The World Health Organization is working closely with the Sri Lankan Ministry of Health to ensure the health and welfare of over 250,000 internally displaced people (IDP) in welfare camps in the government controlled areas in north-eastern Sri Lanka. The WHO field unit in Vavuniya has been active in providing support on the ground in close coordination with the Regional Health services and Humanitarian partners.

Highlights:

WHO's health priorities include provision of adequate healthcare facilities, water and sanitation facilities, prevention of major outbreaks of communicable diseases, as well as providing mental health and psycho social support to the large number of displaced people.

Since September 2008, WHO has assisted by

- Providing technical expertise.
- Supplying medicines for over 30,000 people.
- Contributing a range of equipment, from hospital beds to cardiac monitors, to scale up the functioning capacity of local health facilities.
- Coordinating the work of international health agencies to ensure the most efficient use of resources.
- Training local community workers on mental health support.

WHO is also assisting the Ministry of Health in expanding their response capacity in IDP settings. This includes ensuring there is one primary healthcare center for 10,000 population manned by a doctor, nurse, and others.

WHO's Assistance in the Health Sector

Disease Surveillance and control:
Assisted by WHO epidemiologists, 19 communicable diseases are under surveillance so that they can be detected and contained early. To date, 8,600 cases of chicken pox have been reported from IDP camps. WHO has provided 500,000 acyclovir tablets and injections to treat this disease. Other reported diseases include watery diarrhea, skin infections, and increasing numbers of hepatitis cases. The Organization has provided medicines and equipment, including emergency health kits to cater to 30,000 people for 1 month.

Mobility and Transportation:
WHO has provided 10 vehicles, with drivers and fuel, to help set up mobile teams and mobile clinics in Vavuniya. In Trincomalee, the Organization has supported transport of critical patients to tertiary care.

Supplies and Equipment
To help upgrade hospital facilities, WHO has provided a range of medical and other equipment in five affected districts. These include five defibrillators, four ECG machines, 10 diagnostic sets, 30 catheters, two patient monitors and 100 hospital beds. To prevent malaria and vector-borne diseases, WHO has provided 8700 insecticide treated bednets and 250 malaria test kits.

**Strengthening Human Resources for Health**
Fifteen hospitals are providing health care for IDPs. Although their capacities have been increased by the Ministry of Health, they remain severely overstretched in terms of human and other resources. WHO has assisted in scaling up the facilities in these hospitals by providing salaries for more than 50 staff in seven districts, including medical officers, nurses, and mental health community support officers. In addition WHO is supporting the Ministry of Health by providing accommodation, transportation and food for the medical teams that are providing health care to the IDPs.

**Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Health facilities**
In three districts, WHO funds have helped build semi-permanent wards and emergency medical care units. Four temporary wards with a bed capacity of 40 each have been constructed in collaboration with NGO’s: two in Mannar, one in Jaffna and one in Vavuniya. In addition, two primary health clinics have been constructed in Vavuniya. Recently, the Organization has provided two tent hospitals in addition to supporting a 15-bed referral hospital and helping in scale up facilities at other hospitals.

**Water and Sanitation:** Water, sanitation and drainage is a serious concern in most IDP camps, as unhygienic conditions can lead to breeding of mosquitoes and flies and the spread of diseases. Key issues include distribution of toilets according to international standards, disposal of garbage and human excreta by gully suckers, and supply of safe drinking water. WHO has provided 5000 chlorination tablets in Jaffna to purify drinking water.

**Preventive healthcare services:** Each site has a health post, manned by a public health officer and midwives. Children are being immunized, and pregnant women are being provided ante-natal care, including tetanus-toxoid injections.

**Coordination:** WHO is supporting the MOH in leading the Health Cluster, a group of all health-related international NGOs working in the area, to ensure the most efficient use of resources and prevent duplication of efforts.

**Technical expertise:** WHO technical experts including epidemiologists are working closely with the Ministry of Health, providing advice and support as needed.

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Supplies & Equipment to MoH and RDHS to increase the surge capacity of hospitals and critical care units

Total Value of Support (USD) - 288,000

Note: The humanitarian aid list is a reference guide. The actual distribution and quantity of the aid is subject to the discretion of the identified recipients.

Source: WHO Country Office for Sri Lanka - April 2009