Health Action in Crises
Highlights – No 78: 17 - 23 October 2005

Each week, the World Health Organization Department for Health Action in Crises in Geneva produces information highlights on the health aspects of selected humanitarian crises. The reports usually cover a selection of the situations for which a combined UN system humanitarian appeal has been launched. The WHO contributions in each situation are provided through a mix of different WHO programmes: the staff involved is drawn from WHO field and country offices, often with support from different departments in WHO regional offices and Headquarters. The remit of the WHO departments specifically concerned with Emergency and Humanitarian Action in Crises is to increase the effectiveness of the WHO contribution to crisis preparedness and response, transition and recovery. This note, which is not exhaustive, is designed for internal use and does not reflect any official position of the WHO Secretariat.

SOUTH ASIA EARTHQUAKE

Inter-agency Work:
- The IASC WG activated the UN Joint Logistics Centre for Pakistan.
- The IASC Health Cluster Working Group meeting took place on 13 Oct to discuss health sector priorities. The next meeting will take place on 18 Oct.
- Mental health and psychosocial support needs are expected to increase. The IASC Mental Health Taskforce has been activated to consider what can be done with a follow up meeting on 18 October.
- WHO will organize a teleconference on 19 October on agencies’ activities addressing mental health and psychosocial needs.
- On 17 Oct the IASC Taskforce discussed coordination arrangements and the UN Flash Appeal.
- The IASC Nutrition Cluster Working Group met on 17 October to discuss the minimum responses expected from all agencies.
- The IASC Cluster Working Group on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene circulated an update on their activities.
- The IASC Cluster WG on Early Recovery will meet from 19-21 October.

Assessments and events:
- Health needs assessments continue in accessible areas but large parts of the disaster-affected area are yet to be reached.
- Thousands of injured people have received medical and surgical care and evacuated by air to hospitals outside the disaster area. Trauma management continues to be a priority.
- Measles vaccination is an immediate priority, and attention should also be given to Primary Health Care and respiratory tract infections.
- Drinking water is in short supply, and this will become a major health threat.
- No communicable disease outbreaks have been reported but the risk is high. An early warning and surveillance system is being put in place.
- With plunging temperatures and lack of shelter, hypothermia is an additional threat. Tents, blankets and food for health facilities and affected population are urgently needed.
- The Pakistan Government Ministry of Health, with national and international health partners, is mobilizing large numbers of health teams to supplement the field hospitals that are operating in the disaster area.
- Medical logistics and the necessary supply management systems are being put into place.
- Health Cluster coordination arrangements have been put into place in Islamabad and Muzaffarabad with extensions planned for other operational centres.

Actions:
In Pakistan:
- Mass measles immunization campaign for all children 9 months-15 years has started.
- More than 200 surveillance officers and public health experts, recruited and trained by MoH and WHO, have been deployed to affected areas.
- WHO and MoH are establishing a referral system between the different health providers in Muzaffarabad to reduce the number of referrals to Islamabad.
- WHO and MoH are deploying 40 teams of 5 health professionals into the field this week. 17 surveillance officers have been trained for immediate deployment.
- WHO is planning to set up 4 warehouses in Mansehra and 5 in Muzaffarabad with a cold chain facility in the course of this week.
- WHO and MOH are collecting and analysing all available information on health status which will be shared with health partners.
- The following donors are providing support to WHO. Australia (US$1,899,696), Denmark (US$ 483,870), Ireland (EURO 100,000), Italy (EURO 250,000 plus in-kind donation of 12 Trauma kits A, 12 Trauma kits B, 15 New Emergency Health Kits, 5 diarrhoea Profile D, 5 diarrhoea Profile F and transport), Japan (US$ 1 million), Principality of Monaco (EURO 100,000), Norway (USD 250,000), Sweden (USD 1,928,020), Switzerland (US$ 100,000), the United Kingdom (USD 1,133,834), and USAID (USD 2 million).

In India:
- WHO is working on relief within the UN Disaster Management Team.
- WHO provided MOH with technical guidelines on Mass Casualty Management, Medical Supplies for Crisis Situation, Post Disaster Disease Surveillance, and Water Quality Surveillance.
- WHO provided US$ 12,000 to the Indian Red Cross and four surgical supply kits that would serve hundreds of injured persons.

