

Current Health Event

Scarcity of Water, Summer Diseases in Lebanon

The MoPH, WHO, UNHCR and UNICEF held a series of meetings to prepare a detailed plan of action for preventing and reducing the undesirable impact of summer diseases associated with water scarcity in 2014.

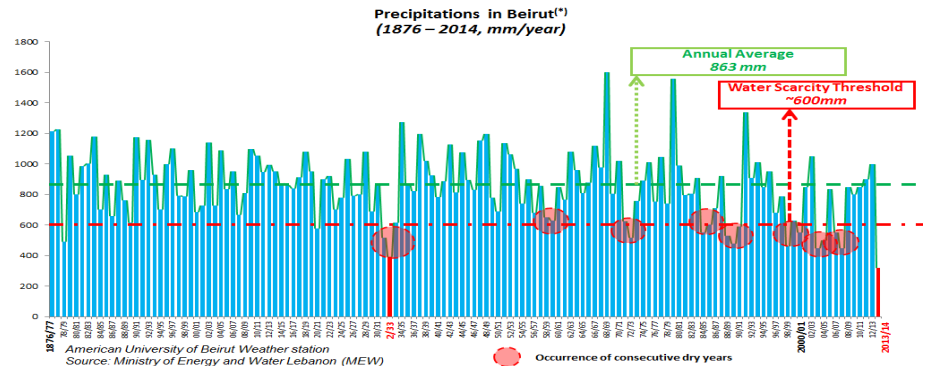
Editorial note:

Lebanon faced an acute drop in precipitation last year (see Figure). Water scarcity affects one in three people on every continent of the globe. The situation is getting worse as needs for water rise along with population growth, industrialization, climate change, urbanization and increases in household and industrial uses. The lack of access to and availability of clean water and sanitation has had devastating effects on many aspects of daily life. Areas without adequate supplies of freshwater and basic sanitation carry the highest burdens of disease which disproportionately impact children under five years of age. However, the impact of water scarcity on public health is locally variable, necessitating local solutions.

Water scarcity forces people to rely on unsafe sources of drinking water. It also means they cannot bathe or clean their clothes or homes properly. Poor water quality can increase the risk of such diarrheal diseases as cholera, typhoid fever and dysentery, and other water-borne infections. Water scarcity can lead to diseases such as trachoma (an eye infection that can lead to blindness and typhus).

Water scarcity encourages people to store water in their homes. This can increase the risk of household water contamination and provide breeding

Recurring dry years have been common in Lebanon's recent history, with frequent occurrence of 2 to 3 consecutive dry years



World Water Day:

The United Nations has declared March 22 of each year as World Water Day to promote activities related to the conservation and development of water resources. This year the theme is "Coping with Water Scarcity"

sites for mosquitoes, the vectors for dengue fever, malaria and other diseases. Unsafe water, inadequate sanitation, and insufficient hygiene account for an estimated 9.1 percent of the global burden of disease and 6.3 percent of all deaths, causing more than 20 percent of deaths of people under age 14.

EU IFS Project:

The European Union (EU) funded an Instrument for Stability (IFS) project. The funding is used by WHO and UNHCR for establishing 8 provincial water public health laboratories in Lebanon and implementing a health education program for the public, strengthening the surveillance system among other related activities.

Water-borne: The pathogen is acquired through consumption of contaminated water, as occurs in diarrheal diseases, dysenteries and typhoid fever.
Water-washed: The pathogen is spread from person to person due to lack of water for hygiene, as occurs in diarrheal diseases, scabies, and trachoma.
Water-related insect vectors: The pathogen is carried and transmitted by insects that breed in or bite near water, as occurs in dengue fever, and malaria.
Water-based (Not in Lebanon): The pathogen is transmitted to humans through contact with and infection, multiplication in, and excretion from aquatic intermediate hosts, as occurs in the diseases schistosomiasis and dracunculiasis (Guinea worm). (Not in Lebanon)

Cumulative Notifiable diseases in Lebanon (Syrian)				
Disease	2013 Cumul	2014 Cumul*	Apr	May
Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
Polio	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Acute Flaccid Paralysis	34(7)	14(6)	4(1)	1(0)
Measles	1760(232)	186(70)	58(23)	22(8)
Mumps	14(2)	261(33)	132(12)	45(5)
Pertussis	59(9)	29(9)	4(3)	1(0)
Rabies	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Rubella	27(1)	11(6)	4(3)	2(0)
Tetanus	4(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Viral Hep B	141(8)	88(11)	31(6)	17(2)
Water/Food Borne Diseases				
Brucellosis	189(12)	72(5)	20(2)	19(1)
Hydatid cyst	13(3)	7(0)	1(0)	1(0)
Typhoid Fever	407(21)	63(3)	10(3)	5(0)
Viral Hep A	1551(220)	578(100)	79(10)	39(19)
Other Diseases				
Leishmaniasis	1033(1032)	290(288)	34(34)	22(22)
Meningitis	204(24)	74(7)	26(3)	4(0)
Viral Hep C	103(4)	35(1)	6(0)	6(0)

Source: Ministry of Public Health, Lebanon