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.

PERU

Assessments and events:
- On 15 August, a series of earthquakes culminating in a 7.5 magnitude quake struck off the coast of Peru, approximately 60km from the city of Pisco. So far, 510 deaths and more than 1000 injured are reported, but figures are expected to rise as search and rescue continues.
- Power and telephone services, which were interrupted by the quake, are gradually being re-established within Peru and in Lima. There have been reports of hundreds of collapsed homes in Pisco, Cañete and Chincha. Several health facilities in the department of Ica, including hospitals in Pisco and Chincha, have suffered physical damage and are operating on a limited basis.
- A tsunami warning, was issued for Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Colombia and the Pacific region but was later lifted.

Actions:
- Pre-hospital care units have been deployed to the affected zone, including Ica, to assist with rescue efforts, attend to the injured and transport them to health facilities.
- In Chincha and Ica, the MoH has deployed a health team of 50 doctors, 30 nurses, 20 ambulances, a mobile operations centre and medical supplies.
- The President has requested that all hospitals run by the MoH, the armed forces and the social security system provide care at no cost to patients.
- WHO/PAHO is meeting with the UN Emergency Team and the Vice Minister of Health to assess priority relief needs.

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Assessments and events:
- Since 5 August, floods caused by heavy rains have caused huge human and material damage. Preliminary information reports 214 dead, 80 missing and as many as 300 000 people homeless. Up to 30 000 homes are reported damaged and tens of thousands of hectares of farmland flooded. Rains have also destroyed railways, roads and bridges, suspended power supply and cut off the communication network.
- Flooding has hit most of the south and some of its most productive agricultural regions. The most affected regions are Kangwon, North Hwanghae, South Hamgyong, South Pyongan, South Hwanghae and the capital Pyongyang.
- The Government has appealed for international emergency aid. Priority needs include food as well as family and diarrhoeal diseases kits.

Actions:
- On 14 August, the Government invited UN Agencies (UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP, WHO and the UN Resident Coordinator a.i.) based in Pyongyang to participate in a needs assessment in the North Hwanghae Province. Findings indicate that around 10% of the population is displaced, 70% of the arable land flooded and half of the health clinics destroyed.
- On 16 August, the UN, NGOs and ECHO met in Pyongyang to amalgamate assessments and determine the way forward.
- Partners and donors are working together to mobilize funds and assistance.

WEST AFRICA FLOODS

Assessments and events:
- Floods caused by heavy seasonal rains continue in West Africa. In Benin’s capital Cotonou, several people were killed and severe damage is reported. In the north of Burkina Faso, almost 10 000 have lost their houses, wells are flooded and the lack of potable water is acute. In Côte d’Ivoire, nearly 2000 people in Agboville, north of Abidjan, are struggling to find drinking water after floods s contaminated the local wells; over 1000 people are displaced. In Senegal, several hundreds of families have lost their homes and crops in the west and in Casamance. In Mauritania, flash floods in the south-eastern city of Tintane have destroyed the local health centre and washed away sanitation.
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](http://www.who.int/hac)

### FLOODS IN BANGLADESH, NEPAL AND INDIA

![Map of Bangladesh, Nepal, and India](image)

- Facilities and water pipes; 16,000 people have no access to drinking water.
- High morbidity and mortality by malaria, cholera, acute respiratory infections among children under five are being reported. Other health risks include dysentery, typhoid and malnutrition, particularly among children.

**Actions:**
- WHO is monitoring the situation and keeping on stand-by should additional support be requested. AFRO Regional Office and headquarters are mobilizing internal resources and assisting national authorities and health partners in the mobilization of external assistance.
- In *Benin*, WHO is assessing the situation; rapid evaluations are being organized to determine the needs.
- In *Mauritania*, a WHO, UNICEF and WFP mission was conducted in the affected area to assess the epidemiological and sanitation situation; a first assortment of essential drugs were provided through the mission. Besides, WHO is requesting US$ 72,000 to meet emergency needs including the provision of insecticide-treated bed nets, sanitation supplies, health kits and logistic support.

