

Each week, the World Health Organization Health Action in Crises in Geneva produces information highlights on critical health-related activities in countries where there are humanitarian crises. Drawing on the various WHO programmes, contributions cover activities from field and country offices and the support provided by WHO regional offices and headquarters. The mandate of the WHO departments specifically concerned with Emergency and Humanitarian Action in Crises is to increase the effectiveness of the WHO contribution to crisis preparedness and response, transition and recovery. This note, which is not exhaustive, is designed for internal use and does not reflect any official position of the WHO Secretariat.

**TROPICAL STORM NOEL
 – DOMINICAN REPUBLIC,
 HAITI AND CUBA**



More information is available at:
www.paho.org/english/dd/ped/home.htm

⇒ A five-person UNDAC team is being deployed to the Dominican Republic.

Assessments and Events

- Over 100 people are reported dead following floods and landslides triggered by the passage of Tropical Storm Noel across Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Cuba.
- In the *Dominican Republic*, 66 are reported dead and 27 missing. Nearly 58 000 people had to evacuate their homes, while several communities are cut off. More than 13 000 homes have been damaged and bridges and roads affected. The situation surpasses local response capacity: the Civil Defense has reported that shelters are overwhelmed, with needs for food, hygiene supplies and security.
- In *Haiti*, 40 deaths are reported as well as many injured; several thousands people were evacuated from their homes. Flooding has been reported throughout the island and evaluations are ongoing.
- In *Cuba*, flooding damaged crops and homes in the eastern provinces of Las Tunas and Holguin; no deaths are reported.
- Urgent health issues include acute diarrhoea due to contamination of potable water supplies, acute respiratory infections and gastroenteritis in the short term as well as dengue, pneumonia and malnutrition in the longer term.

Actions

- The MoHs of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, WHO/PAHO, other UN agencies and humanitarian partners are in continuous contact at all levels.
- The Government of the *Dominican Republic* has activated an Emergency Operations Centre and organized search and rescue operations and evacuations. Local governments are supplying food to the affected population while the Department of State and Public Health sent 12 ambulances.
- WHO/PAHO has sent three extra persons from the regional response team (one watsan, one LSS one communicator) to the Dominican Republic. A LSS-SUMA team has been arranged in order to manage incoming aid.
- WHO/PAHO is supporting the national response in three areas: water and sanitation, food supply, and in shelters. Seven teams are conducting evaluations through out the country, including a MoH and WHO/PAHO team.
- In *Haiti*, WHO/PAHO coordinators are working to provide logistics and are assisting in evacuations in Jacmel in the south-east. Teams are in the capital and are prepared to deploy. Medicines have been pre-positioned in several provinces if needed. WHO/PAHO continues to support areas on the west coast and the north-east that were flooded by torrential rains in the beginning of October. Essential medicines were donated and health care continues to be delivered free of charge.

NICARAGUA



More information is available at:
www.paho.org/english/dd/ped/home.htm

Assessments and Events

- Heavy rains over the past weeks have caused overflowing of rivers and flooding in several departments in Nicaragua. Eight people have drowned and two are missing.
- Approximately 24 000 people are affected in the departments of Estelí, Madriz, Chinandega, León, Managua, Masaya, Granada, Carazo, Rivas, Jinotega and Matagalpa. Some 7000 people have been evacuated.
- In Matagalpa, potable water is limited due to the destruction of the distribution network. Water sewage lines were damaged, spilling into the river. There is a possible contamination of the Río Grande by agricultural chemicals. Cases of diarrhoea, respiratory infections and headaches have been reported in Matagalpa.

Actions

- WHO/PAHO carried out a mission to the affected areas in order to support the mobilization of Medical Brigades and the anti-epidemic fight teams. Damage evaluation and needs analysis are being conducted.
- The MoH is holding medical consultations, lab exams, specialty consultations, mosquito control, delivery medicine, fumigation and purification of wells in Matagalpa. The Government is delivering medical assistance to the affected population as well as conducting consultations with the donor community.

MEXICO



More information is available at:
www.paho.org/english/dd/ped/home.htm

Assessments and Events

- Heavy rains over the past several days have left 855 towns flooded in the southern state of Tabasco. Nearly 70% of the territory is flooded. Approximately 300 000 people are affected and at least 147 000 persons have evacuated. Close on to 30 000 have found refuge in 256 temporary shelters.
- The Federal Government has declared an emergency.

