

# COVID-19 response – Lebanon bi-monthly situation report

15 January 2021

This report is prepared by OCHA, on behalf of and in collaboration with UN agencies and partners involved in COVID-19 response efforts in Lebanon. The report covers the period from 9-31 December 2020.

## Situation

- Between 9 and 31 December, **an additional 48,648 people were infected with the COVID-19**, bringing the total number of reported cases since 21 February 2020 to 163,306 (54 per cent male). Overall, 2,245 healthcare workers have been infected (55 per cent female), mostly working in institutions dealing with the COVID-19 response. Further, a total of 1,535 deaths were registered (34.3 per cent female). **The average local test positivity rate during the reporting period was at 13.5 per cent**, while the positivity including testing at points of entry was 13.3 per cent. **The increase of transmission in December coincided with the holiday season**, which involved many gatherings and social events, with preventive measures loosened.
- **Lebanon is in phase four of the outbreak**, where community transmission is well confirmed.
- During the reporting period, **406 additional Palestine refugees were confirmed as positive with the COVID-19. A total of 3,614 Palestine refugees**, 1,903 (53 per cent) of whom are living in camps, **have been confirmed as positive with the COVID-19, including 141 deaths**, since 21 February. As of 31 December, 241 people were in home-isolation, 49 in hospitals, and 11 in Sibling isolation centre. Since the beginning of the outbreak, **2,339 Syrian refugees and 16 refugees of other nationalities have tested positive for the COVID-19, including 1,529 recoveries and 90 deaths**, with an increase of 309 cases during the reporting period. So far, 157 cases have been detected in informal settlements, of whom 116 have recovered.
- On 13 December, **the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM) issued another circular on amendment of preventive measures and procedures**: additional sectors, including bars, coffee shops and night clubs, are allowed to open; public and private gatherings allowed with limited capacity; and the curfew imposed between 23.30- 05.00. Prior to the holiday season, **further relaxation of the measures was introduced** on 21 December, with the curfew time changed to 03.00-05.00, which was effective until 1 January.

### CUMULATIVE KEY FIGURES (as of 31 December)

**163,306 (48,648 new) confirmed cases**

(during the reporting period of 9-31 December)

**1,535 (419 new) deaths**

**127,959 (33,760 new) recovered**

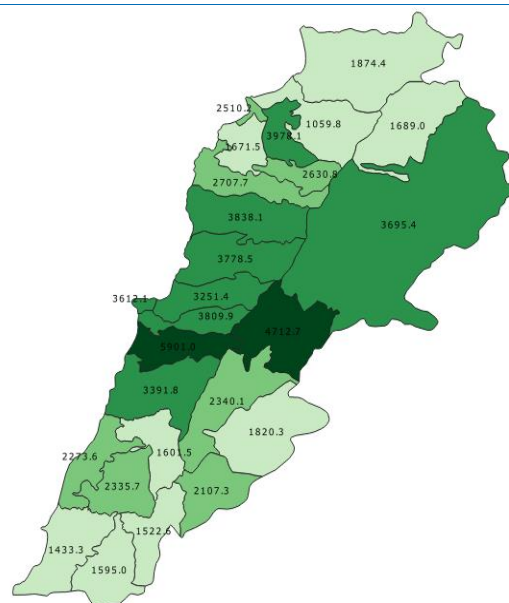
**1,934,632 (361,948 new) PCR tests conducted\***

Sources: WHO/MoPH daily report on COVID-19

\*Lebanon National Operations Room daily report on COVID-19

## Highlights

- **A total of nine community isolation sites were active as of December 31-** Abbassiyeh (30 beds), Ain w Zain (18 beds), Lebanese Canadian Hospital (80 beds), Maad Isolation Centre (42 beds), Modern tourist village (60 beds), Mraijat Isolation Centre (20 beds), Sibling Medical Centre (48 beds), Tayouneh centre (58 beds), Wardanieh (29 beds), with **67 beds occupied out of 385 available beds**.
- **New outbreaks were reported in three additional elderly homes** (Dar Al Saada Elderly Home in Zahle, Sayde Elderly Home and Der Salib Elderly Home in Broumana). In cooperation with the authorities, **the UN and NGOs have supported these facilities to contain the outbreaks** through dispatching registered nurses and procuring personal protective equipment (PPE).
- As of December 31, **the occupancy rate of COVID-19 intensive care unit (ICU) beds was 88.9 per cent** (458 occupied beds out of a total of 515 dedicated ICU beds). The UN and NGOs have been supporting the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) to increase the beds capacity, through providing additional ICU beds, equipment, and human resources support.



