**Health Action in Crises**
**Highlights No 185 – 26 November to 2 December 2007**

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.

### BANGLADESH – CYCLONE SIDR

![Map of Bangladesh](image)

More information is available at [SEARO Emergencies and Humanitarian Action](#).

On WHO is urging a comprehensive approach which would incorporate further preparedness and mitigation measures within the national response plan against future flood and cyclones.

Although not formally activated six clusters (Food, Health, Wash, Emergency Shelter, Early Recovery and Logistics) are functioning in the country thanks to the initiative of the different lead agencies.

At the national level, the Health Cluster held its first meeting on 25 November to share information and set up coordination mechanisms.

#### Assessments and Events
- With official reports putting the number of families affected by Cyclone Sidr at 1.65 million, key public health concerns relate to the scarcity of safe drinking water, poor sanitation and the lack of shelter.
- The nine most severely affected districts are Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Barisal, Borguna, Patuakhali, Pirojpur and Jahlokhati and Bhola.
- Cases of diarrhoea and typhoid fever, acute respiratory infections, including pneumonia, and eye and skin infections have been reported in some districts. Field teams deployed by the Government, NGOs and other responders are providing health care to affected communities.
- The Health Cluster reports the following as the most immediate priorities:
  - Improve disease data sharing and reporting;
  - Conduct needs and damage assessment to identify and reach underserved areas;
  - Provide protection to un-accompanied vulnerable individuals (children and elderly);
  - Support care for injuries and psychosocial work;
  - Take stock of losses in community-based programmes (e.g. polio and HIV/Aids);
  - Promote inter-cluster coordination.

#### Actions
- WHO is deploying nine medical doctors to the most severely affected districts to assist in the collection of health information and the re-establishment of disease surveillance programmes and to support local health authorities with health sector coordination. WHO sent out two inter-agency health kits.
- Surge staff from the Regional Office in Delhi and headquarters in Geneva are supporting WHO’s response in Dhaka.
- The CERF made available US$ 1.46 million to WHO for coordination, prevention and control of waterborne diseases outbreaks, provision of emergency drugs and the replenishment of the buffer stock of essential drugs. WHO also received water and sanitation equipment from Norway and three diarrhoeal diseases kits from Italy.

### PAPUA NEW GUINEA

![Map of Papua New Guinea](image)

More information is available at [WPRO Updates on Emergencies](#).

#### Assessments and Events
- In Oro Province, floods triggered by tropical Cyclone Guba have killed 164 people and displaced at least 13 000. Most of the province remains cut off, with access possible only by air or sea. About 143 000 people are affected.
- Assessments show that the provincial hospital, the urban clinic, all ten health centres and one health sub-centre are operational, as well as 14 out of 19 assessed aid-posts. Most of the assessed health facilities are staffed, though some only partially.
- Popondetta provincial hospital sees only ‘routine’ patients not seemingly linked to the disaster. There are some unconfirmed cases of dysentery but according to media reports, health authorities are reporting an increase of diarrhoea cases.

#### Actions
- WHO is supporting the National Department of Health for emergency response and is coordinating with other national and international health partners. Meetings of all health sector partners are held daily.
- A disease surveillance system was established using a standard reporting format, but it is limited to health facilities with an operational radio.
- The assessment of health facilities is ongoing. Twenty-five aid-posts with no radio communication were assessed physically this week.
- The redeployment of health staff from the provincial hospital to outlying health facilities is being considered.
**OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY**

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

**Assessments and Events**
- Lack of spare parts and equipment is again hampering the correct provision of health services; 20% of the essential drugs and 31% of the essential medical supplies were no longer available at the end of October, while 11 out of 18 psychiatric medications in use in primary health care facilities have run out since August.
- The proportion of deaths among hospitalized neonates at Gaza’s pediatric hospitals has increased from 5.6% during the period January-October 2006 to 6.9% during the corresponding period in 2007.

**Actions**
- WHO continues organizing the procurement, transport and delivery of drugs and consumables under the ECHO-funded project to support the pharmaceutical supply and management system.
- WHO’s activities are supported by Finland, ECHO and the CERF.

**SUDAN**

The first elements of the AU-UN hybrid force, known as UNAMID, have begun deploying.

**Assessments and Events**
- As of 25 November, 483 cases of Rift Valley fever and 166 deaths (CFR: 34.3%) have been reported from White Nile, Gazeera, Sennar States.
- In Darfur, violence has displaced at least 30,000 people in October and killed seven humanitarian workers.

**Actions**
- WHO, UNICEF, the Sudanese Red Crescent and other partners continue to provide technical and logistical support to the Federal MoH for the Rift Valley fever outbreak. Surveillance, case management, vector control and health education/social mobilization are the main axis of the response.
- In Darfur, WHO continues supporting hospitals with drugs, medical supplies and specialized staff to ensure free, quality health and emergency surgical and medical care to IDPs and conflict-affected populations.
- In North Darfur, WHO and the State MoH have begun investigating reported cases of bloody diarrhoea cases in Abu Shouk and Alsalam camps. Refresher trainings on case definitions and case management will be held next week. WHO continues to provide technical support to health facilities and partners on advocacy activities.
- Following up on the mass vaccination campaign held last October, WHO was fully engaged in the implementation of the second round of polio immunization which targeted around 357,000 children under five on 18-20 November.
- In South Darfur, the State MoH, WHO and the NGO Cord conducted a training workshop for community health workers in Al Neim and Khour Omer IDP camps, in Al Deain, on case definition and active case finding of notifiable diseases such as cholera and meningitis.
- Contributions for WHO’s emergency activities were received from the CERF, the Common Humanitarian Fund, ECHO, Finland, Ireland, and Italy.