Actions

- Health authorities are providing medical care and no outbreaks have been reported. Health brigades are conducting damage and needs assessment and 424 doctors, nurses, sanitary engineers and other health workers have been deployed to the affected areas. Epidemiological surveillance, health promotion and cholera prevention are in place in 308 communities.
- Financial support for the affected areas will be provided by the Natural Disasters Revolving Fund (FONDEN).

WEST AFRICA FLOODS



- ⇒ UN agencies and NGOs in Burkina Faso launched a Flash Appeal of US\$ 5.9 million on 26 October.
- ⇒ UN agencies in Guinea have received US\$ 1million from the CERF including \$362 875 USD for flood affected people.
- ⇒ To date, the 12 million Flash Appeal for Ghana has been funded up to US\$ 3 million, including almost 2.5 from the CERF and contributions from Canada and Sweden.

Assessments and Events

- Around 800 000 people have been affected by floods in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Togo.
- Among the hardest hit countries are: Ghana (over 332 000 affected), Togo (over 127 900), Burkina Faso (over 92 900), Niger(57 000), Mauritania (53 000) and Mali (over 42 000).
- Cholera continues rising: since January 7265 cases and 262 deaths have been reported in Guinea, 3016 cases in Senegal, including 2118 cases between end of August and end of October, and 1296 cases and 50 deaths in Sierra Leone. Cases are also reported in Guinea Bissau.

Actions

- Across the region, WHO is supporting national health authorities and partners on prevention and preparedness against acute watery diarrhoeas and malaria as well as in mobilizing funding to support the response in flood-affected areas.
- A joint AFRO/HAC team has travelled to Ghana, Togo, Burkina Faso to assist Country Offices and the Intercountry Support Team (IST) based in Ouagadougou scaling up their logistics and operational capacities.
- AFRO and the WHO West Africa IST are preparing a plan for the distribution of health supplies donated by Norway. Further kits are being prepared for dispatched to Ghana, Togo, Burkina Faso and Guinea.
- WHO received US\$ 400 000 in CERF funding to control the spread of cholera in Guinea, purchase diarrhoeal diseases kits, organize training on the proper case management of cholera, support surveillance and control the correct distribution of supplies. A donation of health supplies was also received from Norway. Besides this, WHO's emergency activities in West Africa are supported only by internal funds, from the Regional Office and Geneva.

CHAD – CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



Assessments and events

- In *Chad*, the Government and four rebel groups have signed a new peace accord. However inter-ethnic fighting has flared and the Government has declared a new state of emergency in Ouaddaï and Wadi Fira regions.
- The outbreak of leishmaniasis is on the downward trend, with 38 cases reported in October against 117 in September.
- In *CAR*, a serious increase in the number of refugees crossing into Cameroon is reported: the number of refugees has risen by 35% over the month of October, reflecting both new influx as well as a more thorough registration, bringing the total number to 45 912 people (compared to 29 389 on 1 October).

Actions

- In *Chad*, WHO continues reinforcing the outbreak early warning system through the organization of workshops: two were held this week, in Abéché and in Biltine. These will be followed by workshops on the establishment of a committee to fight epidemics in both Ouaddaï region (Abéché) and Wadi Fira (Biltine).
- WHO donated rapid tests and consommables for the detection of typhoid fever and meningitis to the International Rescue Committee for the refugees in Ourecassoni.

