

World Bank Deploys US\$40 Million in Emergency Response to Help Lebanon Face The Coronavirus Outbreak

Beirut, April 2, 2020 — In a swift response to the COVID-19 outbreak in Lebanon, the World Bank approved on March 12 the re-allocation of US\$40 million under the current [Health Resilience Project](#) (US\$120 million) to strengthen the Ministry of Public Health's capacity to respond to the crisis by equipping governmental hospitals and increasing their ability to test and treat suspected cases. With the signing of contracts with two UN agencies concluded, fast-track procurement of critically-needed medical equipment and supplies is already underway.

"This outbreak comes at a time when Lebanon's economy is already going through the worst economic crisis in recent history and the Government of Lebanon has limited resources to respond," said **Saroj Kumar Jha, World Bank Mashreq Regional Director**. "The World Bank stands ready to support Lebanon's efforts to contain the rapid spread of the virus and help the Lebanese people in these particularly challenging times."

The COVID-19 outbreak is stressing an already strained health sector and setting back Lebanon's efforts in its fight against poverty. There are concerns that the outbreak will particularly hit the poor and the refugee population. The Government of Lebanon (GoL) has already taken several steps to mitigate the impact of the epidemic. It has prepared a [COVID-19 Health Sector Response Plan](#), mobilized resources to equip additional public hospitals with critically-needed medical equipment, and strengthened risk communication to the population. Despite these efforts, the unmet needs are immense, and Lebanon is under-equipped to respond to such a global pandemic.

The US\$40 million COVID-19 component will support the GOL in three main areas: 1) **Surveillance and case detection**, 2) **Case management and protection of health workers**, and 3) **Multisectoral response to support multisectoral activities**, including

operating command rooms at the central and regional levels and the implementation of risk communications and community engagement campaigns.

The restructuring prioritizes fast-track emergency procurement of required medical goods and services through collaboration with UN agencies who have prompt and streamlined access to supply chains, which are currently under considerable pressure due to high global demand. As such, WHO and UNOPS have already been contracted by the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) using the World Bank's standard agreement for UN agencies to procure the required equipment and supplies. This includes the procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and 5 PCR machines with testing kits covering 6 months' supply needs of public hospitals, 50 ventilators, and 12 Electrocardiogram machines, among others to be delivered consecutively and in batches over a period of 6 weeks. Furthermore, 70 additional ventilators are also being procured by the MOPH from private firms following a competitive bidding process.

The procurement of goods and services is carried out in accordance with the [World Bank's Procurement Regulations](#). The World Bank procurement and financial management regulations will ensure full transparency and accountability in the implementation of this emergency response plan. Procurement activities will be published on the [MoPH website](#), in addition to the World Bank website and the [United Nations Development Business platform](#). Technical and financial audits will be conducted to verify the contracting approach, the appropriateness of prices relative to market prices, the adherence to acceptable and agreed procurement procedures, and the appropriate use of funds for the intended purposes.

The restructuring operation does not affect the initial activities planned under the *Health Resilience project*, which cover: strengthening Primary Health Care (PHC) Centers to provide essential services to the low income population; expanding the provision of health care services in public hospitals; and strengthening the capacity of the MoPH to ensure the effective and efficient administration, implementation and monitoring of project activities.

It is worth noting that the [Lebanon Health Resilience Project](#) is financed through a US\$95.8 million contribution from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and a US\$24.2 million grant from the [Global Concessional Financing Facility](#) (GCFF). Launched in 2016, the GCFF provides concessional financing to middle income countries hosting large numbers of refugees at rates usually reserved for the poorest countries.

World Bank Group COVID-19 Response:

The World Bank Group is rolling out a [\\$14 billion fast-track package](#) to strengthen the COVID-19 response in developing countries and shorten the time to recovery. The immediate response includes financing, policy advice and technical assistance to help countries cope with the health and economic impacts of the pandemic. The [IFC](#) is providing \$8 billion in financing to help private companies affected by the pandemic and preserve jobs. [IBRD and IDA](#) are making an initial US\$6 billion available for the health-response. As countries need broader support, the World Bank Group will deploy up to \$160 billion over 15 months to protect the poor and vulnerable, support businesses, and bolster economic recovery.

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