Highlights of the period

- The Government of the Russian Federation announced the decision to provide an additional two billion rubles for the state health sector in Chechnya for 2006, with most of it planned to be spent on rehabilitation, equipment and salaries.
- The Chechen Ministry of Health indicated priority development areas for the 2006 programme, focusing on primary health care.
- The second regional conference for the leading infectious and epidemiology experts of the Southern Federal District was held in Maikop, Republic of Adygea.
- The first republican unit of haemodyalisis and the N2 maternity hospital were opened in Grozny.

Health update

- An alarming increase of the number of Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever (CCHF) was registered in the Southern Federal District of the Russian Federation in April-June 2006.
- The national health priority plan of Ingushetia envisages immunization of some 36,000 children against Hepatitis B and some 19,000 – against rubella by the end of 2006.
- Additional vaccination campaigns against poliomyelitis, planned for April-May in Chechnya have been delayed for lack of vaccines.
- A comparative analysis of mother and child health in Chechnya, Ingushetia and North Ossetia for 2005 shows that Chechnya retains the highest birth rate compared to the two other republics.
- The prevalence of HIV positive people is increasing in the North Caucasus and in particular in Chechnya.

Full details are contained in this report.

Upcoming events

- 2006 Update to the Inter-Agency Transitional Workplan will be launched in Moscow on 5 July. The Update focuses on four major issues: the security situation, changes in the Food Security and Agriculture Sector, IDP durable solutions, and socioeconomic recovery (www.ocha.ru).
- From 1 to 25 August World Food Programme (WFP) is holding a Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping (VAM) mission to assess the food security and nutritional situation in Ingushetia and Chechnya.
- MSF’s comprehensive assessment of the humanitarian health situation in three districts in Dagestan, including Khasavyurt, will continue throughout summer.
Health Action in the North Caucasus Republics

**Highlights**

The government of the Russian Federation announced the decision to provide an additional four billion rubles for education and health in Chechnya. About two billion rubles is allocated for the health sector, with most of it to be spent on rehabilitation, equipment and salaries. There are plans to increase total bed capacity from 7,800 currently to some 10,500.

The Chechen Ministry of Health indicated the following priority areas in 2006 with a focus on primary health care; physical rehabilitation of buildings, provision of equipment; strengthening health insurance policy; rational use of the health system; strengthening public health management and health quality control; advocating for public and private health programmes; reduction of hospital and increase of ambulatory-polyclinic assistance; expansion of daytime inpatient care facilities; implementation of family physician network with opening special hospital wards and increasing training among health workers and health education.

On 25-26 May WHO co-organised the second regional conference for leading infectious and epidemiology experts of the southern federal district in Maikop, Republic of Adygea. The highlights of the conference were: presentation of the WHO/USAID project on strengthening capacity to prevent Avian Flu in humans in the Russian Federation, made by Dr. Caroline Brown, Technical Officer for communicable disease surveillance and response of the WHO Regional Office for Europe and discussion of plans, priorities, gaps in the national system for the WHO/USAID project implementation. The participants stressed the importance of increased knowledge in reviewing southern regional office policies on epidemiology and infectious control and priority development and used this opportunity to have meetings and discussions with the leading national specialists on infectious control and epidemiology.

**Health situation**

April-June 2006 witnessed an alarming increase in the number of Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever (CCHF) in the Southern Federal District of the Russian Federation. The first cases of CCHF were registered in the middle of April in Stavropol region, followed by more cases in the Republic of Kalmykia and the Rostov region in early May. By the end of June 2006, 26 cases of CCHF have been registered in the Stavropol region, 41 - in the Republic of Kalmykia and 13 - in Volgograd region, according to Rospotrebnadzor (the Federal Service for Supervision of Consumer Rights and Welfare Protection). In 2006 there has been a marked expansion in the distribution of CCHF cases: new cases have been detected in Zymovnikovskiy, Tsymlyanskiy and Tselinniy districts of the Rostov region where no cases have been observed in recent years. Most cases occurred during care of agricultural animals in private facilities. While it is especially important to undertake preventive treatment of animals against tick infestation, according to various re-
ports, tick control measures in the district have not been implemented promptly, largely due to insufficient allocation of finances for these purposes.

