Each week, the World Health Organization Health Action in Crises in Geneva produces information highlights on critical health-related activities in countries where there are 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.

**VIET NAM**

Assessments and Events
- At least 82 people are reported to have died during the recent floods, bringing the total number of deaths since the beginning of October to nearly 200. The flooding has affected several of the central coastal provinces, causing extensive damage to property and crops. Close to 95,000 houses are left under water, and fear of disease outbreaks is growing.
- As floodwaters begin to recede, residents are already preparing for Tropical Storm Peipah, due to hit before the end of the week.

Actions
- The MoH is responding to the immediate needs of the affected populations, providing essential drugs while the provincial health authorities are strengthening health care and environmental hygiene.
- WHO is monitoring the situation and sharing health information and guidelines with the MoH and local health authorities.
- WHO is also assisting for the improvement of surveillance of disease outbreaks in affected areas.
- WHO emergency assistance so far has been supported by regular budget funds.

**TROPICAL STORM NOEL – THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, HAITI AND CUBA**

Assessments and Events
- The death toll from Tropical Storm Noel has risen to more than 130, making it the deadliest storm of the region this year.
- In the Dominican Republic, official figures report 85 people dead, 48 missing and 4406 rescued. More than 16,000 homes have been damaged; according to the Red Cross, the number of displaced exceeds 66,500, including more than 35,000 in temporary shelters. So far, 137 communities remain inaccessible.
- Conjunctivitis and diarrhoea are the main conditions reported in the shelters. Three cases of meningitis have also been notified. Water distribution systems are damaged in many places, raising the risk of waterborne diseases.
- Immediate health needs as listed in the Flash Appeal include water quality control and improved hygiene and sanitary conditions, epidemiological surveillance and disease control, and continued provision of health care, including distribution of medical supplies and reproductive health commodities.
- In Haiti, 43 deaths are officially reported, 27 of them in the Ouest Department. Fifteen people are still missing and close to 14,200 are in shelters. More than 5000 houses have been damaged or destroyed but there is no report of damage to health structures.
- In Cuba, officials report more than 80,000 people affected and 60,000 evacuated. Although not a single death has been reported, the storm has left damages worth millions in the east.

Actions
- In the Dominican Republic, the MoH monitors needs and provides essential drugs. WHO/PAHO technical staff helps identify needs in essential drugs and equipment and respond to needs in water and sanitation.
- WHO/PAHO also supports the MoH in analysing data, identifying communities at risk and setting up a communications plan to strengthen the response.
- WHO/PAHO is requesting US$ 2.1 million through the Flash Appeal to support water purification and quality control activities, epidemiological surveillance, the provision of health care and medical supplies and the coordination of the health sector response.
- In Haiti, WHO/PAHO continues to support the MoH, providing transport for the MoH emergency focal points and assisting in the coordination efforts.
- WHO/PAHO’s first assistance so far has been supported by regular budget.
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/
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WEST AFRICA FLOODS

Assessments and Events
- Around 800,000 people have been affected by floods in 14 West Africa countries. Among the hardest hit countries are: Ghana (over 332,000 affected), Togo (over 127,900), Burkina Faso (over 92,900), Niger (57,000), Mauritania (53,000) and Mali (over 42,000).
- In many places, the floods have destroyed agricultural farmlands and food stocks and are expected to further aggravate the nutrition situation of infants and children in the next months and years.

Actions
- Across the region, WHO is supporting national health authorities and partners on prevention and preparedness against acute watery diarrhoeas and malaria as well as in mobilizing funding to support the response in flood-affected areas.
- WHO received US$ 400,000 in CERF funding to control the spread of cholera in Guinea, purchase diarrhoeal diseases kits, organize training on the proper case management of cholera, support surveillance and control the correct distribution of supplies. A donation of health supplies was also received from Norway. Besides this, WHO’s emergency activities in West Africa are supported only by internal funds, from the Regional Office and Geneva.

BURUNDI

Assessments and Events
- According to UNHCR, 31,400 Burundian refugees have been repatriated from Tanzania since January, including 440 spontaneous returnees. So far, 370,399 have returned under the UNHCR facilitated repatriation process which began in April 2002. An estimated 300,000 still live in Tanzania.

Actions
- WHO participated in a meeting lead by the Minister of National Solidarity, Human Right and Gender in charge of repatriation process of Burundese refugees coming from Tanzania.
- WHO helped the MoH organize vaccination campaign against meningitis in Ruyigi province. Preliminary reports show that 98% of the 45,000 people targeted by the campaign were immunized. Simultaneously, WHO provided support to strengthen epidemiological surveillance in the area.
- Essential drugs donated by DFID to support free health services for children under five and pregnant women are now available in health centres. WHO will organize a training session on drugs distribution and monitoring.
- WHO’s emergency activities in Burundi are supported by Finland and the Republic of Korea.

