Health Action in Crises (WHO/HAC)
Highlights - No 51: Monday, 21 March 2005

The WHO/HQ Department for Health Action in Crises produces 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.

SOUTH-EAST ASIA

TSUNAMI CRISIS

For up-to-date information on WHO interventions in crisis-affected areas:
General WHO Tsunami Website

Assessments and Events:
- No communicable disease epidemics were reported in India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand, but all health actors remained vigilant.
- In Indonesia, sporadic cases of Acute Jaundice Syndrome also have been reported in the Province of Aceh. Investigations were immediately undertaken.
- A planning meeting for organization and provision of pharmaceutical and medical supplies is under preparation. It will bring together representatives of all districts and provincial and national health officials and is supported by donors.

Actions:
- Measles was reported from Peuremee camp in the Province of Aceh. As an immediate response, 400 vaccinations were performed. No further cases have been reported since.
- A measles vaccination campaign targeting over 45,000 children aged six months to 15 years was carried out in the area of Banda Aceh. The campaign reached over 80 percent coverage and will be followed by routine vaccination.
- In Sri Lanka, a two-day workshop funded by WHO was organized to discuss disease surveillance and prevention.

SUDAN

– Darfur –

Assessments and events:
- Aid agencies activities are restricted by recurrent violence and insecurity. UNSECOORD has increased security measures for all movements.
- The assessment of Ashaba camp in South Darfur, as one of the possible areas for relocation of around 25,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Kalma camp, is ongoing.
- As of the week of 14-20 March, 27 suspected cases of meningococcal meningitis have been reported from Saraf Omra camp, North Darfur.
- The number of reported cases of Hepatitis E has slightly decreased, except in North Darfur.
- The overall number of new cases of bloody diarrhoea has slightly decreased, except in West Darfur, where it is still increasing.
- Measles has been reported from Kass, South Darfur.

Actions:
- In North Darfur, a total of 161,000 doses of meningitis trivalent vaccine have been requested from the International Coordinating Group (ICG) on Vaccine Provision for Epidemic Meningitis Control for a mass vaccination campaign in the affected area. It will target the population at risk in Saraf Omra and surrounding villages and will be implemented by the Federal MoH with support from MDF-Belgium and WHO.
- Lumbar Puncture kits, Transisolate Media for transport of cerebrospinal fluid samples and meningitis oily chloramphenicol field test kits for rapid laboratory confirmation are pre-positioned in all Darfur states.
- Tetravalent meningitis vaccines have been provided to the UN clinic in Khartoum and to all the MERT clinics for vaccination of UN and NGO staff.
- As part of the meningitis preparedness plan, a workshop will be held on 22 March to prepare the vaccination campaigns according to locality and camp.
- Rehabilitation of El Fasher Hospital, North Darfur, is ongoing. Both the infrastructure and the medical supplies have been assessed and needs are being addressed.
- Two workshops were held at El Fasher Hospital. The first was on water testing equipment and trained participants on proper preparation of chlorine and chlorination procedures. The second was on vector control and concentrated on the different mechanisms available for vector control equipment.
• A workshop on Integrated Management of Childhood Illness was held by the State MoH for key stakeholders. A series of workshops will be conducted over the next six weeks to introduce this strategy.
• In Nyala, South Darfur, three training sessions on meningitis case management for doctors and medical assistants were carried out for 54 national and international participants. Four additional sessions of the one-day training were carried out in peripheral localities on 20 March.
• A mass measles vaccination campaign is being implemented by MSF-Holland in Thur, South Darfur.
• CARE returned positive feedback on the proposed intervention to reduce the fly population in Kalma camp. CARE will contribute insecticides, field workers and transport; WHO will define baseline data on fly density and monitor the implementation and the impact of the intervention.
• In West Darfur, WHO, in cooperation with the MoH, UNICEF and MEDAIR, coordinated a measles vaccination campaign in Gandermi, targeting close to 3,400 children aged nine months to 15 years.
• A meeting was organized by the EPI Department of State MoH to prepare with partner NGOs the next round of the National Immunization Days (NIDs). WHO held separate bilateral meetings with NGOs working in the SLA areas.
• A seminar to inform clinicians, prescribers and pharmacists in the three Darfur states on the newly published *Sudan National List of Essential Drugs* is scheduled for mid April. Facilitators from both the Federal and State MoHs will participate.
• 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.