Chechen state reports reflect a variety of problems, including lack of a standard paediatric hospital, wards or polyclinics; poor development of diagnostic and rehabilitation services for children; lack of bacteriology and other labs; strong shortage of pediatricians and health services for children; limited services at the Republican children hospital. The rates of child disability are increasing, with one-third of them between 5 to 9 years old. Lack of regular child health monitoring system, late hospitalisation, low knowledge levels of health workers and inadequate medical treatment are among main infant mortality causes. Half of maternal mortality cases in 2006 were linked to the late consultation and hospitalisation and low quality of medical treatment.

Following up on joint WHO/MoH mortality survey, the MoH of Chechnya initiated monthly analysis of death certificates registered in the Republic. The results indicated that 60-70% of documents were not issued properly: either the ICD-10 classification was wrong or the death cause was not linked to the main diagnosis. In January 2006, 88% of all death certificates issued in Shelkovskoi district, 76% in Nozhai-Yurt, 75% in Kurchaloi, 72% in Argun and 67% in Grozny did not meet the required standards.

**Health assistance**

As part of a joint project between the Chechen Ministry of Health, WHO and Rostov medical academy, WHO has facilitated through USAID support a one month certified training of 60 PHC workers (physicians and paediatricians) at Rostov medical academy.

On 13 June WHO carried out a training session for 42 PHC workers in Malgobek district of Ingushetia. The main topic of the session was diarrhoea, its classification and treatment, as suggested by the MoH of Ingushetia as one of the most common morbidity conditions at summer time.

In addition to its regular supply of medicines and laboratory consumables to the hospitals in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan and provision of several hospitals in Chechnya with Insulin, ICRC has provided medicines and medical consumables to the Republican Pyo-Septic Surgical centre in Grozny in April 2006. This is in addition to medical donations to the Republican Blood Bank in Grozny.

Over the reporting period, ICRC funded participation of eight specialists from various medical facilities in Chechnya in trainings on obstetrics and gynaecology, child anaesthesiology, clinical rheumatology, certified training in laboratory services as well as trainings in other respective specialties at medical institutions in Moscow, Volgograd, Stavropol and Makhachkala.

MSF is making a comprehensive assessment of the humanitarian situation in three districts in Dagestan, including Khasavyurt. The objectives of the exercise are to assess health care status of the population of Dagestan by geographic regions and social groups, to estimate the extent of medical and humanitarian crisis, to identify vulnerable groups and the most affected geographical areas, to estimate the healthcare needs, and a number of other issues. This assessment will look closely into the following topics: access to quality primary healthcare, mother and child health, tuberculosis & mental health. Started in April, it will last throughout the summer.

On 30 May MSF opened a primary health care clinic in Karagalinskaya, Shelkovskiy district of Chechnya. The clinic is staffed with a gynaecologist, a general practitioner and a paediatrician and provides free consultations and free drugs through a MSF-pharmacy.

On 18-23 June MSF held in Nalchik two training courses on rational drug use for 32 surgeons and practicing physicians from neurology and trauma departments of Hospital Number 9 in
Grozny. The training was focused on the use of evidence-based rational medicines in surgery hospitals.

The mission of Benelux ambassadors to the North Caucasus donated 600 sets of emergency medical aid to the Chechen medical system and a resuscitation ambulance to the Republican children hospital.

On 4-12 April a group of 11 German plastic surgeons provided 147 surgeries to 84 children in the Republican children clinical hospital in Grozny, within the framework of the charitable project "Interplast" to perform plastic surgery on children who had suffered from burns and experienced problems with eyesight.