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/
**HURRICANE STAN**

Concerns are growing for Hurricane Wilma. PAHO is monitoring the situation.

**Assessments and events:**
- The heavy rains from Hurricane Stan have almost stopped. Flood levels in affected areas are beginning to recede.
- There are no reports or rumours of outbreaks. However, given that water sources are contaminated, food safety and waste management poor, the risk is high.
- In Guatemala, the floods and landslides severely damaged houses and infrastructure in 251 of 331 municipalities in 15 of the country's 22 departments. 652 deaths were reported. More than 140,000 persons are residing in temporary shelters. Crop loss is estimated at US$ 400 million.
- In El Salvador, 69 deaths were reported with more than 69,603 people living in shelters. At least 21 health centres are damaged and 80% of roads network is affected. Sanitation and water are major health issues.

**Actions:**
- In Guatemala, PAHO/WHO installed the Humanitarian Supply Management System (SUMA/LSS) at the central warehouses of National Emergency Response Commission (CONRED), the Ministry of Public Health and the Secretariat of Social Works. PAHO/WHO mental health consultants and food safety experts have also been deployed.
- PAHO/WHO provided US$ 100,000 for medicines and supplies, mobilization of emergency teams, and temporary installations in the CONRED. Four vehicles were provided to MOH.
- In the Guatemala Flash appeal, WHO/PAHO is requesting a total of US$ 1,770,000:
  - Medical care and disease surveillance (US$ 850,000)
  - Nutritional monitoring and surveillance / Technical assistance (US$120,000)
  - Water and Sanitation/Technical Support (US$ 800,000).
- In El Salvador, PAHO installed SUMA and provided guidance on sanitary management of shelters and nutritional security in emergency situations.

**NIGER**

**Assessments and events:**
- The crisis continues and malaria remains the leading cause of mortality and morbidity.
- WHO co-chaired with MoH an interagency health coordination meeting where malaria epidemiological data from the past 3 years were analysed.
- Between 7 and 14 October 2005, 5 new cases of cholera were reported in the Tahoua region bringing the total number of cases reported between 13 July and 13 October to 477 (46 deaths).

**Actions:**
- WHO conducted a seminar on "Supporting Niger Associations for polio vaccination and malnutrition in Niger" in Niamey from 13-15 Oct for 350 religious scholars with the objective of involving them in immunization campaigns and responding to malnutrition situation in Niger.
- WHO hosted a three day workshop in Niamey for the Niger Rapid Intervention Team (ENIR), on preparedness and response to epidemics.
- A joint National Health Information System (SNIS) / WHO team is visiting the regions of Zinder and Maradi to improve the collection and analysis of malnutrition data from all stakeholders. These data are to be sent to the Regional Department of Public Health (DSRP), for a more complete analysis of the situation. All food crisis affected regions will be visited by this SNIS/WHO team by the end of October 2005.
- A malaria expert joined the WHO crisis response team in Niamey on the 15 October 2005 for a period of 6 weeks.

---

**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/)
**SIERRA LEONE**

**Assessments and events:**
- Widespread floods in the southern region of Sierra Leone has displaced more than 7000 people.
- More than 1000 families have been affected, with their farm land and houses destroyed.
- Poor sanitation in the affected areas presents serious risks to disease outbreaks such as cholera, diarrhoea, dysentery and typhoid fever.

**Actions:**
- WHO is working to provide essential and preventive medical supplies to the affected population through the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS).
- WHO has developed a plan amounting to US$ 54,000 in order to supply 3 cholera kits, 20 basic health emergency kits, anti-malaria drugs and 200 Rapid Diagnostic Tests kits.

---

**SUDAN**

**Assessments and events:**
- In Darfur, Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI), clinically diagnosed malaria, injuries and bloody diarrhoea remain the leading causes of morbidity. The majority of deaths are caused by clinically diagnosed malaria, followed by ARI and bloody diarrhoea.
- Heavy rainstorms in Port Sudan have affected at least 156,000 people with 3340 households destroyed. Affected groups - primarily IDPs from South Sudan, Nuba mountains, Western Sudan, Eritrea and from within Red Sea state- are living in the open next to their destroyed homes.
- Most in-country resources for relief are prepared well against Darfur, with its 1.8 million IDPs, and the South, where return of IDPs and reconstruction are the main priorities. Lack of preparedness at local level, funding and implementing capacity continues to be issue.

