El Niño and health
ETHIOPIA overview - January 2016

EL NIÑO FORECAST AND HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES

• Drier conditions are expected to continue in the northern part of the country (very severe in Northern Pastoral Zone, severe in Eastern Highlands Agricultural Zone) resulting in two consecutive poor crop and pasture seasons. The number of affected people in need of food assistance is expected to increase from 10.2 million currently to 18 million until the end of 2016. More than 2 million people have no access to safe water.

• Wetter conditions are expected to impact river systems in the south of the country (Omo, Shabelle and Awash rivers) with flooding in the last quarter of 2015 and potential humanitarian consequences that could last until mid-2016.

• 180 000 people are already displaced due to drought and floods.

CURRENT AND PROJECTED HEALTH CONDITIONS

• Close to 400 000 children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition and require therapeutic feeding in Afar and Sitti, eastern and central Oromia, eastern and northern Amhara, and eastern and central Tigray states. This number has continued to increase on a monthly basis without the normal seasonal decreases in caseloads and is expected to rise with potentially 100 000 new cases. It is estimated that 20% of the severely malnourished children (80 000) will develop medical complications such as diarrhoea and respiratory infections, and will be more susceptible to die from measles.

• Water- and vector-borne diseases including cholera, dengue fever and malaria could increase due to flooding and poor water, sanitation and hygiene conditions. More than 200 cases of cholera have been reported in Moyale, in Oromia and Somali regions of Ethiopia at the border of Kenya, and the outbreak has already disseminated into Kenya. There are concerns on possible dissemination into Sudan and Somalia. Close to 1500 cases of dengue fever, very sensitive to increased temperatures, have been reported in Dire Dawa.

• Communicable diseases such as measles, scabies, and acute respiratory infections could rise due to shortage of water and poor water, sanitation and hygiene conditions combined with malnutrition and population displacement. Thirteen districts of Ethiopia (nine in Oromia) are affected by measles with 258 outbreaks and 31 000 cases reported. A scabies outbreak with more than 300 000 reported cases is ongoing in Amhara and Tigray regions. A local outbreak of meningitis C is on-going in Kule refugee camp in Gambella.

• Floods could reduce access to health services for populations in affected areas. Critical public health, medical, nutrition and water services are currently overstretched.

• Increasing psychosocial and mental health effects are often associated with stressful conditions and displacement.

*INFORM (Index for Risk Management) is a global risk assessment index for humanitarian crises and disasters: http://www.inform-index.org/
HEALTH PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE ACTIONS

- In July 2015, WHO assisted the Ethiopia Ministry of Health in the development of the El Niño Health and Nutrition sector contingency plan which includes:
  - Surveillance, outbreak investigation and response;
  - Measles preparedness;
  - Case management and treatment protocols;
  - Community mobilization, training and orientations;
  - Advocacy and resource mobilization;
  - Logistics and supply chain management and monitoring and evaluation.


- In November 2015, Ethiopia HCT prepared a disaster appeal, including USD 33 million for the health sector to provide health assistance to 3.6 million people in the first quarter of 2016, with the following priorities:
  - Provide life-saving health services to highly food insecure and displaced people in emergency affected areas;
  - Prepare, detect and respond to epidemic disease outbreaks in high risk areas.

- The Ministry of Health and humanitarian partners issued a National Floods Contingency Plan requiring 7.5M Birr (USD 355 000) for health sector preparedness.

- WHO currently requires USD 9.5 million for strengthening health response operations, with four objectives as outlined in the WHO response plan (December 2015):
  - Ensure that all people in acute need, particularly those who are highly food insecure and displaced population in priority Woredas have access to quality essential and lifesaving health services;
  - Strengthen health sector preparedness for the early detection, control and response to the current and increasing risks of epidemic-prone disease outbreaks, including cholera;
  - Improve public health emergency risk management and preparedness and inter-sector coordination at national and subnational levels;
  - In high-risk zones participate in the direct efforts to address the current food insecurity and subsequent nutritional emergency by supporting Ministry of Health and partners in the rapid detection, referral of malnourished men, women and children and the provision of quality specialized treatment of severely malnourished children with medical complications in health facilities.

- WHO deployed expert surge capacity to assist the Ethiopia Country Office and Ministry of Health in scaling-up immediate health assistance.

- WHO is deploying 20 Early Warning and Response System (EWARS) in a Box kits which provide durable, field-ready equipment needed to establish and manage disease and nutrition surveillance, alert and response activities for roughly 1000 health centres and serving as many as 10 million people.