On 29 May – 3 June MDM carried out a training course on paediatrics and therapy in rural medicine for 35 PHC workers of Nozhai-Yurt and Vedeno districts of Chechnya in Nalchik.

In addition to its cardio-pulmonary resuscitation programme in Ingushetia and Chechnya, IMC has introduced a new health educational programme "public health for population" in ten villages in Chechnya and in five - in Ingushetia. Two teams, each comprised of two workers, visit the rural area centres and provide learning sessions on selected health related issues.

In addition to operation of its four counsellors in mobile teams in three Chechen districts, World Vision initiated in April a new six months project providing drugs assistance, medical instruments and equipment to 11 ambulatories in Shelkovskoi, Grozny-Selsky, Urus-Martan district of Chechnya and city polyclinic N4 in Grozny.

### Health Topics

#### 1. Mother and Child Health

The results of a WHO comparative analysis of mother and child health situation in Chechnya, Ingushetia and North Ossetia-Alania, based on the official reports of the Ministries of Health, show that in 2005 Chechnya retained the highest birth rate (22.0), compared to Ingushetia (14.2) and North Ossetia (11.2) (average RF – 10.3). In Ingushetia and North Ossetia birth rates have been reducing since 2003. Infant mortality remains highest in Ingushetia with 24.5 in 2005, though also reducing from 28.1 in 2003 and 24.8 in 2004. The lowest infant mortality is reported in North Ossetia since 2003 (10.5) and 9.4 in 2005.

The main infant mortality causes have been linked to the quality of obstetric care during the perinatal period (Chechnya – 62.2; Ingushetia – 60.6; North Ossetia – 40.3). A high rate of detection of congenital defects in North Ossetia (32.5) is explained by the availability of the genetic laboratory, while in Chechnya (6.4) and Ingushetia (12.4) such a facility is non-existent.

Maternal mortality continues to be high in Ingushetia (44.1 in 2005) and Chechnya (43.5) though reducing from 2004 with 73.4 in Ingushetia and 75.0 in Chechnya. The main maternal mortality cause is bleeding (in Ingushetia – 66.6; Chechnya – 37.5; North Ossetia – 33.3; average RF – 28.6).

WHO continued the activities in line with its MCH programme, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). In April, three ten-day training courses took place in Shelkovskoi district of Chechnya within the framework of Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) programme. 51 health workers (mainly paediatricians, feldshers, and nurses) attended. In June, two ten-day training courses were held for 40 health workers in Nozhai-Yurt district of Chechnya.
On 24-27 April WHO organized a training course on Essential Obstetric Care (focus on family planning, use of contraceptives, consultations, sexually transmitted diseases, abortion prevention) for 25 state health workers (obstetricians and gynaecologists) in Ingushetia.

In the framework of its Integrated Management of Childhood Illness/Making Pregnancy Safer (IMCI/MPS) programme, WHO has carried out a follow up of IMCI strategy implementation in North Ossetia on 19-23 June, coupled with further audit of hospital conditions in Vladikavkaz and Ardon & Alagir districts of the republic. Altogether, six policlinics were assessed, four of them in Vladikavkaz. The follow-up exercise recognised the overall high efficiency of IMCI training in the republic. The overwhelming majority of trained medical personnel have realized and are now practicing less frequent administration and shorter terms of antibacterial therapy for ARI and diarrhoea treatment in children, tend to avoid unnecessary hospitalisations and to promote extensive breastfeeding. Most medical facilities are widely using and distributing the mother’s card, providing parents with information on rational breastfeeding, child development and vaccination. At the same time, in a number of cases doctors still tend to adhere to old practices, guidelines and recommendations, which necessitates further continuation of IMCI training workshops for paediatricians, particularly those working in the district health centres of North Ossetia.

In April – June, training sessions of UNICEF’s Mother Empowerment Project (MEP) covered on a monthly basis some 390 resident and IDP pregnant women, mothers and other primary child care providers, living in Malgobecksky district of Ingushetia. In April, UNICEF launched the same programme in Chechnya, where it plans to target some 4,000 mothers in cooperation with the Republican Children’s Policlinic in Grozny.