Source: Lebanon National Operations Room daily report on COVID-19

## Response per pillar under Priorities 1 and 2

### Pillar 2 (Risk communication/community engagement):

- *Rooted in Trust Project* logged 549 COVID-19-related rumours across Lebanese social media during December, with an increase in rumours related to the COVID-19 vaccine and its distribution. Three reports related to responding to these rumours (a [humanitarian bulletin](#) for RCCE partners, a frequently asked questions document to respond to the rumours on social media, and a document supporting journalists to report on the vaccine) were produced and shared with partners for further distribution.
- Conducted an awareness raising session organized by UK-Med with 39 members of the scouts in Ftouh Kesrwan area, where the risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) messages about preventative and precautionary behaviours during the holiday season were shared and discussed. A youth-led campaign to track behavioural change was organized by the Scouts with the support of UK-Med, and 7050 masks were distributed.
- Developed eight [comics](#) aimed at addressing fake news around COVID-19, and disseminated on social media pages.
- Distributed 2,000 cloth masks along with flyers and posters, and disseminated awareness videos on social media platforms and WhatsApp groups, reaching 2,000 Lebanese and Syrian refugees in Aarsal and Bekaa, as part of COVID-19 that took place on the 26 December in the areas.
- Implemented community awareness-raising activities on COVID-19, including informing the importance of wearing masks and distributing masks at checkpoints established by volunteers and youth networks. These activities reached 1,800 Lebanese and Syrians at checkpoints in the neighbourhoods in Baalbak, and an additional 700 Lebanese and Syrians in Bekaa.
- Implemented a live streaming online activity targeting children to raise awareness about COVID-19 and child protection, reaching 4,068 children.
- Conducted awareness sessions on efficient practice of wearing masks and applying social distancing, as well as mask distribution, in food markets in Bekaa, targeting about 40 people.
- Conducted awareness sessions on COVID-19, reaching 44 vulnerable Lebanese and 160 Syrian refugees.

### Pillar 3 (Surveillance):

- Under the integrated influenza-like illness (ILI) and COVID-19-like illness (CLI) sentinel surveillance: three trainings, including one training of trainers, were conducted targeting nine primary health care centres in Beirut, Nabatieh and South, where 45 staff were trained on identification of patients with ILI/CLI case definition, and specimen sampling and referral; assessed three hospitals for launching ILI/CLI; and two training were conducted in Saida and Zahle governmental hospitals, targeting 25 staff. So far, two hospitals and 16 medical centres adapted ILI/CLI surveillance across Lebanon, out of ten hospitals and 10 medical centres targeted.

### Pillar 4 (Points of entry):

- Screened 29,341 individuals for COVID-19 at the Beirut Rafiq Hariri International Airport during the reporting period, with the average weekly figure increased by approximately 150 per cent from the previous reporting period.
- Screened and tested 34,044 travelers, including 1,450 children, at five border crossing points - the average weekly figure increased by approximately 63 per cent from the previous reporting period, out of which 7,071 people went through the PCR tests. This brings a total number of screened at the border crossing points to 197,780 individuals since March 2020.
- Checked 680 children's vaccination status together with the COVID-19 screening and provided them with missing measles and polio vaccines.
- Conducted training sessions on COVID screening, IPC measures, use of personal protective equipment (PPE), source control, transportation of suspected cases, first aid, and COVID-19 situation in the country to frontline border immigration officials at three points of entry (Aboudieh border crossing, Beirut Port, and Tripoli Port), reaching 152 officers from the General Security Directorate, eight Civil Defense personnel and five firefighters.

### Pillar 5 (National Lab):

- As part of the national quality assessment (EQA) programme for molecular diagnostic techniques for SARS-CoV-2, EQA panels were delivered to 23 laboratories across the country to help monitor the performance of laboratories that are testing for SARS-CoV-2 by reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR).

- Procured and delivered 60,000 RT-PCR tests to the Rafiq Hariri University Hospital (RHUH) and the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) warehouse, as well as 20,000 ribonucleic acid extraction reactions to the latter.
- Upgraded the laboratory capacity at governmental hospitals through procurement and delivery of the following equipment to nine hospitals: eight blood bank freezers; eight blood bank refrigerators; one 80°C freezer, one film array analyzer; five gel card centrifuges; and four inverted microscopes.

