

Current Health Event

Diarrhoeal diseases

WHO is supporting the stepping up of the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) epidemic preparedness efforts in Lebanon in view of increased risk of cholera and other epidemic diarrhoeal diseases during the summer months.

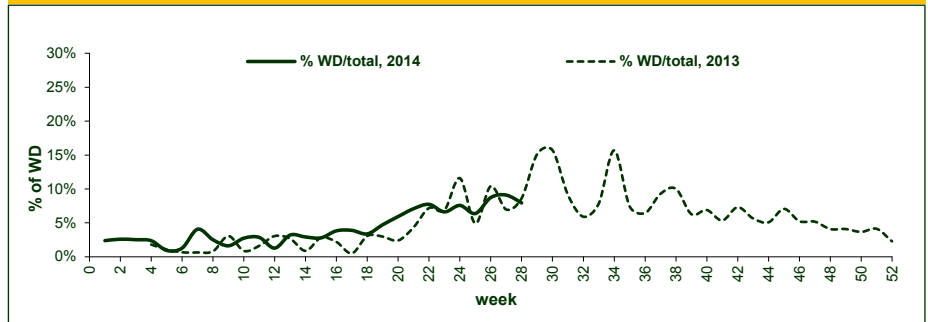
Editorial note:

The ongoing conflict in Syria has displaced over 1.1 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, in addition to over 500,000 unregistered Syrian who live in crowded informal (tent) settlements (ITSs) in relatively impoverished areas of the country with poor environmental and sanitary conditions.

This huge increase in the number of Syrian refugees has over-stretched the water and sanitation, housing and health care systems in Lebanon. The overcrowded living and environmental sanitation conditions of the ITSs as well as limited access of these refugees to health care have increased the risk of diarrhoeal disease outbreaks among this refugee population. The risk is further accentuated as the country is expected to face a severe water shortage this summer, particularly in the areas where the unregistered Syrian refugees are living, due to the unusually low precipitation during the past winter. An early rainy season may also amplify the seasonal occurrence of diarrhoeal diseases in the country.

The risk of introduction of *Vibrio cholerae* and/or any other epidemic diarrhoeal disease pathogens and

Figure 1: Weekly proportions of watery diarrhoea reported by the field medical units in the Bekaa, 2014 (up to week 28)



%WD/total: proportion of watery diarrhoea over all medical consultations.

Source: Ministry of Public Health, Epidemiological Surveillance Program, Bekaa team.

their spread across the country is real, owing to considerable population movement between these settlements hosting high number of displaced Syrian refugees with limited access to health care and other lifeline services.

WHO and MoPH are reviewing the national preparedness plans and establishing concrete steps to mitigate the risks of diarrhoeal disease epidemics.

Key facts:

- Diarrhoeal disease is the second leading cause of death in children under five years old. It is both preventable and treatable.
- A significant proportion of diarrhoeal disease can be prevented through safe drinking-water and adequate sanitation and hygiene.
- Diarrhoea is a leading cause of malnutrition in children under five years old.

The MoPH is stepping up the efforts to improve public health preparedness to mitigate risk of cholera and other epidemic diarrhoeal diseases throughout the country particularly in areas where large number of unregistered Syrian refugees are living in overcrowded conditions.

Cumulative Notifiable diseases in Lebanon (Syrian)

Disease	2013 Cumul	2014 Cumul*	Jun	Jul
Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
Polio	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Acute Flaccid Paralysis	34(7)	18(6)	2(0)	1(1)
Measles	1760(232)	207(79)	19(8)	0(0)
Mumps	14(2)	287(41)	18(6)	4(2)
Pertussis	59(9)	43(13)	7(0)	3(1)
Rabies	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Rubella	27(1)	11(6)	1(0)	0(0)
Tetanus	4(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Viral Hep B	141(8)	120(17)	18(0)	4(3)
Water/Food Borne Diseases				
Brucellosis	189(12)	133(19)	29(6)	5(0)
Cholera	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Hydatid cyst	13(3)	11(1)	0(0)	1(0)
Typhoid Fever	407(21)	99(7)	21(2)	1(0)
Viral Hep A	1551(220)	703(120)	70(13)	15(0)
Other Diseases				
Leishmaniasis	1033(1032)	333(330)	27(27)	3(3)
Meningitis	204(24)	98(10)	12(2)	0(0)
Viral Hep C	103(4)	47(1)	7(0)	5(0)

* To date

Source: Ministry of Public Health, Lebanon