

WHO Article

Context:

Lebanon's health sector is under unparalleled strain, compounded by years of socioeconomic deterioration, regional instability, and recent escalations in violence along its southern border as well as across the country since September 2024. More than 1.3 million people have been internally displaced, including refugees already burdened by high poverty rates. Infrastructure damage, escalating displacement, and ongoing economic decline have worsened access to healthcare and essential services, leaving the health sector on the brink. This crisis builds on a complex, multi-year context, with Lebanon hosting millions of Syrian and Palestinian refugees, grappling with economic collapse, political stalemates, and managing the residual impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Beirut Port explosion. As of 2024, poverty affects over 80% of Lebanese citizens and 90% of Syrian refugees, rendering healthcare unaffordable for many. In the aftermath of the signature of the ceasefire in November 2024, the military escalation has led to the closure of at least 130 primary health centers and 7 hospitals. The health system is under immense strain, grappling with almost 4000 fatalities and more than 16 000 injuries. Unprecedented attacks on healthcare facilities have not only disrupted services but also resulted in severe injuries and fatalities among healthcare workers. Shortages of medical supplies, skilled health personnel, and essential medicines are compounding the crisis, leaving countless vulnerable individuals without access to critical treatments, particularly for trauma care and non-communicable diseases. The risk of communicable disease outbreaks is heightened, driven by overcrowding, poor sanitation, and the widespread disruption of healthcare services. In October 2024, WHO Lebanon launched a Flash Appeal for USD 50 million to sustain urgent health interventions over six months, in alignment with the UN Flash Appeal. Concurrently, the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), WHO, and partners developed a comprehensive health sector roadmap to address immediate humanitarian needs, facilitate early recovery, and build long-term resilience in the health system. This phased approach aligns with Lebanon's National Health Strategy Vision 2030, prioritizing strengthened health system governance, expanded primary healthcare, and greater self-sufficiency in essential medical supplies. Under the 2025 Health Emergency Appeal, WHO reaffirms its commitment to this multifaceted strategy, emphasizing an integrated humanitarian response alongside scalable early recovery and resilience-building initiatives. These coordinated interventions underscore WHO's pivotal and unique role in Lebanon: stabilizing trauma care, ensuring continuity of essential services, and reinforcing public health surveillance to protect Lebanon's vulnerable populations amid an escalating crisis.

Data:

People in need: 3.7 million

- including:
 - LEBANESE 2.2 MILLION
 - SYRIAN REFUGEES 1.3 MILLION
 - PALESTINIAN REFUGEES 119 000
 - MIGRANTS 87 000 People

Targeted 1 3.1 MILLION

Funding requirement US\$ 48 MILLION

WHO'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

1. Strengthening integrated disease surveillance and laboratory capacity for effective public health response: To boost Lebanon's early warning systems and disease surveillance, WHO will focus on strengthening cholera response through water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions and coordinated vaccination efforts, helping to mitigate and contain potential outbreaks. This will reinforce Lebanon's laboratory and disease surveillance capacity for more effective public health responses to emerging threats.

2. Ensuring scalable clinical care and protection during health emergencies: WHO aims to enhance Lebanon's ability to handle mass casualties by providing targeted support for trauma care, essential medical supplies, and surge support, especially at critical health facilities. WHO will support primary healthcare centres, mobile clinics and mental health services in high-need areas to ensure uninterrupted access to essential healthcare for vulnerable populations, including displaced persons.

3. Strengthening community engagement and resilience through comprehensive public health interventions: To build community resilience, WHO will stabilize health services across Lebanon, focusing on restoring health infrastructure, expanding primary care access, and supporting essential services for trauma care, chronic disease management, and mental health. Rapid training and surge capacity initiatives will address urgent needs in conflict affected areas, fostering robust community engagement in public health.

4. Enhancing health emergency preparedness and response capacities: Laying the groundwork for a resilient health system, WHO will support public health governance, digital health infrastructure, and the promotion of universal health coverage. Initiatives to increase local production of essential medicines, retain skilled health workers, and expand renewable energy

sources in health facilities will help secure sustainable healthcare access for Lebanon's most vulnerable.

"Supplies are extremely important because those hospitals have been working at full capacity and anything that improves their readiness means that they can carry out a better response and improve access to necessary and much needed healthcare. This also sends a very important signal of solidarity from the international community to Lebanon in these difficult times."

Dr Firass Abiad, Lebanese Ex-Minister of Public Health

WHO 2025 RESPONSE STRATEGY

WHO's 2025 response strategy for Lebanon prioritizes a comprehensive, phased approach that addresses urgent humanitarian health needs while building long-term resilience. Following escalating violence and a surge in health needs, WHO launched an Operational Response Plan in October 2024, focusing on trauma care, continuity of essential health services, and outbreak prevention. The proposed strategy for 2025 centers on stabilizing Lebanon's healthcare system, expanding access to critical services, and fostering close collaboration with MoPH and partners for a coordinated and impactful response. In 2024, WHO, in collaboration with MoPH and local partners, implemented key initiatives to address immediate health needs. These included the delivery of 225 metric tons of medical supplies, supporting hospitals and clinics across the country. WHO also established two mobile medical units and satellite clinics, which provided consultations to displaced persons in 8 shelters. Efforts to strengthen disease surveillance proved critical, aiding MoPH in detecting a cholera case in October 2024 and preventing further spread through targeted and effective measures. In addition, WHO coordinated and supported training on mass casualty management, along with advanced trauma care and mental health in emergencies, bolstering mental health services for displaced populations and frontline workers. WHO also played a pivotal role in maintaining and reinforcing the Public Health Emergency Operations Center (PHEOC), a key example of the solid partnership with MoPH, ensuring that health facilities were prepared for rapid emergency responses. For 2025, WHO's strategy is structured around a dual approach that meets both immediate health needs and early recovery goals, closely aligned with Lebanon's health sector roadmap. WHO will continue to strengthen Lebanon's capacity for mass casualty management by providing trauma kits, medical supplies, and essential resources to frontline hospitals. Sustaining essential healthcare services for vulnerable groups remains a priority, with expanded support for primary healthcare centers and mobile units that deliver mental health, non-communicable disease management, and maternal and child health services. WHO's partnership with MoPH extends to supporting Lebanon's transition to health resilience. Early recovery efforts will focus on restoring critical

health infrastructure and addressing workforce shortages through training and surge capacity support. Long-term resilience efforts will include developing local production of essential medicines, supporting digital health systems, and enhancing health financing mechanisms to secure universal health coverage. WHO will continue its support for outbreak early detection and response, as the country is in increasing risks for flare-ups and outbreaks of communicable diseases. Through its key coordination role, WHO collaborates with local, regional, and global partners to align resources, promote transparency, and optimize resource allocation. WHO's technical expertise, coupled with MoPH's national stewardship, underpins Lebanon's journey from crisis to recovery, safeguarding equitable healthcare access while fostering a resilient health system for the future.