#### **Pillar 6 (Infection prevention and control (IPC)):**

- Distributed the following item to eight health care centres in Tripoli: 50 bleach bottles, 17 soap bottles, 85 bottles of cleaning solution, 11,930 cloth face masks, 24,950 surgical masks, 1,040 gowns, 1,000 bouffant caps, 1,000 shoe covers, 135 hand sanitizers, 52 rubbing alcohol bottles, 14,900 gloves, 950 face masks, 100 paper rolls for examination tables, 50 face shields, and 36 safety gloves.
- Distributed the following item to two hospitals and 13 primary health care centres in Beirut: 210 bottles of bleach, 42 bottles of soap, 168 cleaning solution, 3,500 cloth face masks, 8,500 surgical masks, 3,540 gowns, 2,500 bouffant caps, 5,000 shoe covers, 520 hand sanitizers, 370 rubbing alcohol bottles, 3,490 face masks, and 315 paper rolls for examination tables.
- Procured and distributed PPE and IPC kits (50 facemasks, 3,600 surgical masks, 25 face shields, five protection fears, 20 patient gowns, 3,200 gloves, one thermometer, ten bottles of hand sanitizer, seven bottles of hydrogen peroxide, 31 bottles of hand sanitizers, four sensor based machines, 15 surface disinfectant bottles, five surface disinfectant, one emergency medical bag) to the General Security Directorate at the Tripoli Port and Aboudieh border crossing point, as well as 500 surgical masks to the exit permit processing unit of the General Security Directorate.

#### **Pillar 7 (Case management):**

- Developed a checklist for nurses on caring for COVID-19 patients' mental health, in cooperation with the MOPH's national mental health programme. Based on the checklist, around 240 nurses in the COVID-19 wards of the ten public hospitals were trained, with the checklist, as well as flyers and posters on coping with stress distributed.
- As part of the twinning project, two twinned hospitals started clinical training and will move forward to the maintenance phase, which will continue about five months, with two other twinned hospitals being under the initial phase. Further, three pairs of twinned hospitals are finishing the assessment and currently developing a plan for initiation of support. An additional ICU equipment is being distributed to public hospitals that are part of this project.
- Trained about 15 nurses on COVID-ICU care at Saydet Zgharta hospital, which will soon open a new COVID-ICU ward.
- In partnership with the Lebanese Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, two training were conducted on the recommendations and guidelines for the management of pregnancy, delivery and post-partum during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was developed by the National Technical Committee of Corona and Pregnancy. Breastfeeding management and latest infant and young child feeding (IYCF) recommendations developed by the national IYCF committee were also integrated in the training. The virtual trainings reached 207 health care providers.
- Conducted four onsite conferences on COVID and pregnancy management skills in governmental hospitals, reaching 58 medical and paramedical staff (27 doctors, nine midwives, and 22 register nurses).
- The network of midwives is providing women and girls of reproductive age with the information on COVID-19, pregnancy and family planning. Around 5,478 women/girls reached through one-to-one counselling sessions on reproductive health and family planning, as well as COVID19 related information.
- Recruited and deployed 30 registered nurses, 54 practical nurses and three nurse supervisors to newly activated/ reactivated isolation sites at three specialized facilities (Dar Al Saada elderly home in Zahle Der Salib elderly home in Broumana, and Sayde elderly home).

#### **Pillar 8 (Operational support and logistics):**

- The evaluation committee for the expression of interest has been evaluating the suppliers to be included in the final invitation to bids for consolidated procurement plan of COVID-19 items. A draft invitation to bids has circulated among partners for validation.

## Response per sector under Priority 4

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### Food Security Sector

- The COVID-19 outbreak and economic challenges persisted in Lebanon, with high inflation rate and increasing costs of food, affecting the living conditions and food security of populations. During the month of December, 29,662 Lebanese households across Lebanon received life-saving food assistance in the form of a monthly family food parcel, as part of the support provided to the 50,000 most vulnerable Lebanese families affected by COVID-19 and the economic crisis over six months, while additional targeting continued across the country. Precautionary measures to minimize risks of COVID-19 transmission, such as physical distancing, installation of hand washing facilities and use of personal protective equipment, were implemented during distributions.

### Other

- Provided counselling for 11,954 caregivers on infant and young child feeding practices and breastfeeding and distributed micronutrients supplements for 1,384 children.
- Provided a cash grant to over 75,000 children living in poor and vulnerable households (both Lebanese and Syrian) in face of the economic crisis and COVID-19 pandemic.