Each week, the World Health Organization Health Action in Crises in Geneva produces information highlights on the health aspects of selected humanitarian crises. Drawing on the various WHO programmes, contributions cover activities from field and country offices and the support provided by WHO regional offices and Headquarters. The mandate 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.

### AFGHANISTAN

**Assessments and events:**
- Flash floods and avalanches triggered by torrential rains killed at least 50 people and destroyed or damaged more than 500 houses in the southern and south-western provinces of Helmand, Uruzgan, Badghis and Ghor. Around 3500 persons are reported to be affected.
- The Joint Disaster Preparedness Committee (JDPC), which includes the Government, UN agencies, international relief organizations and coalition forces, has sent rapid assessment teams to the affected areas.
- Local resources are enough to cover the needs and the health supplies are included in the joint Government/UN response plan. The JDPC has already sent medicine, together with tents, tarpaulins and blankets to Uruzgan.

**Actions:**
- The WHO Representative is acting for the Resident Humanitarian Coordinator and thus leading the overall humanitarian response.
- In the South, the WHO sub office assessed the damages to health facilities and coordinates the health response, monitoring availability of staff and disease outbreaks.
- WHO delivered 37 diarrhoeal diseases kits (part of the Inter Agency Health Emergency kits 2006) to the MoH. The supplies will be used in all areas affected by insecurity, drought or floods.

### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

**Assessments and events:**
- In Kinshasa, in a sudden outburst of violence, at least ten people have died during street clashes between the army and militiamen loyal to Mr Bemba.
- As of 16 March, 730 cases of meningitis and 84 deaths had been reported in rural areas bordering in Sudan and Uganda. A mass vaccination campaign is planned and will require between 800 000 and one million vaccine doses.

**Actions:**
- UN agencies and OCHA met with the Ministry for Humanitarian Affairs to strengthen collaboration and present the Humanitarian Action Plan for 2007.
- From 1 to 15 March, WHO, FAO, WFP, OCHA and the Lutheran World Federation visited the District of Bas-Uele, Province Orientale. The mission recommended the urgent provision of essential drugs and strengthening primary health care and reproductive health services.
- In 2006, WHO’s emergency activities were supported by Finland and Italy. Funds were received from OCHA’s humanitarian fund and the UN CERF.

### BURKINA FASO

**Assessments and events:**
- From 1 January to 11 March, the MoH reported 7333 suspected cases of meningitis, including 583 deaths. Twenty-two districts, three of them in the capital, Ouagadougou, are currently over the epidemic threshold (10 cases/100 000/week).
- The first phase of a vaccination campaign targeting 1 million people has been completed in six districts and is ongoing in a further two districts. The bivalent vaccine was secured from The International Coordinating Group (ICG) on Vaccine Provision for Epidemic Meningitis Control as well as from the security stockpiles held by the MoH.

**Actions:**
- The ICG approved the release of 3 350 000 additional doses for further vaccination campaigns in 13 affected districts and a first shipment of 1 165 000 doses arrived early this week.
- WHO, MSF, Plan Burkina, and UNICEF are providing technical and financial support to the MoH in the coordination and implementation of the response to the outbreak.
- Over US$ 1.2 million are urgently needed to overcome the financial shortfall and allow all necessary campaigns to be implemented in full.
**SOUTHERN AFRICA**

- Humanitarian agencies and partners are increasingly concerned by the possibility of food shortages in the sub region.
- At least 72 people have died following blasts at a military armoury in Mozambique’s capital Maputo triggered by high temperatures.

**Assessments and events:**
- In Madagascar, preliminary assessments after the cyclone Indlala report 30 deaths and thousands homeless. The cyclone halted relief efforts in the south, where drought is already affecting 582,000 people: food insecurity is worsening. Immediate needs include essential drugs, food distribution and prevention of waterborne diseases.
- In Zambia, floods have brought increased risk of malaria or diarrhoea outbreaks to some 1.2 million people. Many health facilities are now isolated, operating on limited medical supplies and technical supervision. Impassable roads hamper mobile clinics and the movement of patients to referral centres.
- In Mozambique, thousand of people affected by the floods along the Zambezi are still living with little water and poor sanitation. Meanwhile, as of 21 March, 109 cases of cholera and 3 deaths were reported in the provinces of Niassa and Cabo Delgado.