Early July no new cases of meningitis have been notified. Since January, 12 cases and one death have been reported, all in Northern Red Sea.

Actions
- In Somalia, WHO continues assessing the possibility of establishing an operational base in Merka, to ensure appropriate response to the health needs of the IDP settlements on the road from Mogadishu to Afgoye.
- Following the report of an increased number of cases of acute watery diarrhoea in Berbera Town, Somaliland, WHO provided support to local health authorities for training, case management and supplies.
- In Ethiopia, seven WHO consultants are providing technical support to AWD affected regions. In Oromiya, WHO organized an AWD sensitization campaign in Arsi Zone for local health authorities as well as religious leaders and elders from 25 woredas. WHO, UNICEF and the Federal MoH jointly started the development of a health and nutrition plan for 2008.
- In Eritrea, a team has been dispatched to Southern Red Sea to investigate a reported outbreak of acute diarrhoeal disease.
- An ECHO-funded project is ongoing in areas of Northern and Southern Red Sea. The project targets close to 100,000 women of child bearing age and more than 70,000 children under five (some moderately to severely malnourished) aims to provide basic health, nutritional and antenatal care.
- WHO activities are supported by the CERF, Canada, Italy, Norway, Sweden, the United States and Finland for Somalia and cluster coordination, by the CERF and the local Humanitarian Response Fund in Ethiopia, and by the CERF and ECHO for Eritrea.

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OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

More information is available at: www.emro.who.int/palestine/

Assessments and Events
- The MoH is facing continued problems to maintain access to quality services. Increased restriction of movements prevents both health personnel and supplies from reaching clinics and people from seeking care.
- Although shortages of pharmaceutical supplies have diminished thanks to the ECHO-funded pharmaceutical project managed by WHO and the MoH, the chronic emergency and the unpredictability of the transport of goods in the Gaza Strip requires the pre-positioning of large quantity of pharmaceutical supplies. However, there are so far hardly any donors’ financial commitments for the pharmaceutical sector in 2008. Immediate funds are necessary to avert a catastrophic situation in the Palestinian public pharmaceutical.

Actions
- A logistic coordination meeting was held between partners to discuss the increasing difficulties to get goods out of the West Bank into the Gaza Strip.
- ECHO conducted a monitoring visit to review the achievements of the pharmaceutical project.
- WHO has facilitated the preparation of the health section for the CAP 2008. Access to quality health care was highlighted as key priority for the sector.
- WHO’s activities are supported by Finland ECHO and the CERF.

INTER-AGENCY ISSUES
- Clusters.
  - The Cluster for Camp Coordination and Camp Management met on 8 November.
  - The Global Health Cluster will meet face to face in Geneva on 14-16 November.
- The 69th IASC Working Group meeting took place in Rome on 5-7 November.
- The IASC Task Force on HIV/AIDS in Emergencies met on 9 November.
- A Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative meeting will take place in Geneva on 13 November.
- On 14 November, the IASC Weekly meeting in Geneva will update on Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and on the outcome of the 69th IASC WG.
- The next meeting of the UN Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs will be held on 15 November.
- Humanitarian Reform Country Workshops will take place in Afghanistan (14-15 November), Haiti (19-23 November), Côte d'Ivoire (4-5 December) and Sudan (date to be confirmed).
- CERF. The next inter-agency meeting on the Central Emergency Response Fund will be held on 16 November. CERF training will take place in Nairobi on 20 and 21 November, and in Bangkok on 29 and 30 November.
- The next IASC Sub-Working Group on the Consolidated Appeals Process will take place on 22 November. The 2008 CAP Launch is scheduled to take place in Geneva on 11 December.
- Gender. An inter-agency Workshop on Gender Equality and Gender-based Violence Programming in Humanitarian Action will take place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 26-28 November.
- Military and Civil Defence Assets. An Extraordinary Session on the Use of MCDA will take place in Geneva on 28 November. The Annual meeting of the Consultative Group on MCDA will be held on 29 November.
- The 76th United Nations Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord) Training Course will be held on 3-7 December in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
- Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration. A DDR course will be held in Accra, Ghana, on 3-14 December.
- Safe Access to Firewood and Alternative Energy in Humanitarian Settings. An information and briefing session on the IASC Task Force on SAFE will take place in Geneva on 7 December.
- The IASC Principals meeting will take place in Geneva on 10 December.

SPECIAL EVENT
The Fourth Global Meeting of Heads of WHO Country Offices with the Director-General and Regional Directors will take place in Geneva on 12-14 November. The overall purpose of the meeting is to enhance the performance of the whole of WHO at country level in line with the Organization's Country Focus policy. HAC, in close collaboration with EMRO, will organize a session on “Managing WHO's Work in countries in crisis situations”.

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

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