

key updates

- As of 8 May 2020, 7 Palestine Refugees have been confirmed COVID-19 positive. One person was identified on 24 March and had fully recovered by mid-April. The remaining 6 persons were identified on 21 April, 23 April, and 1 May. One person has now recovered, the others remain in isolation at Wavel Camp and are receiving support from UNRWA and other partners. In addition, the local municipality has issued restrictions, including home quarantine for the camp's residents and a closure of the camp's shops. These are being enforced by the local Wavel Camp factions.
- As part of a nationwide testing drive to determine the spread of COVID-19 in Lebanon, the MoPH collected random tests in several Palestine refugee camps during the last week of April.
- On 6 May, UNRWA and MSF opened a 96-bed quarantine and isolation centre at the Siblin Training

Centre (STC) **south** campus in the presence of the Lebanese ministers of Public Health and Information.

- The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) continues to await MoPH approval to begin provision of COVID-19 testing at Hamshari Hospital, Saida.



fundraising

- On 8 May, UNRWA launched an **updated appeal** to fund its COVID-19 emergency response. Efforts to protect Palestine refugees in Lebanon against the pandemic and economic crisis will cost USD 41.1 million in the next three months.
- UNRWA highly appreciates the support already received from generous donors. Additional funds will be needed for the Agency to help Palestine refugees through this difficult time.

coordination

Lebanese government and UN interagency coordination:

- On 7 May 2020, the UN launched an appeal to support the Lebanese COVID-19 response. The overall UN response in Lebanon is expected to cost up to USD 350 million for activities until the end of June.

Palestine refugee community coordination:

- UNRWA Lebanon chairs a weekly technical committee for an effective COVID-19 response for Palestine refugees. LPDC, UNICEF, MSF, PRCS, local NGOs and factions attend. The eighth meeting was held on 7 May. UNRWA area offices are

replicating this coordination mechanism at the local level where possible.

- In coordination with i.a. UNDP, NRC, and Save the Children, disinfection kits have been distributed in refugee camps and adjacent areas in Saida, Tyre and the Beqaa. Coordination continues with Najdeh, NPA, WPA, ANERA and NRC to also distribute disinfection kits in areas that have not yet been reached.
- Together with ANERA, UNRWA is preparing an COVID-19 isolation facility inside an UNRWA school in Ein el Hilweh camp.

COVID-19 testing

26 random samples were taken from **Tyre** area on 21 April.

138 samples were taken from **Saida** area on 20 April and 30 April.

16 random samples were taken from persons living in **Shatila camp** on 25 April.

32 from persons living in **Burj Barajneh camp** on 25 April.

107 random samples were taken from **Wavel camp** on 28 April and 1 May.



impact on unrwa operations and response

health

- **UNRWA Health Response:** In line with WHO recommendations, UNRWA continues to provide essential primary health care services during the COVID-19 crisis, including: (1) time-sensitive emergency health interventions; (2) vaccination services; (3) reproductive health services; (4) distribution of medication and supplies for chronic and mental health illnesses; (5) services to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.

- **UNRWA Health Centres (HCs):** All 27 UNRWA LFO HCs will be open from 9am to 2pm during Ramadan. In an attempt to reduce all risk of spreading COVID-19, various measures remain in place to reduce foot traffic at HCs. These measures have resulted in a 65% decrease in daily HC

visits since February 2020. LFO continues to adapt its HC staffing in line with the decrease in visitor numbers.

- **Hospitalization:** All hospitalization referrals continue to be limited to life-saving, and tertiary care services. All non-urgent and programed surgeries have been temporarily put on hold.

- **Treatment of COVID-19 patients:** any Palestine refugee COVID-19 patient in need of medical care will be transported to a suitable hospital by the Lebanese Red Cross, in coordination with Palestine Red Crescent Society and UNRWA Area Health Officers. UNRWA and the Palestinian Embassy in Lebanon will cover the medical costs of Palestine refugees hospitalized because of COVID-19.

education

- **Self-Learning Programme (SLP):** Learning guides have been developed to support students' self-study across all grades and core subjects. New self-learning materials are distributed to students and caregivers on a weekly basis through social media platforms. While the SLP participation rate has increased in recent weeks, students continue to report challenges in accessing online learning due to a lack of connectivity and smart technological devices.