**Actions:**
- WHO/MoH pre-positioned four basic health kits for floods of the Gash River in Kassala.
- In North Darfur, preparations are underway for the next National Immunization Day in November.
- A team from WHO and the State Ministry of Health treated 230 patients - mostly women and children - during their bi-weekly visit to the Tawila area following the suspension of INGO activities in the area because of deteriorating security. They also vaccinated 50 children under 5 years.
- WHO conducted refresher courses for 40 hospital nurses and for 20 statisticians.
- WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNJLC and OCHA carried out a joint mission to Mallit camp to assess the need in shelter, food and health care after reported new arrivals.
- In South Darfur, WHO provided Nyala Teaching Hospital with additional antibiotics, anti-malarial drugs and anaesthetics.
- A joint mission by WHO, UNFPA, NCA, ACT and Caritas and the State Ministry of Health visited 11 health facilities in Ed Al Fursan to assess the standards of services, identify gaps in interventions and develop a strategy to improve quality of health care.
- The tuberculosis emergency control plan was translated into Arabic to train TB personnel from the SMoH.
- A team from the SMoH and WHO trained 20 medical workers in Al Deain in cholera preparedness.
- WHO supported SMoH to conduct clinical and laboratory diagnosis of malaria using Para check and provided 2 500 Para check to health partners.
- In West Darfur, WHO provided a New Emergency Health Kit, 2000 para checks and 25 000 Oral Rehydration Salts.

---

11 staff from the WHO-Sudan country team have been dispatched to Pakistan, as surge force for immediate relief, while other personnel is being deployed from across the region.

---

**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/)
| **IRAQ** | **Assessments and events:**  
- No major changes in the situation on the ground after the 15th Oct National Referendum.  
- WHO continues to support the physical rehabilitation of different health facilities.  

**Actions:**  
- WHO Iraq is working closely with the MOH Communicable Disease Control (CDC) Centre in Baghdad, to prepare for possible Avian and Pandemic Influenza in Iraq.  
- WHO provided MOH an Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Checklist, recommendations, and case investigation forms.  
- A joint WHO/FAO Task Force on Avian and Pandemic Influenza has been established.  
- WHO procured and delivered 22 computers with printers and scanners at the cost of US$ 78,000 for the water quality control labs of the Ministry of Environment  
- WHO held a teleconference with MOH Maternal and Child Health Unit Officials to discuss the implementation of a new survey on maternal and child health in Iraq.  
- WHO in collaboration with the MOH School Health Unit and UNICEF, is conducting health screening of primary school children in 100 schools in seven governorates - Kirkuk, Rasafa, Basra, for visual and hearing difficulties. |

| **WEST BANK and GAZA STRIP** | **Assessments and events:**  
- The referral of patients abroad continues to be difficult because of the closure of the Gaza Strip Erez (northern border) and Rafah (southern border).  
- Avian Flu Preparedness:  
  - The Palestinian Ministries of Health and Agriculture have started to coordinate actions, such as banning import of poultry from infected countries.  
  - The Israeli Ministry of Health recently released a contingency plan.  

**Actions:**  
- The Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse of WHO financed the Israeli-Palestinian public health magazine Bridges of issue 6 vol.I which is focusing on improving mental health. This magazine will soon be on-line.  
- A local consultant was recruited in order to prepare a situation analysis of the social determinants of health. The work will be carried out in the following 3 months. |

| **INTER-AGENCY ISSUES** |  
- UNFPA is holding a working conference “Women, Peace and Security: Implementing Resolution 1325: UNFPA’s Role, Responsibilities and Opportunities” in Bucharest, Romania, from 17-20 October 2005. WHO is invited.  
- On 20 October, the IASC-UNDG Tsunami Taskforce is updating on the Tsunami impact and recovery assessment process. WHO will participate.  
- The next ECHA meeting of 19 October dealt with the natural disasters in South Asia and Central America. The meeting also briefed on the recent joint DPKO, OCHA and UNDP mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo and review of the current situation in Sudan. WHO will participate. |

---

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

**MAP DISCLAIMER:** The presentation of material on the maps contained herein does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the World Health Organization concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or areas or of its authorities, or concerning the delineation of its frontiers or boundaries. Map source: Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin.