



INTERNATIONAL NGOs IN LIBYA ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE ADMINISTRATIVE IMPEDIMENTS IMPOSED OVER MEDICAL IMPORTATIONS THAT COULD LEAVE MORE THAN 500,000 PEOPLE IN NEED AT RISK

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The members of the Libya INGO forum welcome collaboration and renewed efforts of the Libyan authorities in strengthening the humanitarian space and ensuring that humanitarian assistance reaches those in need, in a safe and dignified manner.

Since summer 2019, the INGO forum members have been experiencing delays and administrative impediments related to the importation of medications and medical supplies, that are ultimately compromising the humanitarian agencies' capacity to provide health assistance to the people in need in Libya.

Health services continue to be one of the priority sectors of intervention under the Libya Humanitarian Response Plan 2020, which was released by the Humanitarian Coordinator, Yacoub El Hillo, earlier this month, and endorsed by the Libyan authorities. Following the conflict escalation in April 2019, especially affecting the West and South of Libya, the humanitarian partners are concerned about the impact of months of under-supplied medical stocks across the country, due to the intricate administrative procedures. More than 3,970,000 people¹ are in need of health assistance, lacking consistent access to primary and secondary health care services.

The ongoing conflict exacerbates health needs across the country, while funding for direct medical service delivery, especially for communicable and non-communicable diseases, remains scarce. While almost 400,000 Libyans and non-Libyans were provided with health services in 2019, scaling-up efforts is necessary as conflict intensifies. According to the 2020 HNO, many health facilities have been directly targeted and 22%² of them closed in 2019 while most others are unable to provide essential services and medicines. The situation is much worse for those displaced (343,000³) and on the move (more 700,000 migrants and refugees⁴) who are already facing challenges accessing public health services⁵ due lack of documentation, discrimination, and overstretched health services.

To deliver the much needed health services, the humanitarian community has supported coordination efforts to negotiate a viable solution tackling the administrative barriers, including significant delays in custom clearance and transport

¹ Humanitarian Response plan 2020

² Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020

³ Including 170,000 people newly displaced as per Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020.

⁴ According to Round 28 DTM, 654,000 migrants, and 48,000 refugees, Health sector Bulletin for January 2020.

⁵ Around 24 per cent of Libyans and 80 per cent of migrants and refugees, reported facing challenges accessing health services. (HNO 2020).

constraints. So far no solution to address the Libyan and international importations constraints has been provided to ensure the continuity of health services in Libya.

The members of the Libya INGO Forum struggle with the following constraints that severely limit the humanitarian health intervention, in the absence of a streamlined and reliable procedure put in place by the authorities:

- Libyan guidelines related to drug importation are in place but are not systematically followed by Libyan authorities, resulting in unnecessary delays or undue scrutiny. These guidelines include procedures pertaining the procurement, the storage, the distribution, and the donation of medical products.
- Challenges affect not only the importation of pharmaceutical products but also the distribution across the country, including difficulties related to the importation of medical supplies and distribution of any health supplies across the country (besides the impediments related to the volatile security situation in conflict affected areas).
- A high number of shipments with essential life-saving supplies have been stuck at the entry point in Libya with several months' delay due to multiple uncoordinated clearance procedures leading to significant impact faced by humanitarian organizations to timely deliver medical assistance.
- Governmental fragmentation adds a layer of administrative impediments due to the uneven application of legislation and policies across the country and the lack of mutual recognition of existing procedures.
- The turnover of senior government officials contributes to the weakening of the existing procedures, which leads to new legislative initiatives that often lack a precise timeframe and provisional procedures during the transitional period.
- Escalation of the conflict and targeted airstrikes over critical transport infrastructure where the custom area is located add more to the problem and delays - jeopardizing expensive shipment of drugs and slowing the clearance process.

These delays compromise the overall effectiveness of the response, overburden human and financial resources on NGOs, and causes the spoilage of such costly and sensitive supplies as the pharmaceutical products.

The INGO forum in Libya calls for:

- *The international community and humanitarian actors* to scale up diplomatic efforts, in order to guarantee the timely approval and clearance of drugs supplies
- *The Libyan authorities* to find long-term solutions to facilitate medical importation procedures
- *Parties to the conflict in Libya and the international community* to respect the arms embargo, ceasefire and International Humanitarian law by ensuring non-targeting of infrastructure that are critical to the transport of medical supply to affected civilians.