

# ***FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA: CHOLERA OUTBREAK***

*30 June 2000*

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period covered: 16 - 27 June, 2000*

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*The cholera outbreak is presently affecting two out of four island states constituting the Federated States of Micronesia. Although the disease has been contained geographically, the number of registered cases is still increasing.*

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## ***The context***

The Federated States of Micronesia consisting of four separate states declared the state of emergency on 9 May 2000.

Cholera has been so far restricted to the island state of Pohnpei and to one of the outer islands, namely Pakin. According to 28 June 2000 data, there are 1,628 cholera cases registered either at the island hospital, at the out-patient clinics or dispensaries. In total, 338 people were detained in hospital for medical treatment. To date, there have been 9 confirmed cholera deaths. The hospital has recently opened a separate section for cholera patients with 30 beds.

The state legislature voted to keep the schools and the sakau bars closed until they meet the newly-developed Environmental Protection Agency (USA) guidelines.

The two unaffected states have adopted special travel regulations for all persons coming from the state of Pohnpei.

## ***Latest events***

A WHO laboratory technician arrived at Pohnpei on 19 June to upgrade the laboratory facilities. WHO has also sent an epidemiologist to assist the local efforts.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

The Micronesia Red Cross Society (MRCS) continues to be an active member of both the hospital and the Governor's Task Force teams that have been established to deal with the outbreak. These teams are involved in training MRCS volunteers in the prevention and early treatment of cholera. House to house training sessions by teams of volunteers are held on daily basis. Briefing and debriefing sessions take place before and after the training. Over 600 homes have been visited so far. Water containers, buckets, salt, sugar and soap have been used for demonstrations of water purification, basic hygiene and preparation of the home-made or medical oral rehydration salt.

The Health Delegate provided by the Australian Red Cross has been working closely with the MRCS, specially on assessing the situation and planning future activities. The Health Delegate also represents a resource person for the treatment of cholera in the hospital.

A MRCS vehicle is used to transport cholera cases identified through home visits to hospital. Vehicles, including the one donated by the Kanagawa Chapter of the Japanese Red Cross, are used to take volunteer training teams to local communities.

Banners, billboards, posters and pamphlets on cholera prevention and treatment have been prepared and distributed around the island.

### **Distribution of Relief Supplies •**

Cholera kits arrived in Pohnpei on 21 June 2000.

Six hundred (1 litre) bottles of lactated ringers and three hundred (10 ml) containers of potassium chloride have been distributed to the local (and only) hospital to assist in treatment of severely dehydrated patients. Thirty seven water containers and forty four buckets have been distributed to houses that could not afford to purchase them and did not have any other access to clean and safe water. Two hundred thirty seven gallons of bleaching powder solution have been distributed to schools, households and the hospital for water purification purposes.

Due to daily rains in Pohnpei, raincoats have been purchased for volunteers working in local communities and lunches have been provided.

### **Future activities •**

Procurement and distribution of additional water containers and buckets will ensure access to safe water and appropriate hygiene for all households.

Distribution of pamphlets and posters in local communities and posting of relevant billboards will increase the knowledge on the prevention and early treatment of cholera.

The island hospital has an ambulance with no equipment or trained personnel. Volunteers will act as "on-call" drivers to assist in transportation of people with cholera to health facilities. The drivers and vehicles will represent a supplementary service available for those with no other option.

Procurement of mobile radios will enable a more effective communication with the vehicles in the field or for the drivers "on-call".

## ***Outstanding needs***

A soft pledge has been received by the American Red Cross for water jerry cans. All other relief items and funds for telecom equipment, personnel and administrative costs are outstanding and urgently required.

## ***External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media***

The MRCS will continue to liaise and work in close co-operation with the Governor's Task Force and local communities in order to follow-up the needs related to the cholera outbreak.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

Please note that the budget line Clothing & Textiles has been deleted while the corresponding items are now reflected in Other Relief Supplies. See Annex 2.

## ***Conclusion***

Even though the cholera outbreak was first registered eight weeks ago, the number of reported cases is still increasing. Immediate support from donors is essential to enable the MRCS to meet the needs of 32,000 beneficiaries.

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