On 24-25 May Action Contre la Faime (ACF) conducted a two-day training course on newborn care and breastfeeding for its staff and invited specialists from assisted Shatoi, Sharoi and Itum-Kale Chechen districts to Nazran, Ingushetia.

2. HIV/AIDS

According to the latest available data, the prevalence of HIV positive patients is increasing in Chechnya with 635 people registered by end of May 2006, including 122 women and 16 children. Voluntary testing remains low, (below 5%) and adequate data of remote and rural areas are not yet available. In five months of 2006 there have already been 70 new HIV cases registered,
which is 1.7 times higher for the same period of 2005. Out of 70, 16 were women, including 8 pregnant and 2 children. In Ingushetia there have been 27 new cases registered in 2006. In Ingushetia some 4,500 people get HIV tested on a monthly basis, half of them being registered pregnant women. In Chechnya some 17,000 people got tested in the first quarter of 2006, including 793 pregnant women.

Three Youth Friendly Clinics (YFCs) and three Youth Information Centres (YICs) continued their operations in Ingushetia and Chechnya within the framework of UNICEF’s Young People’s Health, Development (YPHD) and Participation – HIV/AIDS Prevention project. In line with this project UNICEF continued to distribute essential supplies, including office and IT equipment, furniture, and medical consumables to the Youth Friendly Clinics in both republics.

UNICEF also continued to work on strengthening young people’s knowledge on safe reproductive health practices and HIV/AIDS prevention, through communication and social mobilization activities as well as information campaigns among young people and teenagers. In May, 18 HIV/AIDS awareness-raising trainings were held for 450 children in schools in rural districts in Chechnya and in two schools in Grozny. In June, UNICEF conducted a five-day training course on the ‘Prevention of Risky Behaviour among adolescents and young people’ in Kislovodsk, with the participation of 35 staff from Youth Friendly Clinics (YFCs) and Youth Information Centres (YICs), as well as young volunteers from Chechnya and Ingushetia. The training course was facilitated by representatives of the NGO ‘Look into Future’ (St. Petersburg).

In addition, UNICEF continued to support two Centres for the provision of psychosocial support to people living with HIV/AIDS. Counselling and support were provided on a regular basis to HIV-positive individuals from Ingushetia and Chechnya and their family members.

WHO provided 105 test kits (‘Genscreen’, ‘Unif’, ‘Vironostika’) to HIV centres in Chechnya and Ingushetia within technical assistance programme on capacity building in perinatal and child care with the focus on reduction of HIV/AIDS mother to child transmission. As well, WHO developed and distributed to the Grozny AIDS centre 3000 HIV Awareness posters.

In May-June Caritas organised training for trainers on HIV/AIDS for two specialists of the Chechen AIDS centre, four health workers and one volunteer. Caritas has also supported participation of two experts from the Chechen AIDS centre in the first conference on HIV in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Moscow in May.

### 3. Tuberculosis

On 22-27 May WHO, in cooperation with MoH of Ingushetia, carried out a joint training course on Tuberculosis (TB) for some 200 Ingush primary
health care and TB workers in Nazran, Ingushetia. WHO consultants and representatives of the Central TB research institute facilitated the courses in all central district hospitals in the republic.

On 23-28 April 2006 WHO facilitated participation of the Head of the TB service of Ingushetia in the advanced course on TB control management in line with international recommendations for TB specialists from federal TB institutes, the Federal Correctional Service (FCS) and the joint regional DOTS projects. The course was organized in cooperation with the WHO Collaborating Centre for TB and Lung Diseases and the S. Maugeri Foundation (Tradate, Italy) and was held in Moscow.

WHO continues delivering (with the support of WFP) food commodities to the Republican TB hospital in Nazran, Ingushetia. In April-June, TB in-and outpatient beneficiaries received 27150 kg of flour, 2884 kg of oil, 372 kg of sugar and 32 kg of salt.

