

CAMBODIA: DENGUE HAEMORRHAGIC FEVER EPIDEMIC

9 October 1998

appeal no. 24/98

situation report no. 4

period covered: 8 September - 3 October 1998

The outbreak of a Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever epidemic in July, affected more than 14,000 children in Cambodia. The Cambodian Red Cross Society (CRCS), supported by the International Federation which launched an Emergency Appeal on 12 August, responded rapidly to the outbreak by providing medical supplies and insecticide to the affected areas. Volunteers were trained for a community health education programme aimed at prevention and treatment. These efforts, co-ordinated with the government's Health Ministry and the World Health Organisation (WHO), contributed towards the decline of the epidemic during the reporting period.

The context

The outbreak of Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever (DHF) in Cambodia had reached epidemic proportions by July leading the Ministry of Health (MoH) to seek external assistance. The International Federation, with the Cambodian Red Cross Society responded and on 12 August 1998, an Emergency Appeal was launched on 12 August for CHF 658,000 to assist 1.1 million people for four months.

To date, more than 14,000 children have been affected by the disease making this the worst epidemic in Cambodia's recent history. The 1998 epidemic has also spread to areas unaffected in previous years and, in addition, has not been primarily confined to urban and peri-urban areas as before. An estimated 252,000 children are considered to be at high risk, according to the WHO.

Latest events

The spread of DHF is in slow decline although it remains at epidemic level. The nation-wide control operation, co-ordinated by the MoH and supported by the Red Cross continues. Larvicide has been distributed to households in 60 districts and insecticide spraying has taken place in 39 of

the worst affected districts. These and other measures, as well as seasonal norms, have contributed towards the decline in numbers affected.

Due to the increased scope of the areas effected by DHF, it has been necessary for the Federation and the CRC to expand its activities accordingly. Distribution of medical supplies is underway to thirty hospitals in the thirteen affected provinces.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Provision of Medical Supplies •

Medical supplies (32 MT) were airlifted into Cambodia in late August with further consignments received during September. Areas of distribution and quantities were determined in close collaboration with the MoH. Actual distribution, carried out by the CRC, is in progress. Monitoring of usage will be undertaken jointly by the Federation and the CRC.

Blood test kits for Hepatitis and HIV sufficient to carry out 20,352 tests and 7,000 tests for Syphilis have been donated to Kantha Bopha hospital.

IV fluids and materials, medication for treatment of dengue shock syndrome, and laboratory equipment are currently being distributed

Provision of larvicide and insecticide to the MoH •

1 MT of Abate (larvicide) and 2,000 litres of insecticide have been donated to the MoH through the National Malaria Centre. (An additional quantity of Abate is currently on order.)

Community education and control / Training of volunteers •

Cleanup campaigns, and distribution of leaflets, posters, T-shirts and caps was carried out in late as part of the ongoing community health education programme implemented by the Red Cross branches.

Twenty five CRC Volunteers completed the second Community Based First Aid (CBFA) training on 16 September bringing the total number of volunteers now active in all districts of Phnom Penh to fifty. The training included a module on dengue prevention and treatment.

Outstanding needs

The response by both Phnom Penh-based donors and by the international community has gone from strength to strength. Pledges, including a significant one from ECHO, have now virtually covered the Appeal. Therefore, assuming that pledges are realised, and given that the epidemic conditions are slowly improving, there are no outstanding needs for this Appeal. However, continued support to strengthen CRC capacity (largely in health and disaster preparedness) will be a central theme of the Federation support in the coming months and in 1999.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Excellent co-ordination and co-operation with the MoH and WHO has been central to the success of this operation. Good relations with other agencies has also facilitated the flow of information.

National media coverage has provided an exceptionally high profile of the operation, the CRC, the International Federation, and also of the donors.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The operation continues to be a great success. Strong donor support has enabled the CRC to implement a timely operation and as a result DHF infection rates are on the decline, hospitals are adequately equipped to deal with new cases and there is an extensive health education programme in place. The coming months will provide a period of consolidation where lessons learned will be reflected upon and education components will be further institutionalised. It is hoped that a photographic record of the operation will soon be available and that a final report will be issued by early 1999.

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