Health Action in Crises
Highlights No 132 – 30 October to 5 November 2006

Each week, the World Health Organization Department for Health Action in Crises in Geneva produces information highlights on the health aspects of selected 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.

HORN OF AFRICA

Assessments and events:
- In Ethiopia, acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) continues to spread, with the death toll rising to 279 and 29,880 people infected. The outbreak has reached Afar.
- Major floods from the Wabe Shabelle River have killed at least 67 people and displaced tens of thousands in the Somali state since the weekend. Half of the 280,000 people that live near the river have been forced from their homes. Roads have been washed away and many communities are cut off. The polio campaign was postponed by a week.
- In Somalia, the same Wabe Shabelle floods have killed at least 12 people. Little additional information is available so far.
- The UN Food and Security Analysis Unit reported that 1.8 million people are still facing acute food shortages, particularly in the South of Somalia, where about 1.4 million are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.
- Increased violence in south and central Somalia has forced an estimated 24,000 people in north-east Kenya.
- In Djibouti, three cases of measles were confirmed. One suspected case of acute flaccid paralysis was declared on 20 October but is not yet confirmed.

Actions:
- In Ethiopia, the Government and humanitarian agencies are working together to try and contain the AWD epidemic.
- The Government’s Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Agency (DPPA) is organizing a first reconnaissance by helicopter in the flood affected area. WHO is participating.
- In Eritrea, WHO and the Country Team developed four new projects addressing water and sanitation, infant and under-five mortality and access to and utilization of health facilities.
- In Djibouti, WHO is supporting the preparation of the next polio campaign which is planned for 4-11 December. WHO also provided MOH with equipment to support epidemiological surveillance and immunization activities.
- With the malaria season almost upon the Horn, WHO is advocating intensified prevention activities such as indoor residual spraying to mitigate potential outbreaks. Incidence is expected to peak from January until April.
- WHO’s emergency activities are supported by a grant from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Italy for Djibouti and Sweden and Finland for Somalia and for supporting health cluster coordination.

GUINEA

Assessments and events:
- According to OCHA, the situation in Kindia, hit by severe floods in September, is alarming. An estimated 1200 people are still in need of assistance after the loss of their houses, food supplies and belongings.
- Kindia is also affected by a cholera outbreak, and flooding of wells and latrines has contaminated water sources, increasing further the risk for the population.
- Cholera is also affecting Conakry.
- The outbreak of cholera in Guinea Forestière has subsided, after totaling 1564 cases between January and September 2006.

Actions:
- WHO, UNICEF and OCHA conducted an assessment in Kindia and recommended necessary actions.
- WHO pre positioned drugs against malaria, diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory infections.
### OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

- The MoH and local health authorities, with support from WHO, reinforced epidemiological surveillance for high risk diseases.
- WHO and UNICEF organized sensitization campaigns for local populations.
- Four more cholera kits have been requested urgently.
- Funding for emergency activities came from the CERF.

**Assessments and events:**
- Living conditions in Gaza have plummeted with unprecedented levels of unemployment. Surveys show that 87% of residents live below the poverty line, and 80% depend on UNRWA food aid.
- The European Union is expected to double its support to the oPt.

**Actions:**
- WHO has finalized the 2007 Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) in consultation with OCHA.
- WHO has proposed to ECHO a project aiming to provide drugs and medical supplies and to build capacity of the health sector in 2007.
- WHO is preparing a roundtable on the issue of infectious disease. Health professionals and partners from Israel and the oPt will gather to discuss and propose common activities in the field of communicable diseases.
- WHO’s 2006 emergency activities are funded by the Organization’s Regular Budget and contributions from ECHO, Japan, Finland and Norway.

More information is available at: [http://www.who.int/hac/events/opt_2006/index.html](http://www.who.int/hac/events/opt_2006/index.html)

### SUDAN

- In South Darfur, security is tense and volatile in several areas. There is an influx of displaced from Tulus to Nyala, with an average of 100 to 150 arrivals in Otash camp daily.
- Cholera continues, but case reporting has been poor. The cumulative number of cholera cases in South Darfur is 1669 including 77 deaths since the beginning of the outbreak in August. In West Darfur, 780 cases and 58 deaths and in North Darfur, 287 cases and 10 deaths.

**Actions:**
- In Darfur, WHO continues assisting the State MoHs in responding to cholera by supporting response coordination, case management and surveillance.
- The State MoH, in collaboration with WHO, is opening a health facility for new arrivals in Otash Camp.
- In North Darfur, WHO and UNICEF are supporting the State MoH in coordinating the upcoming polio immunization campaign. Discussions are ongoing to ensure the security of the vaccination teams.
- To reinforce access to quality health services in rural areas, WHO supports two local health committees in rehabilitating their village health facilities.
- In south Kordofan, WHO is coordinating the preparation of the upcoming polio immunization campaign in Abyei with health partners, local authorities and UN agencies.
- In 2006, contributions for WHO’s emergency activities were received from ECHO, Finland, Ireland, Norway, Switzerland, the United States as well as the CERF and the 2006 Common Humanitarian Fund.

