

## **Lebanon**

The Lebanon survey was conducted in February and March of 2004. The geographical areas sampled were Beirut, North Lebanon, Mount Lebanon, and South Lebanon. The final sample included a total of 40 private pharmacies, with 10 in each area. Public sector procurement prices were obtained from two sources. First was the Ministry of Health, which at the time of the study was directly purchasing medicines for severe chronic illnesses only and these are distributed directly to affected patients. The second procurement source was UNICEF, which through a special arrangement conducts purchasing on behalf of the Ministry of Health for other essential medicines such as vaccines, antibiotics, and analgesics, and distributes these through a complex network of non-governmental (NGO) outlets.

It was not feasible to survey NGO outlets, where medicines are free of charge to patients but availability would presumably be measurable. Medicines at public facilities (if available) are also distributed at no cost to patients. Twenty public facilities were included in the Lebanon survey, and only availability data were collected. Availability of medicines at public facilities was low, as expected, because at this time the Ministry was not purchasing the medicines for acute illness and preventive care that would ordinarily be distributed to these outlets.

In Lebanon, the government sets official maximums for the price mark-ups on medicines charged by private sector importers, distributors, and retailers. This explains why patient prices in the private retail sector are very consistent for each product. Prices for equivalent products with different names and manufacturers may have different prices, however.