



# 2026 Middle East Emergency Response

## Situation Report #3

March 18, 2026

**Project HOPE is responding to humanitarian needs across the Middle East as renewed conflicts have displaced millions and created urgent health, water, and sanitation challenges.**

### Situation Overview

Lebanon is facing a rapidly worsening crisis following the escalation of cross-border hostilities in early March and communities in Iran are navigating the impacts of sustained conflict. In Lebanon, over 100 villages are under evacuation orders and widespread airstrikes are causing civilian casualties, insecurity, and mass displacement. The situation has recently intensified, with strikes reaching central Beirut and the start of ground operations in southern Lebanon. According to the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health, at least 968 people have been killed — including children, women, and health workers — and more than 2,400 injured.

Displacement in Lebanon has surpassed one million people, affecting nearly one in five residents, with 133,000 individuals sheltering in 631 overcrowded collective shelters where families lack access to adequate basic services like hygiene and sanitation. The health system is under severe strain, with the [World Health Organization](#) reporting 33 attacks on health care and national authorities confirming the closure of five hospitals and 49 primary health care centers. Critical infrastructure like health facilities, roads, and bridges have also been damaged.

In Iran, heavy shelling has damaged or destroyed nearly 250 health facilities and over 30 ambulances. Severe shortages of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies — including

### Key Updates

- Escalating conflict in the Middle East has impacted multiple countries, **displacing over 1 million people in Lebanon and damaging at least 250 health centers in Iran.**
- In response to the expanding violence, Project HOPE has established **two mobile medical units** to shelters in Lebanon.
- **Project HOPE's assessments in Iran reveal significant shortages** in medicines and medical supplies, driving up prices and limiting care.
- Pre-existing challenges like **limited potable water supply and access to health care has been exacerbated across the country**, including in the communities Project HOPE assessed this past week.
- With access to clean water restricted and widespread displacement, **cases of diarrheal disease are rising, placing children at particularly high risk.**

surgical instruments, insulin, inoculations, and more — are affecting health workers across the country, in a health system that already had challenges ensuring access to health care for its citizens. Diarrheal diseases and respiratory illnesses are on the rise, with asthma and other respiratory ailments reportedly on the rise in communities where nearby oil resources and facilities have been hit by airstrikes. In Iran, at last count, over 55,000 residential units have been damaged in the violence with hundreds of water points also destroyed.

## Project HOPE's Response

**In response to the conflict in Lebanon, Project HOPE has established two fully operational mobile medical units (MMUs),** which are now delivering primary health care services to displaced families living in shelters and high-displacement areas. The MMU teams are providing outreach consultations, helping people navigate referral systems, and supporting continuity of care for displaced families. To date, the MMU in Halba (North Lebanon) has provided 100 medical consultations and the MMU in Beirut/Mount Lebanon, has provided 418, with both units continuing to deliver services on a regular basis. To further expand access to primary care, which stabilizes communities and helps families cope in times of chaos, Project HOPE is planning to deploy a third MMU near Al-Akbiye in South Lebanon, with operations set to begin this week.

Project HOPE has also secured 18 Emergency Health Pallets, which will be donated to health facilities in need. These pallets contain a mix of essential medications that health workers need to continue caring for their patients. To support health facilities managing increased demand, **Project HOPE is actively working to secure and mobilize additional medicines, trauma supplies, and medical consumables to address emerging gaps** and ensure the continuity of essential health services.

Project HOPE has distributed essential relief items to eight shelters, in coordination with local authorities and partners, to improve living conditions and reduce health and hygiene risks in the most affected locations. Distributions of family hygiene kits, bedding kits, and bottled water previously reached 2,795 individuals and Project HOPE's team in Lebanon stands ready to procure and distribute additional supplies as needs dictate and resources allow.

**After conflict reignited with Iran, Project HOPE's Emergency Response Team rapidly activated personnel in Iraq to identify medical needs facing civilians in Iran and establish supply chain routes for the delivery of humanitarian assistance.** In Iran, Project HOPE conducted an assessment of community needs in three cities within the western province of Khuzestan, Ahvaz, Abadan, and Al-Bustan. These cities are home to nearly 2 million people and the area includes large cities like Ahvaz and Abadan, as well as more rural communities, like Al-Bustan.

**The assessment revealed that the conflict has exacerbated pre-existing challenges to the health, water, and sanitation infrastructure within Iran,** posing substantial health risks to the population. While health facilities within this region remain operational, including Ahvaz-Razi Hospital, which incurred damage from a nearby explosion, the quality of medical care being received has diminished as medicines and pharmaceuticals run dangerously low.

Data collected in Ahvaz shows that hospitals in the city are experiencing a severe shortage of surgical tools and supplies, in addition to being nearly completely devoid of vaccines for children — resulting in infants receiving no inoculations since birth. **The low supply of over-the-counter and prescribed medicines has resulted in skyrocketing prices amid the conflict.** In one case, we heard reports that the cost of insulin is quadrupling as the population is forced to seek pharmaceuticals internationally.

***“Our teams are working tirelessly to deliver lifesaving health and humanitarian assistance in this complex, active conflict setting, coordinating closely with local partners to ensure we reach those that need it most.”***

***— Arlan Fuller, Director of Emergency Preparedness and Response at Project HOPE***

**Reliance on unsafe water, contaminated with industrial and domestic wastewater, is common and has led to a surge in preventable illnesses,** particularly among low-income families with limited health and hygiene education. Waterborne diseases are prevalent, with significant outbreaks of diarrheal diseases and parasitic infections, such as pinworms, in Ahvaz, Bustan, and Abadan, highlighting both the presence of unsafe water and poor community hygiene practices. Even more concerning, the community reported a noticeable increase in cancer cases, including among children, which locals and observers associate with persistent environmental pollution and contaminated water. This has culminated with numerous deaths directly linked to contaminated water sources in the villages between Ahvaz and Abadan.

Beyond the diarrheal diseases that were widely reported, asthma and respiratory illnesses are among the highest health concerns, prominent among children and reported in every area assessed by our team. While these pre-existing conditions are attributed to the environmental impact of the oil refineries, the increased bombings have impacted the air quality and have exacerbated these health conditions.

In response to the needs identified in this assessment, Project HOPE's emergency response team is assessing how to best provide humanitarian support within these communities — specifically examining how medical supplies, equipment, pharmaceuticals, and the distribution of hygiene kits could address community needs.

Project HOPE has been responding to humanitarian needs in the Middle East since 2023. With programs in Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza, Project HOPE's history of working with communities to address critical health needs is founded upon the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, principles that are at the forefront of this, and every, response.

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