



26 October 2016, Beirut – The Representatives of WHO, the chronic care centre and YMCA, with the Minister of Public Health (fourth from left) during a press conference. Government of Japan is supporting WHO's country office in Lebanon with a grant of US\$ 2.9 million to improve health care for chronic medical conditions in Lebanon. The project focuses on providing essential medicines to vulnerable patients in Lebanon and paediatric patients with life-threatening chronic illnesses at the chronic care centre.

The project was announced in a press conference hosted by H.E Minister of Public Health Mr Wael Abou Faour in the presence of H.E Ambassador of Japan Mr Seiichi Otsuka, former First Lady Mrs Mona Hraoui, founder of the chronic care centre, Dr Gabriele Riedner, acting WHO Representative to Lebanon, and representatives of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).

"The Ministry of Public Health highly appreciates the kind support provided by the Government of Japan to complement what the Government of Lebanon is already doing in terms of securing medicines for chronic diseases for the Lebanese population as part of the primary health care package, specifically during the emergency period that Lebanon is witnessing. The Ministry, through the support of international partners, namely WHO, is able to meet some of the needs of displaced Syrians and vulnerable Lebanese communities but greater support is still needed from the international community. This funding will provide diabetes and thalassemia medications for 750 children through the chronic care centre that the Ministry supports through a special government fund," said Mr Wael Abou Faour.

"We count highly on Japan's continuous support in sustaining primary health care centre initiatives as the main entry point to the health system in Lebanon and we thank WHO for their continuous support, the chronic care centre for their commitment and nongovernmental organizations in Lebanon, such as the YMCA, for their commitment," he added.

"Health is high on the global agenda and is a strategic priority in Japan's diplomacy and cooperation programmes. In the era of the Sustainable Development Goals, the international community has agreed to achieve universal health coverage by 2030, which ensures access to quality health care services and affordable medicines for all. This project is a great example of how Japan is trying to build resilient and equitable health systems," said Mr Seiichi Otsuka, the Japanese Ambassador to Lebanon.

“This is an important collaboration between the Government of Japan and WHO to support the Ministry's efforts in Lebanon,” said acting WHO Representative Dr Gabriele Riedner. “It will help to sustain the health infrastructure in Lebanon which is still under pressure in the context of the ongoing Syrian crisis.”

In coordination with WHO, the support from Japan will benefit 435 health outlets, including 220 primary health care centres and the chronic care centre, in order to be able to provide medicines for chronic diseases to more than 43 000 vulnerable Syrian and Lebanese patients with noncommunicable diseases, and 750 children with thalassemia and diabetes. Implementation of the one-year project began in March 2016.

The Ministry has a long established programme to provide chronic disease medicines that is managed by the YMCA. It ensures procurement and management and reporting on the use of medicines for chronic diseases.

Shortages in medicines in primary health care centres have been reported in recent years and are related to the unpredictable increase in the number of patients who require them. This number has been progressively increasing over the past few years from 78 000 in 2011 to more than 130 000 by the end of December 2015. Data available from primary health care centres benefiting from the YMCA programme show that the patients who required these medications were distributed as follows: patients with one chronic noncommunicable disease (32%); patients with 2 diseases (27%); patients with 3 or more chronic noncommunicable diseases (41%); patients treated with one medicine (22%); patients treated with 2 medicines (80%); patients treated with 3 or more medicines (58%). The most frequently observed noncommunicable diseases are asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular diseases.

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