**Assessments and events:**
- In *India*, Bangladesh and Nepal, tens of millions people continue to be affected by the monsoon floods.
- In *Bangladesh*, the total death toll has risen to more than 600. More than 61,000 people have contracted diarrhoea and 15 deaths reported. A field hospital has been opened in Dhaka to treat diarrhoea patients. Altogether, 3017 national medical teams are providing emergency care in 1247 shelters. The needs remain huge but the overall situation is improving.
- In *Nepal*, rains have stopped and water is receding but there have been new floods. The Nepal Red Cross reports 125 people killed and more than 337,000 affected. Water-, food- and vector-borne diseases as well as skin, eye and ear infections are reported, but no major outbreak: only in Kalikot there have been rumours of cholera, apparently not related to the floods. Altogether, District Health Offices are managing the health response well. Priorities remain shelter, food, water, sanitation and primary health care.
- In *India*, flooding continues particularly in Bihar and Assam. Rains have begun again in West Bengal and more downpours are expected in the eastern and north-eastern regions. Up to 31 million people are affected and nearly one million have been evacuated. So far, 1835 deaths are reported. In the affected areas, people suffer from diarrhoea, dysentery and other waterborne diseases. Polio is another threat as the floods are making transmission easier.

**Actions:**
- WHO is working with the governments of the affected countries, strengthening disease surveillance and health relief systems. Across the three countries the Polio networks have been mobilized to respond to the crisis.
- In *Bangladesh*, WHO is supporting the national health authorities in disease surveillance and by providing emergency drug supplies (IV fluids, antibiotics).
- In *Nepal*, WHO is assisting health authorities for assessments and disease surveillance, and coordinating activities with health partners and other UN agencies. Emergency supplies have been deployed to respond to the anticipated increase in communicable diseases. Prior to the floods, WHO had pre-positioned diarrhoeal and emergency kits in Kathmandu, Nepalgunj and Britnagar. Responding to the possible outbreak of cholera in Kalikot, WHO provided a second diarrhoeal kit to the district hospital there.
- In *India*, the MoH and WHO are monitoring the health situation in the flood-affected districts of Bihar province through the State disease-monitoring centre in Patna. WHO and UNICEF are providing technical assistance to a measles vaccination campaign in Assam.
- Norway pledged to support WHO’s emergency response in flood-affected countries through the donation of kits. Support for WHO’s emergency operations in Nepal is provided by the Republic of Korea. WHO is also using its regular country budget to respond to emergency needs.
## IRAQ

**Assessments and events:**
- On 14 August, a series of explosions in the northern town of Qahtaniya, near Mosul, killed between 200 and 500 people. The blasts targeted a Kurdish religious minority, the Yazidi. Some 375 more were reportedly wounded as at least four blasts hit residential areas. The Regional MoH is describing the situation as a humanitarian crisis.
- The wounded and the dead are being received by private hospitals surrounding the area, the Multi-National Force-Iraq health facilities and government hospitals.
- Beside medicine and medical supplies, shelter and support are urgently required for the 500 families whose homes were destroyed. Needs are being assessed and the findings are shared with the humanitarian agencies.

**Actions:**
- WHO/HAC is preparing an urgent shipment of medical kits as a donation to the Iraqi Health Crescent. Burn and dressing supplies (enough for 400 sterile dressings) will be also shipped. WHO is also looking into the procurement of two to three surgical supply kits to support the health authorities in the Kurdistan region. One kit covers the needs for medical disposable equipment of approximately 100 surgical inpatients for ten days.

More information is available at: [www.emro.who.int/iraq](http://www.emro.who.int/iraq)

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## CHAD

**Assessments and events:**
- Security remains precarious across the east, where UN phase 4 is still in force. Mobility continues to be restricted by the heavy rains. Fighting was reported in a village near Adré on 9 August, where ten wounded were admitted to the hospital.
- Between 1 January and 5 August, 888 cases of hepatitis E have been reported in the IDP sites of Koloma and Gouroukoum, near Goz Beida.

**Actions:**
- The polio vaccination campaign in eastern Chad was successfully completed. In Ouaddai, the region hosting the greatest number of refugees and IDPs, preliminary figures show an excellent coverage.
- The WHO nutritionist conducted an evaluation of the management of severe malnutrition among the IDP and host populations in Goz Beida, and assisted UNICEF and regional health authorities to conduct a training on this subject for 20 health workers from the Abéché regional hospital.
- A new international epidemiologist has joined the WHO team in Abéché.
- WHO’s emergency activities in eastern Chad are supported by ECHO, Italy and the CERF.

On 10 August, Cluster leads in Abéché met to discuss the strategy for the assistance to IDPs and identify the needs for the CAP 2008.

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## HORN OF AFRICA

**Assessments and events:**
- In Somalia, recent surveys in Lower and Middle Shabelle report acute malnutrition rates above emergency threshold levels (GAM > 15%), with alarmingly high rates of severe acute malnutrition (SAM > 4%). The Food Security Analysis Unit for Somalia (FAO/FSAU) and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS Net) estimate that 490 000 people are in an “acute food and livelihood crisis”, caused by poor harvests,. inflation (40% to 60% increases in last three months), and the large number of IDPs due to escalating insecurity. Between 1 January and 10 August, 3864 cases of acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) were reported in Somaliland including 46 related deaths. Another 85 cases were reported in Mogadishu, including one death, and 149 cases were reported from Lower and Middle Juba, the majority in Jilib district.
- In Ethiopia, 85 463 AWD cases have been reported since the beginning of the outbreak. A volcano has erupted in the remote Afar region, leaving two people missing and forcing hundreds to leave the area.

**Actions:**
- In Somalia, the regional health profiling has so far assessed 15 health facilities in Bakoool, Bay, Hiiran, and Middle Shabelle regions. The information
gathered will be entered in a database and shared with health cluster partners. WHO also provided two basic health kits and other supplies for the treatment of diarrhoeal diseases and TB to Hawa Abdi hospital in Afgooye. Hawa Abdi hospital is one of the main referral hospitals for the IDPs fleeing Mogadishu.

- **In Ethiopia**, routine surveillance of diseases of epidemic potential and coordination with health partners are ongoing.
- WHO activities are supported by the CERF, Canada, Italy, Norway, Sweden, the United States and Finland for Somalia and cluster coordination, and by the CERF and the local Humanitarian Response Fund in Ethiopia.

**SUDAN**

Assessments and events:
- Reports from the Sudanese Red Crescent suggest that 72 people have died in the recent floods; more than 73,800 houses were partially or fully destroyed and approximately 11,000 cattle have been lost. More rains are expected.
- Only 30% of the US$4.6 million requested to help people affected by the floods has been received so far.
- A cholera outbreak in eastern Sudan, spreading because of the flood, has reportedly killed 49 people.

Actions:
- WHO is closely monitoring the situation. Emergency epidemic surveillance measures are in place, supplies for preventive and curative health have been pre-positioned.
- In 2007, contributions for WHO’s emergency activities were received from ECHO, Ireland, Italy, Finland, the CERF and the Common Humanitarian Fund.

**INTER-AGENCY ISSUES**

- Clusters.
  - An external evaluation of the cluster approach in Chad is taking place from 13 to 23 August.
  - A meeting of global cluster leads will take place in Geneva on 28 August.
  - The IASC Cluster Task Team will meet in Geneva on 29 August.
  - Emergency Shelter Cluster workshops will be held in Skovde, Sweden, on 11-20 September, and in Stuttgart, Germany, on 13-22 October. A training workshop will take place in Bangkok on 15-19 October.
  - A meeting of the Global Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Cluster will take place in Geneva on 25-26 September.
  - The Global Health Cluster and the three Clusters (Health, Nutrition and Wash) will meet in Nairobi on 13-15 November.
- On 15 August, the IASC Weekly meeting in Geneva discussed the situation of internally displaced persons in Côte d’Ivoire and the recent floods in South-East Asia.
- A meeting to prepare for the IASC Working Group Retreat will take place in Geneva on 23 August. The Retreat will be held in Geneva on 18-19 September.
- **Gender and Humanitarian Action.** The next Sub-Working Group meeting will take place on 5 September. A face to face meeting will be held in Geneva on 18-19 October.
- **Civil-Military Coordination.** The 74th UN Civil-Military Coordination Training Course will be held on 9-14 September in Accra, Ghana.
- The Humanitarian Information Centre Stakeholders’ Consultation will take place in Geneva on 10-11 September.
- **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergencies.** The next meeting of the IASC Taskforce will take place in Geneva on 10-13 September. The newly issued IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings will be officially launched on 14 September.
- The next meeting of the IASC CAP SWG will take place on 20 September.
- **Contingency Planning.** The inter-agency drafting group on the revision of the IASC Contingency Planning Guidelines will meet in Geneva on 24-25 September. The IASC Sub-Working Group on Preparedness and Contingency Planning will meet in Geneva on 26-27 September.
- An inter-agency meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction will take place in Geneva on 25 September.

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

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