**IRAQ**

**Assessments and events:**
• WHO met with Kimadia, Iraq’s state-owned pharmaceutical corporation, to visit central warehouses and discuss the distribution of drugs, medical supplies and lab reagents throughout the country. Assessments showed that all chronic disease drugs but one were available to cover patients’ needs for March.

**Actions:**
• Between 12 and 18 March, a group of MoH officials from the National Drug Quality Control Laboratory completed a one week study tour as part of the UNDG Iraq Trust Fund (ITF) project to re-activate the Laboratory.
• A group composed of WHO and MoH representatives participated in an inter-country workshop on Monitoring and Evaluation of National EPI Programmes, conducted between 14 and 18 March in Tunis. The objectives of the workshop included, among others, a review of the regional reporting system, tools for monitoring and evaluation, vaccine preventable diseases surveillance activities, immunization surveillance and the development of national plans for strengthening and monitoring evaluation systems.
• WHO, in collaboration with consultants from the US, the UK and Iraq, participated in an Action Planning Conference on Mental Health in Iraq. The implementation of the UNDG ITF proposal for mental health and non-communicable diseases was reviewed. A draft Plan of Action was developed around four main clusters: mental health services; mental health training and education; scientific programmes and research capacity; and policies and support for mental health programmes.
• With the support of the EC/UNDP Thematic Trust Fund, 25 food inspectors completed a National Food Safety Training Course, conducted by WHO in partnership with the Jordan Food and Drug Administration. This was the third course of a series of four.
• Under the UNDG Trust Fund Water Quality Control Project, WHO organized for 26 representatives from the Ministries of Environment and of Municipality three training courses on Laboratory Information Management System, on Diagnosis of Algae and Fungi and on Environmental and Health Impact Assessment of Water and Sanitation Projects. Representatives from the government, the private and public sectors, members of NGOs as well...
**WEST BANK and GAZA STRIP**

**Assessments and events:**
- The formal meeting of the Local Aid Coordination Committee (LACC) was held on 10 March in Ramallah to discuss the 1 March meeting in London and present the Mid-Term Development Plan and the Palestinian Authority budget. Donor representatives, including the World Bank and Norway participated.
- A WHO team, composed of EMRO and Headquarters representatives, carried out a review of UNRWA’s health services programmes for Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The review concluded on the critical nature of UNRWA’s work in the health sector and on the need to continue and strengthen the organization’s activities.

**Actions:**
- A bi-monthly meeting of the Palestinian Nutrition Steering Committee was held on 7 March. The meeting covered the latest status of the Situation of Nutrition document, the upcoming MOH-WHO nutrition workshop and the recently completed workshop on nutrition surveillance in Gaza.
- Two WHO consultants from CDC Atlanta completed a ten-day visit begun on 10 March to assist the MoH in investigating the mumps outbreak in the Northern West Bank and to recommend suitable control measures. Since December 2003, more than 4,000 cases have been reported, but estimates suggest more than 10,000 cases, mainly among school-age children. The consultants met with UNRWA, UNICEF, USAID and the Japan International Cooperation Agency and carried out some field visits.
- A WHO Mental Health consultant started a 12-day mission on 17 March to work on the development of support groups with the psychiatric hospitals in the West Bank. Training will also be extended to the pilot Community Mental Health Centres in Ramallah, Hebron and Gaza.
- Two WHO consultants are carrying out a five-day mission to run a nutrition workshop in Ramallah. The objectives are to present the key findings and conclusions of the State of Nutrition document, the draft Nutrition Policy Statement and the National Nutrition Strategy, to further develop an operational plan of action for nutrition 2005-2008, and to identify key areas and roles for the MoH Nutrition Department.
- Together with the MoH, WHO chaired the monthly Health Emergency Coordination Meeting in Ramallah. During the meeting, Health Inforum discussed the updates to website and health facilities database.
- Health Inforum published its monthly Newsletter No. 58 (March 2005). The Newsletter includes, among others, a report on the UNRWA Medium Term Plan 2005-2009 and a brief on the Maternal, Child Health and Nutrition Project (HANAN), a new project funded by USAID and to be implemented in the West Bank and Gaza. The full copy of the Newsletter is available on [www.healthinforum.org](http://www.healthinforum.org)
- In the framework of the European, Palestinian and Israeli Cities Partnership project, WHO supported a four-day visit from the Turin Municipality to Haifa and Gaza. Turin will provide the Haifa Women Coalition Centre and the Gaza Women Empowerment Programme with necessary funds to implement a project promoting women empowerment. The funds will permit the creation of a women’s centre in Gaza. A web page compiling the organizations and their projects and promoting exchange and cooperation is also planned.
- Current WHO humanitarian actions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been made possible by 2004 funding from USAID, AGFUND, and the Government of Norway, as well as pre-2004 funding from ECHO.
**DEMONCRATIC REPUBLIC of the CONGO**

