

*Hundreds of Thousands of people in South and central Somalia hit by the floods are in need of emergency relief. The health situation caused by the floods calls for immediate assistance in the provision of basic health services to affected populations.*



## Somali Floods

### *Hundreds of thousands in need of health assistance*

A total of 400 000 people, as of November 27, 2006, living in the South and Central zone of Somalia are affected by over-flooding of the Shabelle and Juba rivers during the current rainy season (October-December 2006). This number is expected to rise to approximately 900 000 if rains continue up to January 2007. The floods have further destroyed the livelihoods of populations in the regions in Hiran Middle and Lower Shabelle, Gedo, Middle and Lower Juba.

Hygiene and sanitation conditions are threatening the upsurge of communicable diseases. In Hiran it is reported that 70% of town latrines have been destroyed. The number of diarrhoeal cases in the flood affected areas is on the increase and ***Cholera*** has been confirmed in Jilip district in Middle Juba.

With the decrease of food supplies and loss of crops malnutrition levels are also threatening to increase. Food prices have also rocketed increasing the need for food assistance from the international community.

### Health response by WHO and health partners

Humanitarian aid agencies on the ground WHO, UNICEF, FAO, OCHA, WFP and NGOs including the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS), Save the Children UK (SC UK), COSV, ICRC, MSF, are coordinating actions to provide technical, financial and logistical support. In addition to monitoring and reporting communicable diseases in health facilities WHO is supporting the establishment of mobile health teams and is pre-positioning drugs and medical supplies in flood-affected locations.

- ***Improving access to health services***

Health facilities in the flood affected areas have been disrupted with damages or loss of equipment, supplies and vehicles. Service providers and patients are facing difficulties in accessing health facilities as roads have been cut-off by the floods. To provide access to medical services to flood-affected populations, WHO in collaboration with other UN agencies and NGOs is:

- Establishing mobile health teams with the collaboration of NGOs on the ground
- Hastening the functioning of damaged facilities as the floods recedes

- Supplying adequate equipment, drugs and medical supplies to all functioning mobile and fixed health facilities.

- ***Control of Communicable diseases***

To minimize the risks of potential outbreaks of water and vector-borne diseases high due to the increase of vector breeding sites, displacement, overcrowding in camps coupled with the contamination of water sources by flooding of sewage, the health cluster led by WHO, and the water and sanitation cluster led by UNICEF are responding with appropriate water and sanitation interventions in the flood-affected areas:

- Case management of malaria with adequate supplies including anti-malarials and test kits; distribution of Insecticide Treated bed Nets (ITNs).
- WHO is providing adequate supplies and drugs as part of a preparedness and response plan for cholera following the detection and confirmation of few cholera cases in Jilip district in the Juba region this month. MSF-Holland has already established a cholera treatment center in this district.

- ***Strengthening of surveillance and response***

- Sentinel sites are on alert to monitor and report increases in cases of malaria, watery or bloody diarrheal diseases at health facilities.

**For more information please contact:**

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