact of relief efforts in Lebanon, Project HOPE has also identified a local manufacturer able to produce PPE that meet international quality standards. This vendor will be utilized to the extent possible in order to support economic recovery in tandem with public health activities.

Increasing Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Psychosocial Services to Vulnerable and Displaced Populations in East Beirut

Through a grant from the AT&T Foundation and in partnership with AMEL Association International and Boulghourjian, Project HOPE supports access to Reproductive Health

services and Psychosocial Support Services for vulnerable displaced mothers and children in Beirut.

The project aims to create awareness among vulnerable populations, including refugees, migrants, displaced host community members, and those residing in informal settlements, of free of charge/cost reimbursed services available to women of reproductive age—including pre and post-natal care for pregnant and lactating mothers, Gender-Based Violence awareness at targeted PHCs, Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) education and testing, referrals to secondary and tertiary care services, and Clinical Management of Rape (CMR), where appropriate.

The project also provides weekly Psychosocial Support Services for vulnerable mothers and children out of two pre-established psychosocial support centers in Beirut which provide safe spaces for mothers and children to engage in recreational and educational activities, and other Psychosocial Support activities that focus on strengthening community bonds and resilience in times of crisis.

During the past month, supported PHCs have been operating at 25% of capacity under reduced hours (from 8 AM to 1 PM) due to strict COVID-19 government imposed lockdowns. Despite these limitations, health facilities have supported an array of services, including family planning, prenatal screenings, and gynecological checkups.

Additional Programming Needs

Project HOPE continues to meet with local NGOs to discuss potential gaps and partnerships in the areas of Child Protection, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health in order to inform future programming.

Project HOPE has, in cooperation with Care International Liban and local partners, has **identified urgent need for essential Sexual and Reproductive Health as well as Gender-Based Violence prevention and support services in major urban centers across Lebanon**. A concept note describing the needs and planned intervention has been developed and shared with major stakeholders.

Project HOPE is committed to supporting local partners and facilities with these needs and will continue to seek funding in coordination with key stakeholders and local authorities.

ⁱ Lebanon kicks off vaccination against COVID-19. (2021, February 14). Retrieved February 15, 2021, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/14/lebanon-kicks-off-vaccinations-against-covid-19>

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