Health Action in Crises

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⇒ On 31 October, the IASC Weekly updated on the Brussels Round Table Discussions on CAR and Chad.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHO provided technical support to UNHCR for the organization of a training on leishmaniasis for health staff in Treguine and Bredjing refugee camps. Drugs were also provided through the Leishmaniasis Programme of the Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases department in headquarters. • As the 11th polio case for 2007 is confirmed, the MoH, WHO and partners have organized on 26-28 October a new round of immunizations throughout most of Chad and the eastern regions. • In CAR, new project for strengthening WHO's presence in the north-east is being discussed with donors • WHO's emergency activities are supported by Italy, ECHO and the CERF in Chad and by Finland and the CERF in CAR.
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<p>SUDAN</p>  <p>⇒ A joint UN-AU peacekeeping force will begin operating in Darfur by early next year. A 26 000-strong force will absorb the AU mission of 7000 troops which has failed to stem the violence.</p>	<p>Assessments and Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Federal MoH has requested WHO support to investigate and control an haemorrhagic fever outbreak in White Nile and Sinnar States. As of 31 October, 115 cases, including 57 deaths have been reported from localities in White Nile, Sinnar, and Gezira states. To date, 19 samples have been tested positive for Rift Valley Fever. • In <i>South Darfur</i>, security has worsened over the past few weeks and hundreds of IDPs were forcibly relocated from Otash Camp. <p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHO has mobilized technical and logistics support for a joint Federal MoH, Ministry of Animal Husbandry and Fisheries and FAO field investigation. WHO is working with the Federal MoH on outbreak response and to identify technical and operational support needed. • Following the report of a first polio case in South Darfur early September, the Federal MoH, UNICEF and WHO launched massive countrywide immunization campaigns on 23-25 October. The campaigns are coordinated with those held in Chad to ensure maximum impact and lessen the risk of spreading brought by large population movements across the countries in the region. • Contributions for WHO's emergency activities were received from ECHO, Ireland, Finland, the CERF and the Common Humanitarian Funds.
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<p>HORN OF AFRICA</p> 	<p>Assessments and Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In <i>Somalia</i>, recent fierce fighting in the capital has left more than 30 people dead. As much as 88 000 people have reportedly fled Mogadishu over the past days and cannot be reached by relief. Including the latest waves of displacement, and the around 350 000 long-term displaced, OCHA puts the total number of IDPs in Somalia at more than 800 000. Overall, 1.5 million people are in need of assistance and protection, a 50% increase since January. • Lower and Middle Jubba showed a decrease in the number of acute watery diarrhoea cases (AWD) last week. Health education and water treatment initiated by Mercy USA in Jilib district has reduced the number of cases from 75 to 38. • In <i>Ethiopia</i>, a humanitarian disaster threatens the Somali region just two months after the UN warned of acute food shortages. Ethiopia's Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Agency says the situation is critical, with over 20% of children in Ogaden acutely malnourished. Rebel attacks and military counter insurgency operations have disrupted food supplies for months. In August, the UN said emergency food aid was needed for 600 000 people. An estimated 200 000 conflict-induced IDPs are reported countrywide. <p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In <i>Somalia</i>, WHO assessed the possibility of establishing an operational base in Merka, to ensure appropriate response to the emerging health needs of the IDP settlements on the road from Mogadishu to Afgoye. • Following the report of an increased number of cases of acute watery diarrhoea in Berbera Town, <i>Somaliland</i>, WHO provided support to local health authorities for training, case management and supplies. • A polio immunization campaign was conducted on 29-31 October in the six high-risk regions of Togdheer, Nugal, Mudug, Galgadud, Benadir, and Hiran. At the same time, supplementary albendazole medication was piloted in Togdheer and
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	<p>Hiran for children aged two to five. The next campaign is scheduled for 26-28 November for the same regions. Efforts to keep Somalia polio-free continue with the support of all polio eradication partners and donors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHO has installed LSS in all its warehouses in Somalia to ensure efficient and transparent management of all supplies. • In <i>Ethiopia</i>, WHO is mobilizing HAC emergency funds to accelerate the deployment of staff in Ogaden. A meeting to advocate, raise awareness and increase commitment for scaling-up household water treatment and water quality interventions was held in Addis Ababa on 29-31 October. • WHO activities are supported by the CERF, Canada, Italy, Norway, Sweden, the United States and Finland for Somalia and cluster coordination, and by the CERF and the local Humanitarian Response Fund in Ethiopia.
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<p>OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY</p>  <p>More information is available at: www.emro.who.int/palestine/</p>	<p>Assessments and events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UN Secretary-General has urged Israel to reconsider the limitation of fuel and electricity supplies to residents of Gaza, pointing out that this is worsening the already serious humanitarian situation there. <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHO helped organize the transportation of urgently needed consumables to the Jenin Hospital from the MoH Consumables Department. • WHO and OCHA coordinated the passage of nitrous gas through Kerm Shalom crossing for Shifa hospital as elective surgical operations had been suspended as supplies have dwindled to nothing. • Under WHO's coordination, a team of MoH staff from the Quality Control and Drug Registration Department and a USAID expert started a Good Manufacturing Practices audit. Four Palestinian manufacturers will be audited. The MoH will lead the inspections and follow-up inspections. • In coordination with the MoH nutrition department UN agencies and the Japan International Cooperation Agency, a training of trainers on the new WHO growth standards was conducted for around 50 health professionals from the MoH, UNRWA, and NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza. Beside the new standards, the training focused on the introduction of the Maternal and Child Health handbook. • WHO continues conducting field visits to the MoH facilities as a part of the monthly monitoring health surveillance indicators. • WHO's activities are supported by Finland ECHO and the CERF.
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<p>DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO</p> 	<p>Assessments and Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some 13 000 people have crossed the border into Uganda – including 5000 since 22 October – fleeing violence in <i>North Kivu</i>. According to UNHCR, up to 800 people have been arriving at Bunagana every day since 19 October. Most of the newly arrived refugees have been displaced from Rutshuru district of North Kivu. • In <i>Kasai Oriental</i>, 545 cases of diarrhoea, including 11 deaths have been reported in Tshudi Health Zone, Sankuru. Samples are being analysed. Drugs provided by WHO during an earlier outbreak have run out. <p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHO conducted a vitamin A distribution as well as a campaign against parasites for children under five in eleven health zones. • WHO reported 189 new cases of cholera in IDPs camps around Goma from 24 to 28 October. Lack of water and latrines as a source of this alarming increase. The WATSAN working group and health actors are cooperating on solutions. • WHO's activities are supported by the Common Humanitarian Fund.
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IRAQ



