Health Action in Crises (WHO/HAC)
Highlights - No 29: Monday, 4 October 2004

The WHO/HQ Department for Health Action in Crises aims to produce a running note on select current issues at weekly intervals. This note—which is by no means exhaustive—is designed for internal use and does not reflect the official position of WHO.

HAITI

Events:
• Heavy rains, brought by the passage of Tropical Storm Jeanne on September 17-18, caused violent flash floods in the Artibonite and Northwest Departments of Haiti. According to the Civil Protection Directorate on 28 September, 1,514 people had been killed, 952 were missing, and 2,600 were injured. The total number of people affected was estimated to be 298,926.
• On 1 October, the UN launched a Flash Appeal for US$ 32 million, of which US$ 1,680,000 was requested by WHO/PAHO.
• The operational objectives for health set forth in the Flash Appeal include:
  ➢ Re-establishment the provision of primary health care, including provision of essential supplies and drugs, minor repairs of facilities and replacement of lost equipment.
  ➢ Establishment of an emergency surveillance system to detect, prevent or control any possible outbreaks of diseases. This includes provision for monitoring and improving the water quality.
  ➢ Improvement of coordination and information exchange among health partners. This last objective is often overlooked, resulting in further weakening of the health system.

Actions:
• An Emergency Committee has been established by the Ministère de la Santé Publique et de la Population. It comprises WHO/PAHO, USAID, UNICEF and other health actors.
• WHO/PAHO is serving as focal point for health, water, and sanitation activities in response and recovery efforts.
• WHO/PAHO mobilized a team of 18 medical and relief experts (including disaster coordinators, physicians, sanitary and civil engineers, health systems experts, and relief supply management personnel) to assist local health officials and humanitarian agencies.
• WHO/PAHO sent a team to examine the cold chain inputs and deliver tetanus vaccines. 1.5 metric tons of medicines, medical supplies and basic water and sanitation materials were procured by WHO/PAHO.
• WHO/PAHO is preparing to establish a long-term office to improve aid within the health sector and assist with epidemiological surveillance.

SUDAN

DARFUR CRISIS

Events:
• Preparations continue for the 10 October National Immunization Day (NID) against polio throughout Sudan. Synchronized polio NIDs will be held on 10-12 October in 23 sub-Saharan African countries, targeting more than 80 million children.
• During epidemiological week 38 (18-24 September), 80% of the 56 trained reporting units in Darfur provided surveillance data through the WHO-instigated Early Warning Alert and Response Network system. Specifically, 21/26 in West Darfur, 11/14 in South Darfur and 13/16 in North Darfur provided data. The below figure shows the increase in reporting units, 22 May-24 September.

Health Action in Crises
WHO is working with partners to address the health aspects of crises in more than 40 countries. Check the Health Action in Crises Web site for more details: http://www.who.int/disasters/
In the past two weeks, a total of 14 cases and two deaths of clinically diagnosed meningitis were reported in West Darfur.

**Actions:**
- WHO is supervising Training of Trainers courses for the 10 October National Immunization Day against polio. In North Darfur, WHO is also providing the necessary cold chain and financial requirements.
- As part of the overall outbreak preparedness and response plan for South Darfur, WHO facilitated the standardization of sample collection methods. It is now focusing on training, providing emergency supplies and transport, and upgrading the state hospital laboratory’s capacity for disease outbreak confirmation.
- A one-day workshop organised by WHO on outbreak investigation in South Darfur resulted in a protocol for descriptive epidemiological investigation for suspected Hepatitis E outbreaks.
- In response to reports of an increase in cases of Acute Jaundice Syndrome from Kalma camp in South Darfur, WHO and the State Ministry of Health conducted an outbreak investigation.
- WHO is supporting health staff training and the creation of a referral health structure in Hashaba area, North Darfur.
- As part of WHO’s support to the physical and functional rehabilitation of secondary level health facilities in South Darfur, a New Emergency Health Kit (NEHK) was distributed to the Nyala Teaching Hospital to meet the emergency medical supply requirement for the next three months.
- Preparedness actions against possible cholera outbreaks continue throughout the Darfur, in conjunction with the MOH and health stakeholders. Activities include surveillance mechanisms, training in case management, social mobilisation, hygiene education and pre-positioning for treatment sites.
- Funding for WHO humanitarian operations in Darfur has been provided by African Development Bank (AfDB), UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), the Humanitarian Aid Office of the European Commission (ECHO), and the governments of Netherlands, Italy, Ireland, Norway and United States.

**HEPATITIS E IN REFUGEE CAMPS IN CHAD**

- Since 26 June, 1,220 cases of Hepatitis E with 37 deaths have been reported from Goz Amer and Djabal areas. During epidemiological week 38, there were 82 new cases with two deaths in Goz Amer, while in Djabal there were 170 cases with seven deaths. Outbreak control measures are continuing. These include strengthening surveillance activities through training of people, reinforcing hygiene measures, including the distribution of soap, and health promotion with the village elders in Aradib. The need for soap remains high.

**IRAQ**

**Events:**
- The second round of the Polio National Immunization campaign is underway 3-7 October. The campaign is targeting 5 million children aged 0-5 years.
- Preparations continue for the survey on Schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminths (STH), which will be conducted later in the month.
- Malaria and Leishmaniasis spraying is going well in all governorates and will be completed in mid-October.
- Between 26-30 September, the Ministry of Health facilitated a Maternal Mortality workshop (with the support of WHO) in Amman. Participants approved a Plan of Action for the next nine months to further analyze the Iraqi Child and Mother Mortality Survey (ICMMS).

