



REPUBLIC OF LEBANON
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Launching of the Inter-ministerial Substance Use Response Strategy for Lebanon 2016-2021

22 December 2016 | Beirut – The Ministries of Public Health, Social Affairs, Education and Higher Education, Interior and Municipalities and Justice have launched the “Inter-ministerial Substance Use Response Strategy for Lebanon 2016-2021” as a response for substance use including alcohol, drugs and tobacco.

The launching event included speeches by the director general of each of the collaborating ministries in addition to a technical presentation of the Strategy. The event was attended by representatives of ministries, United Nations (UN) agencies, international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), professional associations, healthcare organizations, universities and others.

This strategy was the result of a participatory process involving all stakeholders mentioned above in order to respond to the challenges posed by substance use locally, regional, and globally on various levels, including health, social and economic.

The drafting of the strategy was informed by the identified challenges, opportunities and priorities through bilateral stakeholder meetings and a national consultation meeting conducted in April 2015. The draft strategy went through a series of reviews by the collaborating ministries and by local and international experts and subsequent revisions. The draft was also posted online to give the opportunity to the public to review it and provide feedback.

It is important to highlight that all feedback received from the series of reviews was addressed based on level of evidence, international guidelines and best practices, cultural appropriateness, alignment with human rights principles and cost-effectiveness. Consensus was then reached between the collaborating ministries on the revised draft. A national consensus meeting was held subsequently in May 2016 during which the draft was presented to representatives of all stakeholders in order to agree on the final strategy document.

The strategy aims at: 1) Increased availability of high quality age and gender sensitive prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, social re-integration and harm reduction services and 2) Increased accessibility to these services, 3) Increased protection of human rights of persons with substance use disorders, and 4) Increased efficiency and effectiveness of supply reduction activities.



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The achievement of the above goals will assist on the long-term in:

- Decreasing prevalence of substance use disorders
- Delaying the age of onset of substance use
- Decreasing the prevalence of communicable diseases among People Who Inject Drugs
- Decreasing the number of overdose cases
- Decreasing the stigma around persons with substance use disorders

The above will be reached through 6 domains of action specified in the strategy which are as follows: 1- Leadership and governance 2-Health and social welfare sectors response 3- Supply reduction 4- Monitoring and surveillance 5- International cooperation 6-Vulnerable groups.

The goals and domains of action of the “Inter-Ministerial Substance Use Response Strategy for Lebanon 2016-2021” constitute a framework that will guide national efforts engaged for the prevention of substance use disorders; the harm reduction, treatment, rehabilitation and re-integration into society of persons with substance use disorders, and supply reduction. These goals and domains of action are in line with the WHO Regional Framework for Strengthening Public Health Response to Substance Use and with the framework of the international drug conventions.

The implementation of this strategy will be based on the provision of adequate funding and on the shared responsibility with complementary and integrated roles between all ministries and stakeholders- local and international non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies, professional associations, healthcare institutions, universities and users associations.

During the launching event, the Director General of the Ministry of Public Health, Dr. Walid Ammar, represented by Dr. Rabih El Chammay, emphasized on the importance of the continuity of cooperation between all the collaborating ministries and stakeholders by saying: ‘We are very confident that the same collaboration that led to producing this strategy will ensure the implementation with the same commitment and enthusiasm between the collaborating ministries and all the partners’.

The Director General of the Internal Security Forces General Ibrahim Basbous, represented by General Chamseddine, also stressed on the importance of cooperation by stating: “Our experiences, in addition to the successful international experiences, indicate that the response to



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the drug problem requires first and foremost a clear national vision, based on the principle of participation and shared responsibility, and the complementarity of efforts, in addition to continuous coordination between all stakeholders, whether governmental or non-governmental, including civil society organization. This is what our strategy which we are launching today will achieve.”

The Director General of the Ministry of Social Affairs, represented by Ms. Marie El Hajj, proclaimed: “From this platform we confirm that the Ministry of Social Affairs, in all its units and programs and projects, will not hesitate to carry out its duties as specified and delineated in this strategy within a participatory and collaborative framework which sets the basis for greater clarity of vision and harmony in the response to substance use.”

The Director General of Education Mr. Fadi Yarak declared “the commitment of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to move its efforts forward to ensure the effective implementation of this inter-ministerial strategy in collaboration with all other partners”.

Finally, the Director General of the Ministry of Justice, President Mayssam Noueiry, assured that “the launching of this national strategy for substance use response is a critical and highly important step as the strategy constitutes a clear national plan, joint between the concerned ministries, that addresses all the facets of the response and that embodies the role of every ministry in implementing it and that involves civil society in its development and implementation”.

For more information about global, regional and local statistics, kindly consult the “Situation Analysis” section in the Strategy document published on the MOPH website.

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