- **Psychosocial Support (PSS):** School counsellors continue to provide individual and group counselling services to children and caregivers. In the month of April, over 11,100 check-in calls were conducted to follow up on students' wellbeing. The community has received advice on how to alleviate of stress, anxiety, fear, and panic and on how to help students engage in the Self-Learning Program (SLP).

- **Recreational Activities:** Recreational activities, physical

exercises, and educational games are regularly distributed through social media platforms to improve the well-being and holistic health of children and caregivers.

- **Educational Support:** Special Education Needs (SEN) Coordinators are offering online learning support and therapeutic consultations to students and caregivers in coordination with specialized education institutions. In April, 134 SEN students were provided with online therapeutic consultations.

- **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET):** An emergency response plan focusing on students' health, wellbeing, and training has been developed via e-learning portals and cross-platform messaging services. Support is being provided online and via social media applications. Some 86% of TVET students participated in e-learning activities in April 2020.

protection

- **Suspended activities:** In-person protection monitoring, community engagement, training and capacity building activities continue to be suspended.

- **Ongoing activities:** Wherever possible, protection monitoring, case documentation and referrals, legal counselling, support to mental health specialists, and assessments of emergency protection cash assistance continue by phone and through online communication channels.

- **COVID-19 Reponse:**

- o Mainstreaming protection principles in the UNRWA Lebanon COVID-19 response plan including by: advising on protection-related priorities during the design of the STC isolation centre, designing an MHPSS support plan for patients in isolation centres, developing protocols for

non-health support to families affected by COVID-19, and by initiating a plan to combat COVID-19 stigma at the community level.

- o Supporting the implementation of remote MHPSS, CP and GBV activities with staff and established community groups.

- o Coordination with interagency working groups on MHPSS, CP and GBV in relation to service updates, referral pathways and community messaging.

- o One-time emergency cash is provided to Palestine refugee individuals or families facing protection risks. Adapting to the COVID-19 situation, UNRWA's Protection Unit has reviewed its guidance on the provision of cash and has included additional considerations which have become more salient in the past weeks as beneficiaries' livelihoods have become increasingly strained

protection contd.

• UNRWA remains very concerned with the vulnerable status of Palestine Refugees on the labour market, which has worsened during the lockdown. Since October 2019, UNRWA's legal aid unit has received an increase of labour law cases relating to arbitrary dismissals and terminations

without indemnities. This caseload has further increased since the start of a nationwide COVID-19 lockdown in mid-March 2020.

field infrastructure and camp improvement programme (FICIP)

• **Suspended activities:** All new shelter rehabilitations, installation management and infrastructure work is currently suspended.

• **Ongoing activities:** Shelter rehabilitations started before the crisis began are continuing until completion.

• **COVID-19 response:** UNRWA Health Centres are disinfected daily by UNRWA sanitation staff. UNRWA teams have modified the Sibliin Training Centre dormitories to be used as an isolation centre.

relief and social services (RSS)

• **Cash assistance disbursements:** The Agency announced a first phase of emergency cash assistance on 7 May. Except for UNRWA staff, beneficiaries eligible to receive UNRWA services in Lebanon will be invited to receive at least LBP 100,000 from a Western Union/BoB Finance distribution point. PRS will receive their April and May scheduled payments plus a top-up totaling at least LBP 600,000 per family in MCPA support plus a minimum of LBP 150,000 per person in food assistance. The exact amounts each beneficiary will receive depend on the exchange rate set by the Lebanese Central Bank on the day of the money transfer.

• **Social worker visits:** Regular social work intervention has been suspended. RSS does provide emergency psychosocial support (PSS) using digital tools.

• **Registration services:** Registration services have been suspended with the exception of urgent cases, which are handled remotely.

• **Assistive devices:** RSS is remotely coordinating with an NGO to provide a limited number of assistive devices to persons in need during the COVID-19 crisis.

outreach to community

• UNRWA regularly updates the refugee community on important COVID-19 developments, including with messages

from the Director and updates from the UNRWA-chaired technical committee.

More information about UNRWA's response to COVID-19 can be found online at:

www.unrwa.org/covid_19