Summary

More than a month after the 12 January earthquake that devastated swathes of Haiti, particularly its capital Port-au-Prince, in excess of 300 000 people are suffering from injuries and over one million are living in temporary settlements or host families after losing their homes.

Immediately following the quake, which killed more than 200 000 people, the most pressing need was to rescue people buried in the rubble and provide immediate emergency care for trauma patients.

Now in the second month, health needs have changed. The focus today is on post-operative care and follow-up of patients who have undergone surgery, rehabilitative services for people with disabilities, providing primary health care services to people living in overcrowded conditions with poor shelter and sanitation, such as maternal, child and mental health care, control of chronic diseases including diabetes, heart disease, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. Outbreak control and environmental health interventions are also crucial to prevent and control epidemics.

More than 50 staff from the World Health Organization/Pan-American Health Organization (WHO/PAHO) Office in Haiti responded to health needs in the wake of the earthquake. To support in-country operations, WHO/PAHO has since deployed more than 60 international experts in disaster management, epidemiology, public health, communicable diseases, water and sanitation and communications, among others. A field office has also been established in the Dominican Republic city of Jimani, on the border with Haiti, to facilitate logistic operations.

WHO/PAHO is working with UN agencies and non-governmental organizations in Haiti and coordinating the Health Cluster response to the emergency. More than 396 national and international organizations have registered with the Cluster, providing evidence of the enormous need for coordination. The Cluster has established sub-groups chaired by cluster members focusing on specific areas, including hospitals, medical supplies, primary health care/mobile clinics, reproductive health, disabilities, HIV/AIDS treatment and care, mental health and psychosocial support, gender violence and health information management.

Current Health Situation

Haiti’s entire health system, from its infrastructure to the very staff and system that operated it, has been deeply affected by the earthquake. The Ministry of Health’s building collapsed, killing more than 200 staff. Many Haitian doctors and nurses died or were injured, compromising the health system’s capacity to respond to pressing health needs.

While there has been no notable increase in infectious diseases being reported, poor sanitation and crowding increases the risk of communicable diseases. Fifty two sentinel sites have been established to monitor diseases and vaccination campaigns for measles-rubella and diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis are being carried out.
The Ministry of Health has created a National Health Commission to coordinate the local and international response at three levels: mobile health centres, fixed health centres and hospitals. WHO/PAHO and health partners are supporting the Ministry’s priorities.

The re-activation of basic health services is a key priority to keep providing maternal and child health, treat chronic diseases, including tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, reduce malnutrition, manage cases of gender-based violence, and provide mental health services at the primary health care level. With the rainy season approaching, mobile clinics are crucial in order to serve the displaced.

Revised Health Cluster Response

Health Cluster partners are focusing their efforts on the following areas:

1. Effective coordination of the health sector response, needs and disaster risk assessment, monitoring and evaluation
   - Support national health authorities in coordination of the international health assistance and the Disaster Response Commission
   - Conduct health assessments and monitor mortality and morbidity trends by setting up early warning systems, monitor service provision and health facility capacity.

2. Ensure outbreak control and disease surveillance activities
   - Re-establish the capacity to prevent and control communicable diseases
   - Strengthen the health care information system
   - Ensure immunization activities and vector-borne and zoonotic disease control activities

3. Ensure adequate water supply and environmental health
   - Support the provision of safe water in health facilities
   - Support health care waste management
   - Hygiene promotion and health education in health facilities

4. Re-activation of basic health care services
   - Support the management of communicable diseases and primary health care services such as maternal and child health, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS
   - Support basic emergency repairs in damaged health facilities and strengthen the use of mobile clinics for primary health care
   - Provide equipment and supplies
   - Support human resources for health
   - Support prevention, screening and treatment of acute malnutrition

5. Effective treatment and rehabilitation of injured patients
   - Support the treatment of injuries and emergency services, ensure access to a free orthopaedic unit
   - Ensure proper functioning of at least one specialized institute on medical rehabilitation
   - Set up community-based rehabilitation services

6. Ensure availability of essential drugs and medical supplies
   - Provide essential medicines, surgical and trauma kits and other health supplies as needed.
   - Ensure the proper functioning of Haiti’s WHO/PAHO-managed central procurement agency for drugs and pharmaceutical supplies (PROMESS)

Health Cluster partners participating in the appeal are: CARE International, Fraternité Notre Dame, Handicap International, Hôpital Albert Schweitzer, Hôpital Sainte Croix, International Medical Corps (IMC), International Rescue Committee (IRC), IOM, Management and Resources for Community Health (MARCH), Médecins du Monde (MDM), Merlin, PAHO/WHO, Partners In Health (PIH), the Haitian Health Institute (HHI), Save the Children (SC), UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF and World Vision.

Funding Needs

- WHO/PAHO and Health Cluster funding needs will be specified in the launch of the revised Flash Appeal on 18 February, 2010.