**Actions:**
- In Madagascar, WHO has made available the medicines it had pre-positioned before the cyclone season. Stocks are however running out and WHO is trying to mobilize additional supplies.
- In Zambia, a recent assessment recommends epidemic preparedness measures in all affected districts. WHO has used US$ 10,000 from its internal emergency budget for cholera response equipment and drugs.
- In Mozambique, WHO, the MoH the national Red Cross and NGO partners are planning to train health workers in basic surveillance, including case definition to strengthen systems for the detection and response to outbreaks. Three WHO staff have been deployed to Zambezia and Tete Provinces to support health partners. Following the recommendation of the joint assessment conducted with local health authorities, WHO will procure VHF radios to strengthen epidemiological surveillance.

**CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**

- The Emergency Relief Coordinator is due to visit CAR to shed light on the situation in the north and the lack of financial means and humanitarian actors on the ground.

**Assessments and events:**
- Following clashes between government forces and rebels over the past weeks, up to 95% of Birao’s population has fled into surrounding countryside. Most houses as well as the schools and hospital have been destroyed or looted.

**Actions:**
- WHO has donated transport media to MSF-France to support meningitis surveillance around Paoua, Ouham-Pendé, and in other northern prefectures.
- Using funds from the UN CERF, WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF are working with the NGO Aide Médicale Internationale for to set up health care services for the management of obstetric emergencies. WHO is providing financial support as well as one New Emergency Health Kit and 2 dressing kits.
- Another ten dressing kits will be pre-positioned in conflict-affected zones, while two trauma kits, one new emergency health kit and one diarrhoeal diseases kit have just been delivered to WHO in Bangui.
- In 2006, support for WHO’s emergency activities was received from Finland Italy and the CERF. Additional resources are needed.

**OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY**

- More information is available at: [http://www.who.int/hac/events/opt_2006/index.html](http://www.who.int/hac/events/opt_2006/index.html)

**Assessments and events:**
- UN agencies working in the oPt issued a press release stating their grave concern by the recent attack on a UN convoy travelling from Erez to Gaza.

**Actions:**
- The Mental Health team organized in Amman a workshop on the coordination of mental health and psychosocial activities in the oPt; 20 persons participated from WHO West Bank and Gaza, HQ, EMRO, UNRWA and the MoH.
- WHO participated to the work of a fact finding team to finalize a report which will be presented to the World Health Assembly on the economic, social and health conditions of the Palestinian population according to the resolution of the 2006 WHA.
- In 2006, WHO’s emergency activities were funded by the Organization’s Regular Budget and contributions from ECHO, Finland, Japan and Norway as well as the CERF.
SUDAN

Assessments and events:
- In Darfur, humanitarian access remains unpredictable and fragile. IDP camps are almost at full capacity due to a continuing influx of people fleeing violence.
- In South Darfur, the ICRC is stepping up its operation in Gereida to assist IDPs in Darfur’s largest camp. A new national NGO, Global Health Foundation, started operating in Kalma Camp after the withdrawal of Médecins du Monde.
- Between 1 January and 18 March, 7690 cases of meningitis and 479 deaths were reported in nine states of southern Sudan. Juba and Magwi are the worst affected. During the same period, 3264 cases of acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) and 98 deaths were reported, including 864 cases last week only. Ye, Central Equatoria, Kapoeta, Eastern Equatoria, and Akobo, Jonglie, first reported cases in the last two weeks. Juba, Ye, and Akobo are most affected.
- In Abyei, 104 cases of measles and two deaths were reported between 10 February and 10 March; most cases were reported in Abyei town.

