

oPt Health and Nutrition Cluster

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SITUATION REPORT: Issue 4 (April 2012)

The PA's financial crisis affects health of the most vulnerable Palestinians

The PA's financial crisis is continuing to have a very serious impact on the availability of drugs and disposables in the West Bank and Gaza. According to the Palestinian MoH and WHO, in April 2012 157 types of essential drugs were out of stock in the West Bank, while the shortages in Gaza have reached 182 types of essential drugs.

Many Palestinians are now forced to purchase medications from private pharmacies or seek donations from charities. This situation has had a particularly severe impact on chronically ill patients and their families who are on a lifelong medication such as the 60 patients with kidney transplants in Gaza that require a very expensive medicine called Tacrolimus to prevent rejection of their transplants.



The MoH is often unable to supply basic items such as blood bags, catheters and surgical gloves which leads to an interruption of service at intensive care units, postponement or cancellation of surgeries as happened at Hebron hospital where all surgeries were stopped for 3 days due to lack of medicines used in anesthesia.

The director of Shifa Hospital Pharmacy in Gaza told WHO that the hospital fails to provide adequate treatment to the patients with breast cancer and leukemia due to erratic drug supplies. There are 7200 cancer patients in Gaza, of which 1000 currently receive chemotherapy. When the drugs used to treat their illness run out at the hospital, they are faced with a difficult choice of either interrupting their treatment or paying dearly (a course of medication for a breast cancer treatment costs around 21,600USD) for the needed medicines through the private sector. Only a few lucky ones qualify for treatment abroad in Israel or Egypt.

A group of regional donors, called by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), have promised around 65 million USD to support the Gaza health sector. New pledges constitute only a part of the above fund and the effect of this assistance is yet to be seen. In the meantime more support will be required to ensure adequate supply of medical commodities and restore access of the people in oPt to needed health care services

Health and Nutrition Cluster Team:

HNC Coordination Focal point WB: Yousef Muhaisen; email: ymu@who-health.org

HNC Coordination Focal Point Gaza: Abdelnaser Soboh; email: aso@who-health.org

HNC Coordinator WBG: Dr. Vachagan Harutyunyan; email: vha@who-health.org

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PRCS ambulances continue to be delayed at the Israeli checkpoints



In April, Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) have continued facing difficulties providing timely emergency care services to the communities in West Bank as its ambulances are often held up at the Israeli checkpoints. In April 2012 PRCS registered 6 such incidents. This number is significantly less than the 21 incidents registered in March, however still very high considering the amount of human suffering each of these days entails.



Following are the details of the incidents:

Date	Name of the Checkpoint	Delay in minutes	Comments
3/4/2012	Qalandya	50	18 years old patient with a leg fraction. Back to back to ambulance service to Makassed hospital in EJ.
4/4/2012	Qalandya	35	A female patient 63 years old with a leg fraction. Back to back ambulance service to Makassed hospital in EJ.
8/4/2012	Qalandya	60	One year old cancer patient. Back to back to Augusta Victoria hospital in EJ.
8/4/2012	Tunnels/Bethlehem	45	A female patient. PRCS ambulance of Bethlehem was allowed to transport the patient directly to St Joseph hospital in EJ.
27/4/2012	Kafr Qadum	105	Delayed at a flying checkpoint at the entrance of Kafr Qadum village; the ambulance headed to provide emergency services during weekly demonstrations in the village.
30/4/2012	Qalandya	60	3 years old cancer patient. Back to back to Augusta Victoria hospital.

UNRWA: AWARENESS CAMPAIGN FOR NON COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCD) IN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

In view of the increasing burden of NCDs, UNRWA Health Program has undertaken an innovative intervention towards reorienting approaches and scaling-up activities towards prevention and control of NCDs with focus on life style modifications and further community involvement through an awareness campaign as part of an outreach program, communicated with the Education Department started on 9/4/2012.

The gradual adoption of unhealthy behaviors including tobacco use, physical inactivity and unhealthy diet, aggravated by poor psychosocial wellbeing has resulted in the current alarming burden of NCDs in Palestine.

Inadequate investment in prevention also contributes to the ongoing and rapid rise in the NCDs burden, nevertheless, the current focus on curative care for NCDs and utilizing high technology interventions are neither, cost effective nor sustainable.

The plan targeted youth and adolescents in 6 UNRWA schools in Bethlehem Governorate (Battir, Al-Walaja, Dheishah, Beit Jala and Aydah), targeted around 500 participants (boys and girls) on the concept of NCDs as well as on the importance of adopting healthy life style including adequate physical exercise, consuming healthy food particularly fruits and vegetables and avoiding fatty and processed food and sugar containing beverages as well as tobacco and smoking.



