

SUDAN: MENINGITIS

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The Disaster

During the course of the last several years a serious cerebro-spinal meningitis pandemic has affected large parts of Africa. Sudan is located within the African cerebrospinal meningitis belt, and has been severely affected by sporadic waves of outbreaks. The present occurrence started in several northern states in November, 1999, and gradually gained momentum by mid-February, 2000 when Juba, the capital of Equatoria (renamed Bahr el Jebel) State, reported an increased incidence of cases clinically and serologically diagnosed as cerebro-spinal meningitis (CSM). The cumulative number in that State alone reached 1,529 cases with 106 deaths between January 9 and April 4, 2000. During the same period the Upper Nile, Khartoum, Sennar, White Nile, Gezira, South Kordofan and Gedaref States reported attack rates approaching or exceeding the epidemic threshold of 5-10 cases per 100,000 people, with Equatoria recording 129 cases per 100,000. So far, the total number of cases recorded is 2,639, with 204 deaths (a case fatality rate of 7.7%).

Three scenarios are considered possible:

- The outbreak is successfully confined as a result of successful with vaccination and treatment interventions.
- The outbreak spreading with higher incidence among the at risk groups within the states mentioned.
- An uncontrolled geographical spread to more states in the meningitis belt due to factors such as an increase in nomadic mobility at this time of the year (March to June).

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

An unspent balance of CHF 134,660 remained available from the last meningitis appeal and is being transferred to the new project to start the current intervention (please see the separate Final Report on Appeal 07/99 issued on 5 May, 2000). The SRCS and the Federation are therefore well positioned as a result of efforts which also focused on preparing for future outbreaks. Further funding of CHF 295,500 is required.

To respond to the recent development, a CSM Task Force, formed in 1999, was re-activated and began meeting regularly again on a weekly basis. The Federation and SRCS are members of the Task Force, and have been involved in a rapid assessment of the affected areas, identifying the immediate needs in terms of drugs and vaccines.

The Task Force meeting of April 19 reviewed the situation and concluded that the number of cases was increasing. The coming 6-8 weeks are considered to be critical because of weather conditions which favour the transmission of the disease.

The SRCS, with support provided by the Federation, played a central response and treatment role during the 1998 and 1999 meningitis campaigns. The SRCS set up an Epidemic Diseases Preparedness facility to train and prepare for a future epidemic, an arrangement which is now being activated to respond to the latest outbreak.

Needs

The Task Force found on April 19 that only very limited quantities of CSM vaccine and oily chloramphenicol were available in the country and additional quantities of vaccine and oily chloramphenicol are now needed in the following locations:

State	No. of CSM vaccines needed	No. of Oily Chloramphenicol needed
Western Darfur	180,000	5,000
Sinnar	100,000	3,000
White Nile	150,000	2,000
Western Kordofan	50,000	2,000
Total	480,000	12,000

The Federation and SRCS intervention is planned for two months, targeting four states. Each state will mobilize some 25 volunteers for daily service and put one vehicle at the disposal of the project. A budget summary for the planned intervention is as follows:

Item	Price in CHF	Comments
Bivalent A & C vaccine CSM & syringes	110,000	480,000 doses
Oily chloramphenicol	24,000	12,000 vials & syringes
AD syringes w/needles and waste container	71,000	480,000 syringes and safety boxes
International transport	26,500	Air freight of medical items
Internal transport, storage and vehicle costs	11,000	One vehicle in each state, clearing and local storage of medicaments
Volunteers incentives	9,500	Incentives: CHF 45/month or CHF 3/day
Personnel (local staff)	3,100	One staff on 50% basis to supervise state branch activities
Management Support Charge	7,000	SRCS Headquarters technical and managerial support
Programme Support Costs	32,500	
Total CHF	294,600	

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