

CAMBODIA: DENGUE HAEMORRHAGIC FEVER EPIDEMIC

28 August 1998

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period covered: 18 - 26 August 1998

The delivery of medical supplies, cleanup campaigns, health education activities and volunteer training are all moving ahead and beginning to have an impact in urban areas. Overall caseload figures, however, are continuing to rise. Funding of the operation is improving, but cash is still needed to finance the purchase of more medical supplies and other items.

The context

The epidemic of Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever (DHF) is continuing. According to the latest Ministry of Health figures almost 9,000 children have been admitted to hospital since the start of the outbreak and there have been 237 deaths.

Seasonal peaks of DHF in Cambodia usually occur in August and September; it is expected that this year the number of infected children will rise to at least 16,000 -- making it the worst DHF epidemic in Cambodia's recent history.

DHF is a severe form of dengue fever, a viral disease spread through the bite of the *Aedes* mosquito, which has its habitat in urban and semi-urban areas. If untreated, DHF typically has a 10 % fatality rate.

Latest events

Clean-up and spraying campaigns are now well underway, as are education and awareness activities.

On Friday 21 August, a major cleanup campaign took place in Phnom Penh city, organised by the Ministry of Health/WHO, Municipality of Phnom Penh and the Cambodian Red Cross. All 7 districts in Phnom Penh organised action in their respective communities, including the cleaning of streets and market places. Banners were produced informing the public about DHF and vehicles fitted with loudspeakers broadcast public health messages.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

{ A first consignment of blood testing kits was received on 23 August.

Kantha Bopha hospital will utilise 50% of the blood kits immediately (it conducts 70-80 blood transfusions/day for children with DHF). The remaining 50% of kits will be shared between Takeo Provincial Hospital and National Paediatric Hospital. The distribution plan for these kits (all stored for the moment in the Kantha Bopha cool room) as well as monitoring of the use of all the kits will be done by Red Cross in co-operation with the MoH and WHO.

{ A relief flight bringing the bulk of the medical supplies (but not the insecticide or larvicide) arrived on 27 August.

{ Twenty five Red Cross volunteers finished an 8-day CBFA training course (including a module on dengue prevention and treatment) on 21 August. The course was supported by the Japanese RC delegation, and the French RC which provided two first aid trainers. The training took place in the Japanese RC supported Municipal Health Centre. A follow-up planning meeting is scheduled, at which the volunteers, the Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) and the Municipality health authorities will decide how to follow-up and monitor the work of trained volunteers in Phnom Penh.

{ A further one-day Dengue prevention and treatment training course was organised by the CRC in co-operation with the National Malaria Centre. Action by Provincial Branches was planned and will be monitored and supported by the Federation Health Delegate (due to arrive on 3 September).

{ Newly trained Red Cross volunteers went in pairs to their respective communities and participated in the campaign, distributing Health Education material (posters and leaflets) printed by CRC earlier last week .

{ CRC printed 1,500 T-shirts and caps with Dengue prevention messages on 20 August, to be used for the promotion of cleanup campaigns all over the country. CRC used their own funds raised through a local Emergency Appeal.

{ TV spots and songs on Dengue prevention have been produced by CRC and Cambodian artists; these are now being broadcast on 6 local TV channels and 8 radio channels.

{ 23,000 leaflets and 3,000 posters (two different types each) on dengue prevention, donated by AusAID, are being used in a nation-wide school cleanup campaign. This is being implemented through the provincial Red Cross Branches.

Outstanding needs

MoH/WHO have urgently requested 2000 litres of insecticide K-Othrine 10 ULV (Deltamethrin) for spraying mosquitoes. Several Embassies are considering supporting this purchase (to be procured in Bangkok) through their respective National Red Cross Societies.

Since the issuing of the first Situation Report on this operation, the overall response to the Appeal has been encouraging (62% covered). However, whilst funds have now been pledged to enable a good start to the operation, funds to cover the full cost of the drugs, the insecticide mentioned above (CHF

97,500 additional to the original Appeal) and some in-country costs (staffing and training courses) are still required.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Co-ordination and co-operation remain a strong feature of the operation. The MoH, WHO and MEDICAM (co-ordinating body for NGOs working in the field of health in Cambodia) continue to work together. The Federation/CRC have had considerable discussions with Embassies. There has been extensive (almost daily) news coverage of activities in the Cambodian media.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

Thanks to the excellent co-operation on the ground and the international support (both in Phnom Penh and through contributions to the Appeal), the operation is moving ahead rapidly. However, whilst the MoH reports a slight drop in the DHF caseload in urban areas that have been the focus of spraying and awareness activities, overall the number of DHF cases is continuing to rise.

The focus of the operation now is to expedite the distribution of the drugs, to extend the education and awareness activities and to procure the urgently needed insecticide and larvicide.

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