APRIL, THE MONTH FOR OLDER PEOPLE HEALTH

The second Age-UK funded Age friendly space became functional. Our affiliate Al Wedad Society for Community Rehabilitation (WSCR), started to receive older men and women in the Gaza-Shatee camp based "Grand Parents house". The place is equipped with sport items, TV, radio, books and games and open for older people to socialise, discuss and sport. There are 3 days per week for men and the same for women. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society will provide weekly emotional and psychosocial discharge sessions for older people.

April was a great month for Age Demands Action (ADA). Among others the following World Health Day events, with the theme "Aging and health: Good health adds life to years" took place;



- In Hebron an event was organised by HelpAge and its partner PCCDS, 120 older people underwent a free medical examination by doctors of PMRS and the Palestinian medical military services
- In Gaza a free medical day was organised by HelpAge and UHCC; 43 older people underwent a medical examination by UHCC doctors and nurses
- HelpAge contributed to the development and production of ADA brochures and posters
- The MoH organised celebration of "laying of the Foundation Stone of the first older people hospital" and the WHO organised advocacy workshop were attended by many stakeholders

MDM SPAIN ACTIVITIES IN APRIL

MDM Spain has recently completed (30/04/2012) two interventions in partnership with the Gaza health authorities. The first project with the General Directorate of Mental Health of the Gaza Strip and funded by AECID, and the second one with the Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, funded by ECHO.



The project entitled "Improving the quality and response of Mental Health Services in the Gaza Strip" aimed to strengthen performance of the Gaza mental health services by means of training, mentoring and supervision of the mental health staff as well as providing management tools to the Community Mental Health Centers in Sourani and Jabalia.

Furthermore MDM Spain facilitated establishment of MHPSS Emergency Rapid Response Teams (ERRTs) to provide mental health services in the aftermath of emergencies

The project entitled "Health services Emergency Risk Reduction and Preparedness in Khan Younis Governorate, Gaza Strip oPt", aimed to address the lack of emergency response capacities at the health facilities in Khan Younis governorate. In the scope of the project MSF Spain supported Nasser hospital to develop Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP) that will guide hospital's emergency preparedness and response activities. The EPP contains a number of standard operating procedures (SOP-s) to help organize the work of the district medical response teams in mass casualty management.

On April 12th MDM Spain together with the Nasser Hospital staff, MDM France, PRCs and Civil Defense carried out simulation exercise to field-test the Emergency Preparedness Plan. This helped to familiarize the participants with the plan and identify its strengths and the areas for improvement.



Islamic Relief France (SIF) has initiated evaluation of its kindergarten based nutrition project in Gaza. The evaluation will include an assessment of the nutrition status of the children the targeted kindergartens and its comparison with the baseline anthropometric data collected at the start of the project.

Islamic Relief France helps more than 12,000 vulnerable children (4-5 years old) in the different marginalized areas of the Gaza Strip by providing fortified milk and high energy

Updates from Health and Nutrition Cluster

- ✓ In April HNC launched Mid-Year Review of its 2012 response.

The Mid-Year Review (MYR) is a mechanism for mid-term evaluation of humanitarian response planned and implemented in the scope of the Consolidated Appeals Process. It provides an opportunity for humanitarian agencies to review and streamline sectorial needs assessments and strategies to ensure that their interventions address the needs of the target communities in an effective and efficient way. The results of the Mid-Year reviews are documented and posted on the OCHA's web site. The oPt MYR report can be accessed at <http://unocha.org/cap/appeals/by-country/results/taxonomy%3A19>

The schedule of the key HNC MYR 2012 activities is as follows

- 19th of April – 20th of May: Partners to collect data and report on the progress of their health and nutrition projects against the targets set in the HNC Response Plan 2012 and contribute info for update of cluster needs analysis
- 21st – 26th of May: HNCC to compile the partner inputs and submit to OCHA
- 2nd – 7th of June: Revision of cluster response plan (revised targets, core indicators, project updates, re-prioritization, uploading to the OPS (by June 6))
- 8th – 12th of June: Review of draft MYR document
- 11th – 16th of June: fine tuning projects in OPS following the Humanitarian Coordinator's feedback

The preliminary findings of the HNC response evaluation and the summary of proposed changes to the NAF will be presented to you at the HN Cluster meeting on **23rd of May 2012**.

- ✓ Health / Protection taskforce have discussed components of the referral system between health and protection service providers. Drafts of the case definitions and mapping datasets were approved by the task force. Draft of the referral documentation is being worked on. The system will be presented to the cluster partners in **June 2012**

Key HNC Dates in May 2012

- **9th of May:** Health / Protection taskforce have convened to discuss the components of the referral system (case definitions, mapping datasets and referral documentation)
- **16th of May:** Health / Protection taskforce have convened to fine tune the referral form to refer patients from health to protection providers in the West Bank
- **23rd of May:** Health and Nutrition Cluster meeting