WHO – IRAQ
Bi-WEEKLY BULLETIN
Week Ending 11th May 2008

Response to Crisis

WHO provided 5,000 quadruple blood bags to the National Blood Transfusion Center in Baghdad as part of WHO’s continued efforts to assist the Iraqi Ministry of Health in responding to the current alarming humanitarian health situation in the country.

Recently, attention has been focused on Sadr City, where health facilities are overwhelmed by an increased number of injured patients and unable to meet some urgent health needs. Sadr City hospitals have received the following additional emergency medical supplies from WHO Iraq:

- 20 boxes of Sutures for different uses containing 1000 dozen in each box
- 2 boxes of Infusion giving sets (with air inlet and needle) containing 1000 pieces in each box
- 1 box of Chest tubes containing 500 pieces

4 Emergency Trauma Kits supplied by Norway have arrived in Iraq. Two each of will be sent to Baghdad and Erbil. During this time of renewed crisis, WHO is working hard with the Ministry of Health and coordinating members of the Health and Nutrition sector to try to ensure that sufficient medical supplies are available and contingency plans are put in place to deal with any significant increases in violence throughout Iraq.

Support to Health Care Technology

The following activities have been conducted as part of the project funded through UNDG Iraq Trust Fund/European Commission to strengthen and improve the medical equipment management and maintenance system across Iraq:

a. WHO facilitated 4 Iraqi biomedical engineering personnel’s (from Baghdad, Basra and Mosul) participation in a 3-week fellowship (10-31 May 2008) on routine and preventive maintenance of diagnostic x-ray system training in Malaysia. The fellowship will improve and update the knowledge and skills of the biomedical engineering personnel and give them the opportunity to:

- Understand the principles and operation of x-ray machines and developers
- Understand of the physiology relating to imaging equipment
- Test x-ray machines to the latest standard using test devices
- Practice basic fault finding techniques

On their return to Iraq, participants are expected to apply lessons learned whilst transferring knowledge to other health care engineering personnel in Iraq.

b. WHO is supporting the rehabilitation of a repair shop for x-ray machines in Baghdad Medical City. The work, expected to be completed within 30 working days, should facilitate the improved transport of faulty x-ray machines into repair shops for maintenance.
Outbreak Investigation & Response

A WHO Iraq team, in partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Health and CDC Atlanta completed an ‘Outbreak Investigation & Response Workshop’ in Baghdad, which was held in the Rasheed hotel from the 28th of April to the 8th of May 2008. It was first time a course of this nature had been undertaken in Baghdad since the UN was forced to scale down its presence in Iraq in August 2003. Attended by 43 participants from 12 governorates the course was led by six international experts (3 WHO / 3 CDC Atlanta), five WHO and two MoH national staff with the relevant expertise.

The course, which focused on health professional’s role in cases of emergency outbreaks, went beyond the expectations of the organizers. Coordinators agree that there is a need to investigate the effectiveness of the course in the long term, its positives and negatives, though outputs (proposals) and outcomes/impacts (proposals put in place) and through quality of future surveillance received. A follow up course and/or a training of trainers program is being considered.

The support of the UN’s SRSG, Mr Staffan de Mistura, and the Minister of Health HE. Dr Salih Hasnawi was pivotal in ensuring a successful course.

School health screening for visual, hearing difficulties and Musclo -Skeletal abnormalities has been completed in 150 schools in 8 governorates in Iraq (Baghdad, Basra, Nassiriya, Muthana, Najaf, Missan, Wasit and Suleimaniyah). 6750 students were screened. Three schools in Al Sadr city could not be visited due to unstable security situation and the curfew. The data collected is under on going analysis.

Completion of training of doctors, paramedical staff and teachers on health promoting schools activities has been completed at 46 pilot schools in all governorates. Monitoring and evaluation of some of the schools revealed an improvement in the knowledge and practices of students regarding health and hygiene and preventive measures against Cholera.

The Teacher’s Manual on Health Education: The MoH - health education and promotion unit, in close coordination with WHO, have completed the amendment of a new version of the Iraqi teacher’s manual within the Action Oriented School Health Curriculum project (AOSHC). The Manual will be used to raise awareness amongst the school community (Teachers/ other staff/ students) on important key health messages and the prevention of communicable diseases.

Fig 2: The Teacher’s Manual on Health education

Starting on the 7th of May, a 5 day IMCI training course for 12 nurses working in Al Qalah and Al Gharaif Primary Health Care Centers in Nassiriya was held with WHO support.

Maternal, child and adolescent health
Fig 3: Training of nurses: counting the breathing rate of a 3 year old child

The training will improve the skills and practices of nurses in dealing with children under five. Components of the course include triage, identification of danger signs in addition to counseling mothers on child home care and nutrition (including the promotion of breast feeding).