

Health Deteriorating in Sudan Funds Needed to Save Lives

Geneva 30 March 2006 - The World Health Organization (WHO) today warned of adverse consequences for the health of millions of people throughout Sudan unless funds for humanitarian interventions are secured immediately.

The current lack of funding coupled with growing security concerns in areas such as Darfur will reduce access to safe water and healthcare services resulting in a possible significant rise in cases of malaria, meningitis, diarrhoeal diseases, acute respiratory infections and measles.

As part of the United Nations Work Plan for Sudan, WHO has developed 20 health projects for the enhancement of health of the population of Sudan. These projects focus on the improvement of information and coordination management, access to hospital care, referral systems and primary strategic health care, communicable disease control, surveillance and outbreak response and environmental health.

“WHO and partners need sustained financial support in order to continue to reduce suffering and save lives in Sudan. A significant increase in disease incidence and in preventable deaths is expected unless the shortfall of US\$ 24 million in funds for health are provided immediately,” says Dr Ala Din Alwan, Representative of Director-General for Health Action in Crises.

Communicable diseases are the leading cause of death in Sudan. Over the last six months, Sudan has experienced major outbreaks of epidemic diseases such as acute watery diarrhoea and cholera, dengue, yellow fever, monkey pox and meningitis, placing additional strains on already stretched health care services. Through timely detection and rapid response these outbreaks, WHO and partners succeeded in minimizing suffering and saving lives.

“A shortfall or a delay in funding could compromise achievements of 2004 and 2005 and the health of millions of people could be at increased risk” said Dr Guido Sabatinelli, WHO Representative Sudan.

Currently, outbreaks of meningitis are affecting 15 of the 25 States throughout Sudan, with 1 335 reported cases and 145 deaths and six states (Blue Nile, Gedarif, South Kordofan, Kassala, Warab and West Bare-el Ghazal) have infection rates above the epidemic threshold for meningococcal diseases. In the two Southern States of Warab and West Bare-el Ghazal there are reports of 774 cases with 121 deaths between 21 February to 27 March 2006. Further spread of the disease is likely due to the lack of access to essential drugs and vaccinations and the limited capacity of the existing surveillance system in high risk areas.

As of 27 March, 2006 the current outbreak of acute watery diarrhoea has affected 9 394 people resulting in 248 deaths in seven of the ten States in Southern Sudan. Cases of acute watery diarrhoea are being reported daily in new locations and situation requires continued monitoring and response.

Funds are urgently required to ensure comprehensive coordination of health sector interventions, timely response to disease outbreaks, improvement in sanitation, access to health care services, essential drugs and safe water and increased preparedness – especially before the beginning of the rainy season (June/July).

WHO is continuing to work with partners to ensure efficient control, coordination and response measures to curb outbreaks and save lives.

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