

CAMBODIA: DENGUE HAEMORRHAGIC FEVER EPIDEMIC 7 January 1999

appeal no. 24/98

revision: Programme extended from 12 December 1998 to 28 February 1999

situation report no. 5

period covered: 3 October 1998 - 31 December 1998

In order to complete the CBFA refresher training, this programme has been extended by 11 weeks to 28 February 1999. With an outbreak of dengue fever in July, 1998 reaching epidemic levels, the Government sought external assistance. The Cambodian Red Cross Society (CRC) launched an appeal with support provided from the Federation. The appeal allowed for a timely intervention, effectively controlling the epidemic and institutionalising preventative measures into the CRC Community Based First Aid (CBFA) programme. A 2-month extension of the operation will allow the training component to be completed and for a review of the operation to be undertaken.

The context

By July 1998, an outbreak of Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever (DHF) in Cambodia had reached epidemic proportions, leading the Ministry of Health (MoH) to seek external assistance. The Cambodian Red Cross Society (CRC) responded with support from the Federation, culminating in an appeal which was launched on 12 August, 1998.

To date more than 15,000 children have been affected by the disease making this the worst epidemic in Cambodia's recent history. Unlike past occurrences, the current epidemic has not been confined to urban and peri-urban areas, spreading to previously unaffected areas. An estimated 252,000 children are considered to be at high risk.

Latest events

While DHF remains endemic to the country, the current epidemic is now over. Those cases which are now being recorded correspond to the seasonal norm. Because some high incident pockets remained in Phnom Penh city, however, further spraying activities were undertaken in November. All insecticide and larvicide interventions by the MoH have now ceased.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Provision of supplies •

The 32 MT of medical supplies airlifted into Cambodia have been distributed by the CRC (in collaboration with the MoH) to 30 hospitals within the 13 affected provinces. With these supplies hospitals were not only able to treat DHF patients, but also replenished quantities used at the height of the epidemic (July to September), as well as creating an emergency buffer stock. Blood testing kits for Hepatitis, HIV and Syphilis were donated to the Kantha Bopha children's hospital.

A total of 12,450 kg of larvicide and 2,000 litres of insecticide have been donated to the MoH through the National Malaria Centre. Sufficient quantities have also been stored so as to enable the MoH to carry out emergency activities if and when necessary in 1999.

Community education and control/Training of volunteers •

A series of cleanup campaigns and health education sessions have taken place in all 10 targeted provinces as well as in Phnom Penh, with provincial Red Cross Branches, Red Cross Volunteers (RCVs) and Red Cross Youth (RCY) the principal actors. Members of the local authorities and communities participated, as well as other NGOs. The campaigns received extensive TV coverage.

Fifty RCVs in the 500 targeted locations received CBFA refresher training which included a DHF module. A further 500 volunteers will receive refresher training in January/February, 1999. A DHF trainers booklet suitable for RCVs and RC youth leaders has been produced.

Outstanding needs

There are no outstanding needs for the appeal. However, the operation will be extended until late February 1999 to enable the completion of training, the full integration into CBFA, and an evaluation of the operation. The delegate will be retained for these activities during this period.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Excellent co-ordination and co-operation with the MoH and WHO continues. Effective information flow and communications have been enjoyed with other agencies. Media coverage has also been widespread, with the major TV channels reporting on a daily basis.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

Thanks to strong donor support the operation has succeeded in meeting its goals. In the coming period a review will be carried out so as to analyse what lessons have been learned and to strengthen the newly increased capacity of the CRC. A final report, which will also detail lessons learnt, will be issued within 90 days from the end of the programme.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Director
Operations Funding and
Reporting Department

Hiroshi Higashiura
Director
Asia & Pacific Department