**Assessments and events:**
- Although security remains precarious, humanitarian aid has resumed for more than 80,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in the camps of Kafe, Tche and Gina in the district of Ituri. Further interruptions are not excluded and a daily assessment is required before aid workers are sent out on the field. According to OCHA, the general insecurity has brought on an increase in the number of IDPs from 70,000 to around 88,000.
- Two cases of acute flaccid paralysis were reported in the Oriental Province. WHO has received samples for analysis. These two cases are occurring as National Immunization Days (NIDs) are to be held in April and May in the DRC, Sudan and in the Central African Republic to avert the spread of polio from Nigeria.

**Actions:**
- The WHO mission to Zobia, Oriental Province, to investigate the plague outbreak has reported 126 suspected cases and 55 deaths between 15 December 2004 and 10 March 2005. In addition to surveillance, WHO, in cooperation with the MoH and MSF-Belgium, has set up treatment facilities, initiated tracing and follow up of contacts and organized social mobilization activities in the surrounding areas.
- The cholera outbreak in South Kivu is subsiding. Poor living conditions and a lack of potable water in affected areas are among the factors sustaining the remaining pockets of disease, particularly in Bukavu, Uvira and Nundu.
- The strike of medical services in Kinshasa has ended earlier this month. Investigations will be carried out in hospitals and health centres to fill up the gaps in data collection. The typhoid fever outbreak is now under control and the number of cases reported has decreased from 2,444 cases two weeks ago to 1,958 last week.
- WHO has received funding from OCHA for the control of typhoid fever in Kinshasa. Other current WHO humanitarian operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are supported by ECHO, Finland, and Norway.

**COOK ISLANDS**

**Assessments and events:**
- From 6 February to 6 March, the Cook Islands were hit by five tropical cyclones. The islands of Pukapuka and Nassau were severely affected by Cyclone Percy on 28 February. Winds in excess of 200km an hour damaged about 80 to 90 percent of homes on the island of Pukapuka.
- The authorities are dealing with outbreaks of diarrhoea and food poisoning, as well as the threat of dengue fever.
- Waves generated by Cyclone Percy also washed away medical equipment and medicines in health facilities.
- The island of Nassau was also affected resulting in significant damage to structures, according to a report from the Royal New Zealand Air Force.

**Actions:**
- WHO has sent USD 22,900 worth of medical supplies and equipment.
- The UNDAC team is assisting damage assessments in the affected islands in the Southern Group.
- A Donor Meeting was held on 14 March to decide on the distribution of donor funds.

**INTER-AGENCY ISSUES**

- **UNHAS/UNJLC.** The steering group of the humanitarian air services (UNHAS) took place in Rome on 23 March, back to back with the meeting of the UN Joint Logistical Centre. WHO participated.
- **Côte d'Ivoire.** In order to follow-up to the Inter-Agency Statement on Côte d’Ivoire (Dakar, 12 November 2004), an inter-agency mission to Côte d’Ivoire is planned to start on 3 April. WHO will participate.
- **Tsunami Disaster.** The Mid Term Review of the Tsunami Flash Appeal is expected to be launched on Wednesday 6 April.

*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/)
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>IASC Plenary.</strong></td>
<td>The next IASC Plenary, at the level of Heads of Agency, will take place in Geneva on 7 April. WHO will participate.</td>
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<td><strong>Sudan.</strong></td>
<td>A donor conference on Sudan in planned in Oslo on 11 and 12 April.</td>
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<td><strong>EFCT.</strong></td>
<td>The next Emergency Field Coordination Training (EFCT XII) will take place in Geneva between 18 and 26 April. WHO will participate.</td>
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<td><strong>UN-CMCoord.</strong></td>
<td>Preparations are under way for the next UN-Training course for Civil Military Coordination (CMCoord) in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, from 15 to 20 May. Another UN-CMCoord training course is planned from 12 to 17 June in Schwarzenburg, Switzerland. WHO is considering participation.</td>
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Please send any comments and corrections to crises@who.int.

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