4. Epidemiology and immunization

As part of the national health priority plan in Ingushetia it is planned to immunise 36.678 children against hepatitis B and 19.362 – against rubella by the end of 2006. Flu vaccination is also to be provided to some 65.590 people.

An additional campaign to vaccinate 95% of children under five in Chechnya against poliomyelitis, planned for April- May has been delayed due to lack of vaccines.

In April-May, UNICEF procured and distributed 293,000 disposable syringes for health care facilities in Chechnya and Ingushetia as part of its Expanded Programme for Immunization (EPI). 88,000 disposable syringes were distributed to 14 health care facilities in Ingushetia and 205,000 syringes to 17 hospitals in Chechnya. At the same time, UNICEF continued to strengthen the capacity of primary health care level facilities (30 in Chechnya and 10 in Ingushetia) through the distribution of essential medical equipment, including tonometers, ophthalmoscopes, stethoscopes, scales for infants/adults and auxanometers. UNICEF also reprinted and distributed to Chechen and Ingush health professionals 500 copies of seven types of EPI methodological booklets/manuals, on EPI planning and management, immunization techniques as well as epidemiological surveillance standards for vaccine preventable diseases.

5. Mental health

On 12-15 May, UNICEF conducted the third training on school counselling for 23 selected school psychologists from Chechnya through the specialized centre ‘Harmony’ in St. Petersburg. The main objective of this training was to provide the participants with the opportunity to learn from other programmes’ experiences, through visiting schools, discussing professional problems with the colleagues from St. Petersburg, and also participate in a conference, during which concrete ideas on providing psychological assistance in places of conflict were discussed.

UNICEF completed the gathering of data related to its ‘Psychosocial Baseline Study - Stage 2’, aimed at assessing the psychosocial state of children who received psychological trauma in Chechnya, as well as at providing an analysis of the children’s environment within school, family and community. Some 4,500 questionnaires were developed and distributed by NAN (the Russian Charity Foundation and UNICEF partner in this study) to affected children, their school directors, neighbours and classmates in different regions of Chechnya.

In June 2006, UNICEF launched a new project for the 'post-traumatic rehabilitation of crisis-affected children of Beslan and their family members. The project aims at reaching both psychologically affected children (through the work of school groups and the Rehabilitation centre in Vladikavkaz) and their parents (through the work of the Family Counselling centre in Beslan). The project seeks to strengthen the families’ capacity to ensure a protective environment for the psychologically affected chil-
dren and reduce the effects of the trauma resulting from the 2004 crisis in Beslan.

On 5-9 June UNHCR organised a training course on psychosocial assistance for specialists of Vladikavkaz based NGO “Dovere” working with post-Beslan crisis issues. The training was facilitated by the experts of Israel Trauma Coalition.

On 25-28 April DRC carried out a training session for 22 psychologists-teachers of newly covered locations in Chechnya (Samashki, Zoni, Yandi, Shatoi and Goiskoe) in Achkhoi-Martan village.

In May – June DRC continued provision of psychosocial and community based services through a group of four local specialists in 15 villages of Chechnya. Apart from technical assistance, DRC counsellors visited once in two weeks self organised women groups in Yandi and Goity to provide learning sessions on various subjects.

IRC continued to work with children in closed and open psychosocial groups in Ingushetia and Chechnya; individual counselling was provided upon request. Psychosocial counsellors worked, as before, with 5-6 year old children in five schools in Grozny. Parents’ & teachers meetings with children’s psychosocial health as a topic were continued in both republics; children of pre-school age participated in playgroups at psychosocial centres 4 days a week, youth representatives continued attending classes of out-of-school programme, psychosocial newsletters were regularly distributed to teachers and parents in schools in Ingushetia and Chechnya. In parallel, IRC continued the work on helminthiasis prevention among schoolchildren and arranged training sessions with hygiene as a topic for pupils and students.

