



The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Novartis Improving access to healthcare in fragile countries

ICRC in Lebanon

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been present in Lebanon since 1967 and has carried out its humanitarian work through periods of conflict, including during the 1975-1990 civil war. Currently it is responding to the rapidly growing needs of displaced people fleeing war and violence across the region and the communities hosting them.

The impact of the armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic (hereafter Syria) continues to be felt in Lebanon. According to reports, there are well over a million refugees from Syria in Lebanon. This puts tremendous pressure on the country's resources and on the capacities of organizations assisting refugees. Border entry policies have been tightened, reducing the influx of refugees, including the weapon-wounded. Palestinian refugees, including those from Syria, face adverse living conditions and persistent tensions in refugee camps.

In 2015, the ICRC assisted 700,000 people across Lebanon, of which over 300,000 patients received care in ICRC-supported health facilities.

The Syrian crisis and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) in Lebanon

In spite of the massive presence of humanitarian assistance, NCDs, also known as chronic diseases, represent a heavy toll for Lebanon. 51% of the population does not have any type of health coverage; out-of-pocket money for health expenditures represents an unbearable financial burden for individuals.

Syrian refugees represent about 20-25% of the total country population, adding a considerable burden on the already suboptimal Lebanese public health services. Competition for scarce resources between refugee and host communities, including for NCDs treatment between refugee and host communities, with consequent social tensions, has already been described.

Facts and figures on NCDs

Each year, 38 million people die from cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, respiratory diseases and cancers worldwide.*

- 75% of these deaths are in low- and middle-income countries
- By 2020, 80% of global disease burden will be due to NCDs

In 2014 in Lebanon, NCDs were estimated to account for 85% of total deaths of which**:

- 47% cardiovascular diseases
- 22% cancers
- 4% chronic respiratory diseases
- 4% diabetes
- 8% other NCDs

* WHO noncommunicable disease factsheet: <http://who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs355/en/>

** WHO Lebanon NCD profile 2014: <http://www.who.int/features/2015/early-detection-heart-disease/en/>



Factsheet ICRC Corporate Partnerships

April 2016



ICRC

ICRC intervention

NCDs represent the first and foremost cause of mortality and morbidity in Lebanon. In terms of access to healthcare, this category of diseases is one of the reasons for competition between host and refugee communities for public health services.

Therefore the ICRC has made it its priority to support NCD healthcare by increasing access to proper diagnosis, treatment and follow-up for patients affected by common NCDs in the catchment areas of the ICRC-supported health facilities. The aim is to establish a system of (secondary) prevention to avoid long-term negative health outcomes (e.g. stroke, nephropathy, etc.) in high-risk patients (e.g. hypertensive, diabetic) through an appropriate identification, treatment and follow-up (to adjust treatment, assess need of referral, etc.).

ICRC and Novartis Access

In April 2016, the ICRC and Novartis started a partnership with the aim to create a lasting impact, providing care and treatment to the most vulnerable populations in Lebanon (Syrian refugees as well as underserved Lebanese and Palestinian patients), suffering from diabetes and high-blood pressure (HBP).

Novartis Access is a new Novartis program to enhance access to healthcare for patients in lower income countries. The Novartis Access portfolio focuses on affordability and availability of 15 on- and off-patent medicines addressing key NCDs – cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, respiratory illnesses and breast cancer – and is offered as a basket to governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other public-sector healthcare providers.

Novartis Access portfolio medicines are provided to the ICRC at a price of USD 1 per treatment per month for two NCD types: cardiovascular diseases (mainly high-blood pressure) and diabetes. Together, these two diseases account for more than 50% of the national mortality.

In the first year, the partnership will be carried out in 10 health facilities in Lebanon, with an overall reach of about 350,000 people. Almost 5,000 people suffering from High Blood Pressure and diabetes have already been identified to benefit from the program, and this number is expected to grow.

Through this project, the ICRC is working to establish a blueprint for improving diagnosis, treatment and follow-up of refugee patients suffering from chronic diseases.

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