**Actions:**
- WHO is contributing to the National Polio Immunization campaign by providing technical and financial support to the MOH, and covering the cost of health workers, transportation, trainings, meetings, health education materials, and independent monitoring.
- WHO is providing technical and training support as well as the main equipments needed for the Schistosomiasis and STH survey.
- WHO is supporting the National Workshop “Nursing and Midwifery Curricula Review” that is taking place 30 September to 04 October in Amman. The workshop is being attended by 32 participants and is funded by UNDG trust.
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NEPAL

Events

- **Humanitarian situation.** The humanitarian situation in Nepal continues to be characterised by political instability with severe impacts on the everyday life, particularly in rural areas.
- **Recent flooding.** In the two first weeks of July, heavy monsoon rain caused moderate to severe floods and landslides in 25 districts in the eastern and central regions of Nepal. Statistics from Nepal Red Cross show 185 deaths (129 deaths confirmed by Ministry of Home Affairs), 305 injured, 37,602 families displaced, 129,683 families affected, 24,435 houses destroyed, 44,800 houses damaged, 61 schools destroyed and several local health facilities moderately to severely damaged.
- **Potential earthquake.** Nepal has a history of devastating earthquakes. Experts fear the consequences of a moderate-to-large scale earthquake in urban centres, particularly Kathmandu Valley.

Actions:

- The UN Country Team—of which WHO is a member—is closely monitoring the socio-political and security situation, and working to improve the provision of basic services. WHO and other external development partners are committed to supporting the implementation of the Nepal Health Sector Programme, with its core element of essential health care services.
- In response to the recent floods, WHO:
  - Facilitated, in conjunction with the MOH, health sector coordination;
  - Reprogrammed regular budget funds to assist the MOH in purchasing emergency medicine for severe diarrhoeal disease outbreaks;
  - Participated, together with UNDP and UNICEF, in a rapid joint assessment of damages in the five districts worst affected by the floods;
  - Worked closely with the Nepal Red Cross Society to gather information.
- WHO is supporting an on-going emergency preparedness programme in the health sector in Nepal. The programme focuses on building local capacity to respond to mass casualty incidents through trainings (including mock drills) and hospital emergency planning.
- For the past three years, WHO has initiated and supported a series of activities aimed at reducing hospital vulnerability on the occasion of a massive earthquake. Both structural and non-structural assessments of selected hospitals have been carried out, in collaboration with the National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET). WHO, Department of Health Services (DHS) and NSET are currently in need of funds to initiate vulnerability reduction in hospitals through retrofitting and non-structural mitigation, as recommended in the two WHO, DHS and NSET assessment studies.
- Through the WHO South-east Asia Regional Office, DFID has supported the development and printing of two publications: a trainer’s manual on how to carry out mass casualty training using the MUSTER software, and a report of the assessment methodology developed by National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET) during structural and non-structural assessment of hospitals in Nepal.
INTER-AGENCY INITIATIVES

- Sudan.
  - WHO will participate in the briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Sudan in New York on 5 October.
  - The next Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Task Force on Darfur meeting will take place in Geneva on 12 October. WHO is a member of the Task Force and will participate.

- Liberia. The OCHA inter-agency internal displacement Division is carrying out a mission to Liberia from 3-10 October. In conjunction with OCHA, the mission will be looking at issues concerning OCHA’S integration at UNMIL.

- occupied Palestinian territories. Preparations are underway for the Arab International Forum for Rehabilitation and Development in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Forum will take in Beirut, 11-14 October. The WHO Representative of the Director-General for Health Action in Crises will participate.

- Natural Disaster Reduction.
  - On 7 and 8 October, WHO will participate in the 10th Inter-Agency Task Force on Natural Disasters in preparation for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (Kobe, Japan, January 2005).
  - WHO will participate in the 2nd Preparatory Committee for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, Geneva, 11 and 12 October.
  - On 7 October, the Emergency Relief Coordinator will chair the high-level panel "How far can the World Conference on Disaster Reduction go in advancing the implementation of disaster risk reduction?" The WHO Representative of the Director-General for Health Action in Crises will partake in this panel.

- UNHCR. The UNHCR Executive Committee will take place in Geneva, 4-8 October. Agenda items include progress achieved, international protection, evaluation and inspection issues and the programme budget. WHO, in its capacity as Standing Observer, will participate.

- IASC Weekly. WHO will participate in the next IASC weekly meeting in Geneva on 6 October. The meeting will brief on the forthcoming World Conference on Disaster Reduction and provide an update on the humanitarian situation in the Balkans.

- Locust in Africa. The next inter-agency meeting on locusts in Africa will take place on 12 October. WHO will participate.

- Polio in Africa. Eighty million children in Africa need to be immunized against polio. To do this, political engagement at all levels in key to success and special efforts need to be made to reach children in complex emergencies. WHO and UNICEF contributed to advocacy messages on polio in Africa for use by the IASC.

- ECHA. The next meeting of the UN Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) will take place on 20 October. As on previous occasions, the Representative of the Director-General for Health Action in Crises will participate.

  - Preparations are speeding up for the Launch by the UN Secretary-General of the 2005 CAP in New York on 16 November.
  - The next CAP Sub-Working Group meeting will take place in Geneva on 5 October to discuss draft 2005 CAPs, the launch plan and outputs and the financial tracking service update. WHO is member of the CAP sub-working group and will participate.

- Good Humanitarian Donorship. The Representative of the Director-General for Health Action in Crises will participate in the 2nd Good Humanitarian Donorship meeting in Ottawa, Canada, on 21 and 22 October.

- Space and Natural Disasters. Preparations are underway for the 2nd UN-wide meeting on the UN and the International Space Charter and Major Disasters, convened by UNOOSA, UNOPS and UNITAR, in Geneva on 15 October. WHO will participate.

Please send any comments and corrections to kollert@who.int.

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