6. Assistance to disabled

Although the number of mine/UXO-related casualties in Chechnya has been significantly decreasing over the last three years, the total number of incidents recorded thus far in 2006 (January-May) has remained at the same level recorded in 2005, as reported by UNICEF. On the other hand, the number of victims killed has been significantly lower (2 in 2006 vs. 8 in 2005). Most of the new incidents are due to the socio-economic needs of the population living in the mine/UXO-affected areas.

UNICEF’s assistance programme for children with disabilities (including mine/UXO survivors) is on-going. In April, UNICEF has provided to the orthopaedic ward of the Republican Clinical Hospital in Grozny, where children receive treatment, a set of essential equipment for an operational theatre, as well as organized a one-month surgery training for a medical doctor from the same ward in St.Petersburg.

On 17-26 April, UNICEF supported a ten-day training in psychosocial support to vulnerable children and their families for three specialists of the Republican Social Rehabilitation Centre in Shali, in Moscow. In June, a one-month training has been organized for two technicians from Grozny’s Prosthetic Workshop, at the Albrekht Institute in St. Petersburg.

On 10-19 April ICRC held a workshop on orthopaedics for 12 Chechen, Ingush, Ossetian and Kabardino-Balkarian rehabilitation specialists in Nalchik. On 1-3 June a regular seminar on war surgery was held for 20 regional experts in St. Petersburg Military Medical Academy.

On 5-6 April Handicap International (HI) held a training course on physical rehabilitation for 20 rehabilitation specialists in Kislovodsk. In May, HI funded participation of one Chechen orthopaedic specialist in the training course in St. Petersburg.

Water & Sanitation

UNICEF, PHO and the local water provider (Grozvodokanal) continued the planned progressive hand-over to the latter, by end-2006, of the management of the water purification and distribution project in Grozny. In May, UNICEF con-
continued to strengthen the operational capacity of Grozvodokanal, including through the procurement of IT equipment, office furniture, office supplies and one vehicle (UAZ-type). In June, UNICEF recruited a professional water engineer who will strengthen the operational capacity of Grozvodokanal, so as to enable the institution to take over the project responsibilities.

In April, UNICEF has completed, through the State Drama Theatre from Chechnya, a series of drama plays promoting hygiene awareness and appropriate consumption of safe drinking water among residents of Grozny. Some 51 water distribution points in schools, kindergartens, TACs and residential areas in Grozny were covered through this activity.

List of abbreviations:

ACF: Action Contre la Faime
CDH: Central District Hospital
CPR: Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation
DOTS: Directly Observed Therapy Short Course
DRC: Danish Refugee Council
EPI: Expanded Programme on Immunization
FP: Feldsher/obstetric post
GP: General practitioner
HI: Handicap International
ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross
IDPs: Internally displaced persons
IMC: International Medical Corps
IMSSM: International Management System for Mine Action
IR: Islamic Relief
IRC: International Rescue Committee
LSG: Lets Save the Generation
MDM: Médecins du Monde
MoH I: Ministry of Health of the Republic of Ingushetia
MoH RF: Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation
MoH Ch: Ministry of Health of Chechnya
MSF-B: Médecins sans Frontières-Belgium
MSF-F: Médecins sans Frontières-France
MSF-H: Médecins sans Frontières-Holland
PHO: Polish Humanitarian Organization
PTSD: Post-traumatic stress disorder
OCHA: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SARC: Saudi Red Crescent Society
SES: Sanitary Epidemiological Surveillance
STI: Sexually Transmitted Infections
TAC: Temporary accommodation centre
UNICEF: United Nations Children’s Fund
UNHCR: UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UXO: Unexploded ordnance
VOM: Voice of the Mountains

Other news

Two issues of the "Bulletin for health care managers in Russia", published by WHO Zdravinform health data base project and WHO Documentation centre in Moscow in April-May 2006 highlighted the issues of public-private sector interaction in health care and premature and preventable deaths. The bulletin can be obtained at http://zdravinform.ru.

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