Planning a field visit – check-list

Preparing for a field visit

Participants

The team should:

- include individuals with complementary mix of skills;
- be formed jointly with representatives of the MoH, other relevant government entities and/or other organizations, whenever possible.

Information and instructions to be obtained before leaving

- available baseline data on the area
- available information on the current situation (arising from investigations and enquiries already made)
- list of the government officials and other organizations to be contacted; (have they been informed of your mission?)
- information on the vehicles or other means of transport that have been arranged or are expected to be available in the field
- guidelines on personal security (if there is insecurity)
- precautions to safeguard your own health
- guidelines for contacts with journalists
- the extent/limits of your authority to commit WHO or disburse funds
- knowledge/lists of other organizations or individuals to whom requests that are not appropriate for WHO should be referred.

Leave behind details of your proposed itinerary and possible contact points.

Things to take

- any permits or letters of introduction necessary – or at least desirable – to travelling to and within the area; (in some high risk situations it may be necessary to have an official escort)
- other personal needs: be as independent as possible in food and personal necessities (see 8.x)
- telecommunications equipment, if needed (see 8.x)
- laptop, portable printer and printing paper
- forms, felt-tip pens, stapler, adhesive tape
- if travelling by road: water (for drinking and the radiator), fuel, oil and basic spare parts
- if travelling in remote and/or insecure areas: survival items

Things to do on arrival

On arrival, or as quickly as possible thereafter:

- establish communications with the WHO country office and report back regularly
- contact local officials, medical officers, health workers, community leaders and representatives of local and other outside organizations that are already present
- visit health facilities, water and sanitation installations, family dwellings, any temporary settlements, any existing public health assistance operations, social service institutions, medical and other relief stores, logistics facilities

Sample headings for a field trip report

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9 Check-lists adapted from WFP Emergency Field Operations Pocketbook, 2002

[Managing WHO Humanitarian Response in the Field – Annexes: Draft 27 June 08]
• Date and itinerary
• Participants
• Purpose/terms of reference
• Persons contacted
• Summary findings/observations (noting differences between different communities/localities)
  ➔ public health conditions and services/operations
  ➔ nutritional status
  ➔ other basic needs and their impact on health
  ➔ special problems of children and women
  ➔ community and local authority structures and capacity
  ➔ special information concerning particular locations and institutions
• Summary conclusions: follow-up actions required

N.B. Copy important information from documents found in the field. Don’t take the originals away with you!