More information is available at:
www.emro.who.int/iraq/information_publications.htm#cholera_sitrep

Assessments and Events

- The spread of cholera in Iraq is slowing; cholera has killed 22 people since an outbreak in the northern province of Kirkuk in August and there have been 4444 confirmed cases, almost exclusively in northern regions. With 2968 cases and five deaths, Kirkuk province has been the epicentre of the outbreak. In neighbouring Sulaimaniya, 14 people have died and 1217 cases have been recorded. In nearby Arbil province there have been 224 cases.

Actions

- The UN Country Team has applied for a rapid response CERF grant. If approved, the grant would facilitate WHO and partners in further assisting the Government of Iraq contain cholera.
- The Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office and WHO headquarters are assisting the Country Office in following up on the request for the CERF grant.
- WHO's emergency activities are funded by Japan and the UNDG Iraq Trust Fund.

INTER-AGENCY ISSUES

- On 19-29 October, a joint ECHO/WHO (AFRO and headquarters) team visited Algeria to evaluate the implementation of the ECHO-funded project for the **reinforcement of the health sector capacity for rapid response** implemented in the four Sahraouis refugee camps. A Plan of action for 2008 has been discussed with the authorities with focus on WHO core commitments in crisis.
- The **Emergency Team Leadership Programme (ETLP)** took place in Villars, Switzerland, from 28 October to 2 November.
- A high-level meeting on **Humanitarian Preparedness for an Influenza Pandemic**, organized by UNSIC and the IFRC, was held in Geneva on 29 October.
- **Clusters.**
 - A one-day workshop for Donors and Global Cluster Leads took place in Geneva on 30 October.
 - The Cluster for Camp Coordination and Camp Management will meet again on 8 November.
 - The **Global Health Cluster** will meet face to face in Geneva from 14-16 November.
- **CERF.** An inter-agency briefing on the Central Emergency Response Fund took place in Geneva on 31 October. CERF training will take place in Nairobi on 20 and 21 November, and in Bangkok on 29 and 30 November.
- The **69th IASC Working Group** meeting will take place in Rome on 5-7 November.
- The **IASC Gender Sub-Working Group** will meet on 7 November. A regional inter-agency Workshop on Gender Equality and Gender-based Violence Programming in Humanitarian Action will take place in Nairobi on 26-28 November. It targets cluster/sector leads and those working to integrate gender as a cross-cutting issue in clusters.
- The IASC TF on **HIV/AIDS in emergencies** will meet on 9 November.
- The next meeting of the **UN Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs** will be held on 15 November.
- **Humanitarian Reform Country Workshops** will take place in Afghanistan (14-15 November), Haiti (19-23 November), Côte d'Ivoire (4-5 December) and Sudan (date to be confirmed).
- The next IASC Sub-Working Group on the **Consolidated Appeals Process** will take place on 22 November. The 2008 CAP Launch is scheduled to take place in Geneva on 11 December.
- **Military and Civil Defence Assets.** An Extraordinary Session on the Use of MCDA will take place in Geneva on 28 November. The Annual meeting of the Consultative Group on MCDA will be held on 29 November.

Please send any comments and corrections to crises@who.int

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