HORN OF AFRICA

Drier-than-normal conditions across north-eastern Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan, and South Sudan have resulted in a serious increase in the number of food insecure people and high levels of malnutrition which are expected to continue during the next months. Up to 22 million people could be affected by food insecurity and associated malnutrition in 2016. Ethiopia is facing the worst drought in 30 years. Water-borne and other communicable diseases such as cholera, measles, scabies and meningitis could rise due to shortage of water and poor sanitation and hygiene conditions combined with malnutrition and population displacement.

SOUTHERN HORN AND EASTERN AFRICA

By early 2016, between 2.7 million and 3.5 million people could be affected by floods across southern Ethiopia, south central Somalia, South Sudan, Kenya and Uganda. Wetter conditions and excessive rainfall are expected to continue in equatorial East Africa through January 2016 with strong signals for above-average rainfall to occur over the Juba, Shebelle and Rift Valleys. Affected areas might be subject to increased incidence of water- and vector-borne diseases including malaria, dengue, cholera and typhoid. Extreme conditions could exacerbate cholera outbreaks which are the worst since 1997-1998 in Tanzania, Kenya and Ethiopia. In Somalia, Kenya and Tanzania there is a specific concern on the possible resurgence of the Rift Valley Fever. Displacement and crowding due to floods could also lead to increased transmission of other communicable diseases such as measles and meningitis, especially in the meningitis belt zone. Flooding can also cause significant damage to health infrastructure, therefore reducing access to health services for populations living in affected areas.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

More than 5 million people are expected to experience food insecurity during 2016 in central Mozambique, southern Malawi, southern Madagascar, south-eastern Zambia, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Botswana, Lesotho and South Africa. Below-average rainfall is forecast during the main growing season (December-April) with a risk for those countries of facing two consecutive bad growing seasons. Most at threat from immediate food insecurity and associated malnutrition are Malawi (close to 3 million people), Zimbabwe (1.5 million), Lesotho and Madagascar.

As a result of the 1997-1998 El Niño, Eastern Africa experienced extensive flooding that led to food insecurity as well significant destruction of health infrastructure throughout the region.

In Djibouti, Kenya, Mozambique, Somalia, Uganda and Tanzania unusually high rainfall triggered major outbreaks of cholera, with over 40 000 cases in Tanzania. Unprecedented outbreaks of Rift Valley Fever (RVF) occurred in Kenya, Somalia and Tanzania, with nearly 90 000 people infected and 500 deaths.
WHO PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE ACTIONS IN AFRICA

As a direct response, WHO is embarking on a twin track approach:

1. Deploying staff to respond to the ongoing outbreaks of cholera in East Africa and the food security emergency in Ethiopia, and providing additional capacity to other high risk countries in the region to support the strengthening of preparedness, coordination and disease surveillance activities in collaboration with partners.

2. In line with WHO’s convening role, and in order to have a consolidated approach to the management of El Niño-related events across the countries of Eastern and Southern Africa, WHO Africa and Eastern Mediterranean regional offices are planning to bring together representatives of the Ministries of higher risk countries with UN agencies and partners to discuss the El Niño-related issues affecting their respective countries and the region as a whole, and to develop a region-wide strategy and action plan.

Summary of preparedness and response actions taken:

- WHO Regional Office for Africa and Headquarters have deployed specialised health emergency and technical personnel from both regional and global levels to support national emergency preparedness and response in Ethiopia and other affected countries.
- WHO Country Offices have assisted Ministries of Health in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya for the development of health sector El Niño contingency and response plans as part of the national inter-sectoral plans.
- WHO Regional Office for Africa supported by WHO Headquarters and the WHO-WMO Health and Climate Office is drafting a regional operational plan to provide support to WHO Country Offices and Ministries of Health.
- WHO, FAO and OIE have developed a joint WHO/FAO/OIE awareness message for Rift Valley Fever and are planning joint actions to support and assess human health and animal health preparedness.
- WHO Regional Office for Africa has issued a WHO regional briefing note on global climate anomalies and potential disease risks (2015-2016) to 47 African countries on 25 September 2015.