Actions:
- In South Darfur, WHO, the State MoH, UNICEF and partner NGOs continue health education and hygiene promotion campaigns against hepatitis E in Ottash camp.
- WHO visited Kass hospital to follow-up free access of IDPs, drugs availability and storage management.
- In West Darfur, 32 IDP volunteers in El Geneina were trained on the proper use of spray equipment to act as malaria teams in their camps. The training was facilitated by WHO and the State MoH.
- A second training workshop on the prevention of HIV/AIDS was conducted by UNICEF, UNFPA, and WHO for 32 participants.
- In southern Sudan, mass meningitis vaccination campaigns were conducted in 15 counties with the support of MSF, Merlin, IMS, Save the Children’s Fund, UNICEF and WHO. Control measures against the epidemic include field assessments in areas reporting new cases and training on proper case management.
- In Abyei, MSF-Switzerland is organizing with the State MoH and WHO a measles vaccination campaign for 29,000 children aged 6 months to 15 years.
- In response to these two outbreaks, WHO, the State MoH and UNICEF conducted a training on the management and surveillance of cerebrospinal meningitis and measles. The State MoH will conduct another training before the end of March.
- WHO and NGO partners are also supporting the MoH with AWD control measures, case management and technical support.
- In 2006, contributions for WHO’s emergency activities were received from ECHO, Finland, Ireland, Norway, Switzerland, the United States as well as the CERF and the Common Humanitarian Fund. For 2007, support has been received from Ireland and the Common Humanitarian Fund.

HORN OF AFRICA

Assessments and events:
- Since December 2006, the Rift Valley Fever (RVF) outbreak has affected 17 districts in Kenya. A total of 684 cases have been reported including 234 confirmed and 155 deaths (CFR 23%). Since end of January, most cases are reported in Baringo district, which has so far reported 172 suspected cases, the second highest after Garissa.
- In southern Somalia, 5602 AWD cases including 251 deaths have been reported between 30 December 2006 and 10 March. The affected regions are Hiran, Lower and Middle Shabelle, the Jubas and Banadir.
- Hundreds of people are reportedly fleeing Mogadishu as violence continues.
- In Djibouti, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network warned of food insecurity in the north-west.

Actions:
- In Kenya, WHO supported MoH in organizing a training on the Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response for provincial and district health staff in Mombasa.
- In the Coast Region, WHO supported a training on the Integrated Manage-
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/hac/

**BOLIVIA**

**Assessments and events:**
- Rains continue and scattered floods persist in Santa Cruz and Beni, the two most affected departments.
- With almost 400,000 people affected, local and international efforts continue throughout the country.
- The limited access to safe water and a lack of sanitation is raising the risk of disease. Authorities report high numbers of both malaria and dengue, while gastrointestinal and respiratory infections have increased.

**Actions:**
- PAHO/WHO is working closely with the MoH to distribute health kits, implement health relief activities and manage humanitarian supplies.

**INTER-AGENCY ISSUES**

- **IASC Working Group.** The IASC WG meeting was hosted by the ICRC in Geneva on 19-21 March. It discussed the humanitarian reform, humanitarian space and protection, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian action, as well as benchmarks for determining when displacements end, HIV/AIDS in emergencies and early warning early action.
- **Privatizing Security.** The first meeting of the inter-agency Advisory Group on privatizing security “Understanding usage and establishing norms and standards for the humanitarian community”, took place on 22 March.
- **Clusters.** The report Implementation of Global Cluster Capacity Building. 1 April 2006 - 31 March 2007 was launched in Geneva on 23 March. The next meeting of the IASC Task Team Sub-Group on the operational aspects of the cluster approach will be held on 29 March.
- **Iraq.** On 17 and 18 April, UNHCR is organizing in Geneva an international conference on “Addressing the humanitarian needs of refugees and internationally displaced persons inside Iraq and in neighbouring countries”.
- **IASC Plenary.** The next IASC Plenary at the level of Heads of Agency will meet in New York on 30 April.
- **CERF.** The Secretariat of the Central Emergency Response Fund will host a training of trainers in Geneva on 2-3 April.
- **ECHA.** The next ECHA meeting will take place on 3 April.
- **Public Health Pre-Deployment Training.** The next course (PHPD3), organized by WHO, will take place from 15 to 28 April in Moscow, Russian Federation. Additional information can be viewed online at: http://www.who.int/hac/techguidance/training/predeployment/en/index.html
- **Humanitarian Coordinators.** The annual retreat of Humanitarian Coordinators will be held in Geneva on 8-10 May.
- **Preparedness and Contingency Planning.** The IASC Sub-Working Group is preparing an inter-agency consultation of Contingency Planners on 2-4 July.
- **Disaster Risk Reduction.** The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction will first meet on 5-7 June.

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

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