

## Current major event

### Risk of measles in Syria crisis

The appearance of measles cases among the Syrian refugees in Lebanon (2 cases) and Jordan (2 cases) represents a potential risk of introduction of measles in the neighbouring countries of Syria during the recent humanitarian crisis engulfing the region.

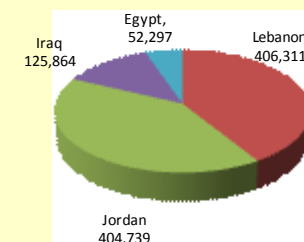
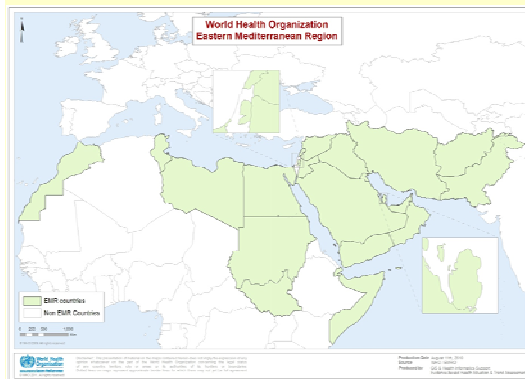
### Editorial note

Measles remains one of the most infectious and contagious viral diseases, particularly among children in humanitarian crisis situation because of its potential to spread rapidly in crowded settings. The disease has been one of the major causes of childhood deaths in humanitarian emergencies and further contributes to mortality by exacerbating malnutrition and vitamin A deficiency.

The current case load of measles among the Syrian refugees may be low and reported only in Lebanon and Jordan, but the potential threat of the disease spreading among refugees in other countries and in the countries hosting these refugees is considered to be high. As the measles containing vaccination (MCV1) coverage in Syria was reported to be very low last year (*Please see the table*), this may further increase the risk of transmission of measles not only among the Syrian refugees but also amongst the children with low levels of immunity in the host countries. The disease can spread rapidly amongst these high risk population groups.

Over a million Syrians are currently displaced to the neighbouring countries (*please see the chart*) and are registered as refugees with UNHCR. There are many more who left the country but are not registered with UNHCR as refugees. This group of refugees is residing and mixed among the host communities in the neighbouring countries. This situation calls for close monitoring for suspected measles cases both amongst the refugees as well as in the host communities. This could pose a challenge to countries like Lebanon and Egypt

## Influx of refugees from Syria in its neighbouring countries



Source: UNHCR data in April, 2013

### Measles cases and MCV1 coverage in Syria and neighbouring countries

Country	Measles cases (Jan-Feb 2013)	MCV1 reported coverage (2012)
Syria	50	52%
Lebanon	151	98%
Jordan	10	NA
Iraq	109	83%
Egypt	3	93%

where the Syrian refugees are not living in camps, but in hotels and other rented premises, making surveillance efforts a real difficult task.

The risk of measles introduction in the neighbouring countries of Syria can pose a serious threat to the measles elimination goals of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. If the situation worsens, it may halt the progress achieved so far in the region for elimination of measles by 2015. The urgent need for now is to enhance surveillance in general and for measles in particular in all the countries neighbouring Syria and also expanding the vaccine coverage for maintaining a high immunity levels amongst all children in these countries that would be critical to prevent any outbreak. Considering that Syrian refugees may have poor access to health services and are continuously moving, the risk of an outbreak may be high but can be averted through well coordinated and concerted efforts by all stake holders.

## Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Novel Coronavirus in UAE; Hepatitis E: in South Sudan; .

### Current public health events of international concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

#### Avian influenza

Egypt	[171 (61), 35.67%]
Indonesia	[192 (160), 83.3 %]
Viet Nam	[123 (61), 49.5%]
Cambodia	[30 (27), 90%]
Global total	[623 (371), 59.5%]

#### Hepatitis E

S. Sudan	[8940 (158), 1.7%]#
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#### Novel coronavirus

Saudi Arabia	[9 (6), 66.6%]
Qatar	[2 (0)]
Jordan	[2 (2), 100%]
UK	[3 (1), 33%]
UAE	[1 (1), 100%]

#### Influenza A (H7N9) virus

China	[21 (6) 28.5%]#
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#### Yellow fever

Chad	[139 (9), 6.4%]
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CFR=Case-Fatality Rate; # Suspected cases