More information is available at: [http://www.emro.who.int/sudan/](http://www.emro.who.int/sudan/)

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**Health Action in Crises**

WHO is working with partners to address the health aspects of crises in more than 40 countries. Check the Health Action in Crises Web site for more details: [http://www.who.int/hac/](http://www.who.int/hac/)
SRI LANKA

Assessments and events:
- Inter-monsoon rains and storms have flooded areas in the South and West of the country. As of 30 October, the Government’s Disaster Management Centre reported 23 deaths and about 331 000 people affected.
- The MoH and the NDMC requested UN agencies and humanitarian partners for relief items (mosquito nets, chlorine tablets, cooking utensils, etc.).
- Meanwhile, the situation in the Jaffna peninsula is of growing humanitarian concern. High numbers of IDPs, inadequate water and sanitation, poor hygiene and limited food supplies pose increasing threats to people’s lives and health. Reduced availability of medication and accessibility to health services is impeding people with chronic diseases to receive proper follow up.

Actions:
- In the South-West, WHO will provide technical assistance to a flood assessment organized by the National Disaster Management (NDMC) Centre.
- WHO is preparing a mission to Jaffna. The mission will assess the health situation, available health services, the response capacity of the MoH and of other health partners, the risk of outbreaks as well as identify gaps and needs and review the surveillance system.
- WHO’s emergency activities in Sri Lanka are funded by the CERF.

The Common Humanitarian Action Plan will be prolonged until June 2007. A new workplan will be developed by sector by mid December.

PHILIPPINES

Assessments and events:
- Oil spills following the sinking of a tanker off Guimaras islands on 11 August, have damaged large areas of coastline. The Government appealed for international assistance.
- The pollution caused health problems to residents, such as breathing problems from toxic fumes. All families residing within 100 meters from the shoreline in the hardest hit areas were asked to evacuate.
- Between 28 August and 6 October, 1107 consultations were made for oil spill-related health complaints in 17 health units in the affected areas. However, since the end of September the number of consultations has decreased and no hospital admissions have been reported. There has been no outbreak of communicable disease in any of the evacuation sites.
- Meanwhile, the death toll from typhoon Cimaron earlier this week has risen to 19, with 15 people missing and 58 injured while some 65 000 families have been displaced and more than 3000 houses damaged.

Actions:
- WHO, upon the request of the Department of Health, sent three consultants to assist in reviewing the response to the oil spill and make recommendations on how to mitigate its effects on health and environment and how to plan for similar emergencies in the future.

UGANDA

Assessments and events:
- The return of internally displaced people is progressing. So far up to 300 000 people have returned to their homes and UNHCR expects as many to return by the end of the year if calm continues.
- Peace talks between the Government and the LRA continue in the Sudanese city of Juba, and the truce signed between the parties in August has largely held.
- As of 20 October, the cumulative number of cases of cholera in Kitgum was 1271 with 42 new cases, affecting 11 camps and well as Kitgum town.
- IASC has confirmed WHO as the health, nutrition and HIV/AIDS cluster lead for Uganda.

Actions:
- WHO is supporting the training of village health teams in Pader, Kitgum, Lira and Gulu. Up to 5500 persons will be provided with the skills to conduct home-based management of fevers, deliver health education and assist vaccination outreach activities in return areas.
WHO continues supporting the MoH in the response to cholera in Kitgum. WHO hired a water and sanitation consultant, assisted with the construction of new pit latrines at the cholera treatment centre and provides essential drugs as well as technical assistance for case management, surveillance and coordination.

- In Lira, WHO is supporting the procurement and distribution of artemether-lumefantrine, essential drugs and supplies as well as guidelines and educational items for the prevention and treatment of malaria.
- In 2006, WHO’s emergency activities are supported by ECHO, Finland, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

**INTER-AGENCY ISSUES**

- **Central Emergency Response Fund.** The CERF inter-agency meeting took place on 31 October.
- **Clusters**
  - **Self-Assessment of Cluster Approach.** On 31 October, the Core Learning Group on the IASC presented the results of the in-country self-assessment of the cluster roll-out.
  - **Early Recovery.**
    - On 2 November, the Cluster sub-group discussed local level needs assessment for early recovery.
  - **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.** The next meeting of the Cluster Working Group will take place in New York on 30 November and 1 December.
- **Lebanon.** The UNDG Working Group on the Lebanon Multi Donor Trust Funds and Joint Programme Mechanisms met on 30 October.
- **Iraq.** On 2 November, UNHCR briefed the humanitarian community in Geneva on the current situation of displacements in and from Iraq.
- **Preparedness and Contingency Planning.** On 2 November, the IASC Sub-Working Group discussed early warning-early action issues.
- **Gender and Humanitarian Action.** On 3 November, the IASC Taskforce discussed the paper on the Gender Strategy, the proposed creation of a specific Sub-Working Group and the Gender Handbook.
- **Information Management.** The next Inter-Agency Group meeting will take place on 7 November.
- **Humanitarian Coordinators’ Induction Briefing.** The next induction briefing will take place on 7-9 November.
- **South Asia Earthquake.** On 8 November, the IASC-UNDG Taskforce will update on the Joint Programme for Relief and Recovery and measures of preparation for the coming winter.
- **Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation.** The second consultative inter-agency meeting on a joint Statement of Commitment or “Call to Action” on preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse by UN and NGO personnel will take place on 9 November. A conference on the subject will take place in New York on 4 December.
- **Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration.** On 9 November, the Inter-Agency Working Group will discuss the launch of the UN Integrated Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (UN IDDRS) scheduled to take place in New York on 8 December.
- **Tsunami Recovery.** On 15 November, the fifth and final meeting of the Global Consortium will take place in New York, with the participation of the UN Special Envoy, Former US President Clinton.
- **IASC Working Group.** Preparations are stepping up for the next meeting scheduled to take place in New York on 15-17 November.
- **Public Health Pre-Deployment Course.** From 26 November to 9 December, WHO will conduct in Geneva the next public health pre-deployment course.

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

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