**Health Action in Crises (WHO/HAC)**

**Highlights - No 32: Monday, 25 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.*

### SWAZILAND

**Events:**
- In June 2004 an interagency mission led by the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Humanitarian Needs in Southern Africa concluded that the situation there as "one of the world's most serious humanitarian crises" …in which… "a deadly combination of food insecurity, HIV/AIDS and weakened governance capacity – on top of crippling chronic poverty – is driving a decline in development indicators in the region. This translates into a deep crisis of livelihoods, with millions suffering from illness, hunger or lack of access to basic services. As a result, hundreds of thousands of women, children and men are dying much younger than normal".
- The tiny Kingdom (population: 1.1 million) of Swaziland is in the throes of a chronic “forgotten crisis”.
- HIV/AIDS amounts to a national catastrophe, with prevalence rates approaching 40% of reproductive age adults. If the current trend continues, life expectancy is expected to decrease by 25 years in the first 15 years of this century.
- Depletion of human resources (health workers, teachers, farmers) is challenging all sectors of society. New ways of providing health and social services are needed.

**Actions:**
- WHO provides treatment for 4000 HIV/AIDS patients, with a goal of 12000 by end 2005.
- The UN has agreed to accelerate joint programs to reduce new infections, mitigate the impact on individuals and communities and establish a sustainable enabling environment for effective HIV/AIDS action.

### SUDAN/CHAD/UGANDA

**SUDAN/DARFUR**

**Events:**
- OCHA estimates of the population affected by the Derfur conflict as of mid-October has risen to 2 million. Of these, 1.4 million are receiving international assistance.

**Actions:**
- WHO is coordinating with UNICEF, UNFPA and relevant NGOs country-wide plans of work for the health sector in 2005.
- 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.

**EASTERN CHAD**

**Events:**
- 6 cases of acute fever with jaundice have been reported from two refugee camps, in the past two weeks, with one death.

**Actions:**
- An urgent assessment mission has been carried out in the affected camps by WHO/MOH/UNHCR and UNICEF to collect latest information from the operational partners, including NGOs and UN agencies to establish a common strategy to prevent possible spread of the disease, to put in place a structure for management of the crisis and to disseminate information.
- WHO is ensuring the active follow-up of blood tests en ensure proper diagnosis, epidemiological surveillance and information management.
- The WHO EWARN surveillance system to monitor health of refugee and local population is expected to be functional by early November.
- WHO will conduct a mortality study among refugees in early December, in collaboration with other health partners.

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*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/](http://www.who.int/disasters/)
### NORTHERN UGANDA

**Events:**
- The UN emergency relief coordinator, Jan Egeland, briefed the Security Council on northern Uganda, where 18 years of conflict has displaced about 1.6 million people (90% of the local population).
- 21 cases of cholera, including 2 deaths, were reported from Pabo Camp, Gulu District.

**Actions:**
- WHO’s sub-office in Gulu District is expected to be operational in early November.

### IRAQ

**Actions:**
- Preparations were finalised for the MOH/WHO/UNICEF Expanded Programme of Immunisation (EPI) workshop from 31 October to 4 November.
- WHO prepared a summary report for the MOH on recent work on maternal and child health in Iraq.
- WHO supported the work of an independent Acute Flacid Paralysis (AFP) surveillance team of Iraqi experts, with results reported to the MOH.
- WHO continues to provide technical and logistical support to the Ministry of Health to enhance the medical supply monitoring system.

*New Web site on WHO actions in Iraq:*
http://www.emro.who.int/iraq/

### INTER-AGENCY INITIATIVES

**Internally Displaced Persons.** The next meeting of the Senior inter-agency Network on Internal Displacement (SN) on the future role of the SN is scheduled to take place in Geneva on 1 November. WHO is a member of the SN and will participate.

**Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration.** Preparations are underway for the UN Workshop entitled *Towards a United Nations Approach to Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration* (DDR) in a Peacekeeping Environment, to be held in Geneva from 28 to 30 October. WHO will participate.

**Natural Disasters.** WHO is participating in the next meeting of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Taskforce on Natural Disasters on 27 October in Geneva. The meeting is on the findings of the first three pilots (in Armenia, Nepal, and Ecuador), South Asia floods, and the 2005 Work Plan.

**Consolidated Appeals Process.** Preparations are stepping up for the launch by the UN Secretary-General of the 2005 CAP, which will take place in New York on 11 November.

**IASC issues.**
- On 26 October, the *Chairpersons of IASC Subsidiary Bodies* met in Geneva to discuss challenges faced by the different Subsidiary Bodies, and make recommendations to the IASC-WG on priority issues to include in the 2005 IASC workplan. WHO, which chairs the IASC Taskforce on HIV/AIDS in Emergency Settings and co-chairs the IASC Gender Taskforce and the IASC Taskforce on Strengthening Field Information Management, participated.
- The IASC Task Force on Darfur Crisis met in Geneva 26 October, with who attending.

**Locusts in Africa.** WHO will participate in the next Inter-Agency meeting on Locusts in Africa in Geneva on 26 October. WHO Country offices in Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger, in conjunction with partner agencies, are addressing the humanitarian consequences of the crisis by supporting Governments in establishing and strengthening nutrition and health surveillance systems.

**Bangladesh.** During the first week of November, DFID will carry out an external review of the August 2004 Bangladesh Flash Appeal. This exercise could offer an excellent opportunity for learning lessons and could feed into the ongoing revision of the Flash Appeal guidelines by the IASC. CAP SWG, as well as contribute to the improvement of future appeals in Bangladesh and for natural disasters elsewhere.

*Please send any comments and corrections to vanschooneveld@who.int.*

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