**CHAD**

**Assessments and Events**
- Fresh clashes between the military and rebel forces broke out on 29 November near the eastern border with Sudan, three days after a major battle near the small towns of Forchana and Hadjer Hadid, 70 km east of Abeche, shattered the peace accord.

**Actions**
- To reinforce the surveillance system in the region, WHO started the installation of 12 HF radios in three hospitals and nine health centres in the districts of Am Dam (Am Dam, Abdi, and Hawouch), Iriba, Bahai, Goz Beida (Koukou, Kerfi, Ade and Dogdore) and Adre (Karkoum, Gongou and Borota).
- A workshop on the management of severe malnutrition was conducted on 21-24 November in the Bahai district hospital in the Bourkou-Ennedi-Tibesti Region.
- WHO’s emergency activities are supported by Italy, ECHO and the CERF.
## HORN OF AFRICA

**Assessments and Events**
- In **Somalia**, the estimated number of IDPs along the Mogadishu-Afgoye road has reached 190,000. Meanwhile, an increasing number of IDPs have reportedly arrived in Afmadow and Kismayo districts, heading to Kenya.
- In **Ethiopia**, although new cases were reported from Oromiya, SNNP, Tigray, Afar, Amhara and Somali regions last week, the overall number of acute watery diarrhoea cases is decreasing. In Oromiya Region, the number of woredas reporting active cases has significantly decreased.
- Over 640,000 people in Ogaden require urgent humanitarian assistance, with food, medical supplies and water being the main priorities.

**Actions**
- In **Somalia**, WHO donated one basic kit to Muslim Aid UK and the International Medical Corps to support the mobile clinics providing basic healthcare to the IDP settlements along the Mogadishu-Afgoye road.
- MoH, UNICEF, WHO and WFP conducted an assessment in flood-damaged areas in Burhakaba. WHO provided World Vision with essential drugs as well as enough household chlorination tablets to provide the affected population with safe drinking water for at least one month.
- The rehabilitation of the outpatient department of the Bay Regional Hospital in Baidoa, conducted by WHO and UNOPS, is complete and the service will open shortly. UNFPA and WHO provided equipment. A WHO-mobilized senior surgeon and a UNFPA-appointed obstetrician-gynaecologist will provide quality services to patients and on-the-job training for health workers. Refurbishment of the operating theatre, X-ray and laboratory is planned.
- In **Ethiopia**, WHO has replenished the regional stocks of Amhara, Oromiya, Tigray, Somali, Beneshangul Gumuz and Afar. An additional US$15,000 worth of drugs and medical supplies is also being procured.
- WHO activities are supported by Australia, Belgium, the CERF, Canada, Finland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, and the United States in Somalia and cluster coordination and by the CERF and the local Humanitarian Response Fund in Ethiopia.

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## PHILIPPINES

**Assessments and Events**
- The death toll from Typhoon Mitag, which has yet to be confirmed by the Department of Health, is 17 while disaster relief officials report nearly 450,000 people affected in Bicol province. On its wake, flooding and landslides destroyed agricultural lands and roads, disrupted power and communications and forced hundreds of thousands from their homes.
- No outbreaks of communicable diseases have been reported so far.

**Actions**
- WHO is monitoring the situation; interagency emergency health kits (trauma, reproductive health and diagnostic kits) can be made available at short notice.

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## INTER-AGENCY ISSUES

- **Gender.** An inter-agency workshop on Gender Equality and Gender-based Violence Programming in Humanitarian Action took place in Nairobi on 26-28 November. The IASC Gender Sub-Working Group will meet on 12 December.
- **Consolidated Appeals Process.** The IASC CAP Sub-Working Group met on 29 November. The 2008 Appeals will be launched in Geneva on 10 December.
- **Military and Civil Defence Assets.** An extraordinary session on the use of MCDA took place in Geneva on 28 November. The annual meeting of the Consultative Group on MCDA took place on 29 November.
- **A Central Emergency Response Fund** training took place in Bangkok on 29-30 November. A high level conference on the CERF will be held in New York on 13 December.
- The **IASC Global Cluster Task Team** will meet on 30 November and 5 December.
- **Democratic Republic of the Congo.** On 3 December, the Humanitarian Liaison Working Group in Geneva will update on the humanitarian situation in the DRC.
- The **76th United Nations Civil-Military Coordination** (UN-CMCoord) training course will be held on 3-7 December.
in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

- A **Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration** foundation course will take place in Accra 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 6-7 December.
- The **United Nations Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs** will meet on 7 December.
- The **IASC Principals** meeting will take place in Geneva on 10 December.
- An ad-hoc **IASC Working Group** meeting will take place in Geneva on 10-11 December.
- The inter-agency **Humanitarian Coordinators Group** will meet on 11 December.
- **Mozambique.** On 11 December, ActionAid will present in Geneva its new report on the cluster approach in Mozambique, with a particular focus on partnership.

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

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