



## TIMOR LESTE

### HYDROCHLORIC ACID SPILLS

- On 16 April 2007, a shipping container containing chemical material started leaking in Dili Seaport. The container contained approximately 20,000 litres of Hydrochloric acid (HCL 33.32%), which is highly corrosive and toxic. The accident occurred close to one of the biggest camps for internally displaced people (IDP), which houses some 300 families and is located 150 meters from the seaport.
- After three days, the HCL accident had been contained. Most of the chemical had gradually leaked into the sea where it was diluted to a non-toxic level. There were no reports of HCL related symptoms to the health facilities, nor were any damage to animals or environment reported. However, the incident affected the income of the local fisherman and fish sellers in Dili and created anxiety among the IDP population.



- The National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), the Ministry of Public Transport and Telecommunication and other ministries, the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), the International Stabilization Force (ISF), UNPOL and other partners responded to the incident in a coordinated manner. The "hot" zone was identified and decontaminated by water being pumped onto the leaking container, which was subsequently covered with powder cement. The area was sealed off in a radius of 250 meters from the epicentre, and advice was issued related to evacuation of IDPs and nearby residents.
- In the health sector, the Ministry of Health (MOH) headed the public health response with technical support provided by WHO. The response consisted of: 1) Site assessment; 2) health coordination meetings with partners; 3) Development of a preparedness plan for the National Hospital, the nearest Health Centre and two exit evacuation points; 4) Alert to all health facilities and specialized units; 5) Drafting of a 1-page brochure on HCL; 6) technical assistance through WHO networks (WHO/SEARO and WHO/HQ including WHO Collaborating Centre for the Health Protection Agency in UK) and Environmental Health Unit of Northern Territory Government in Darwin, Australia.

### INTER-AGENCY WORKSHOP

- WHO EHA participated in a 5-day workshop on Interagency Capacity Building for Preparedness, Contingency Planning and Response organized by UNICEF and UN office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in May 2007. The meeting was attended by all the UN agencies including UNMIT, and by government representatives, international agencies (ICRC/IFRC), Timor-Leste Red Cross (CVTL) and NGOs working in emergency preparedness and response. The meeting highlighted the importance of coordinated planning and response especially for emerging and cross cutting humanitarian issues. The draft UN Contingency Plan for the Upcoming Legislative Election (end June 2007) was also discussed and finalized.

### CONTINGENCY PLANNING WORKSHOP

- Taking into consideration the recent violence and conflict which has affected Timor-Leste for a year, the Ministry of Interior through the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) conducted a one day workshop on 15 May 2007 to discuss and finalize the Contingency Plan for Conflicts. The Contingency Plan is the third plan prepared by Timor-Leste adding to two existing plans for flooding and drought. WHO EHA participated in the workshop along with key government ministries, district and sub-district administrators, UN agencies, development partners, NGOs and international organizations working for humanitarian assistance, e.g. ICRC/IFRC and the Timor-Leste Red Cross.
- Based on the overall Contingency Plan for Conflicts, each ministry including each sector working group was tasked to complete its sub-plan. In the health sector, WHO together with other development partners and agencies will continue to support the Ministry of Health and Health Sector Working Groups to complete the sub-plan.