

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

ETHIOPIA: MENINGITIS

14 February 2002

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This Information Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation will consider international support through an Appeal

The Situation

A meningitis epidemic in Ethiopia, which emerged in 2000, is again beginning to spread rapidly. Latest reports estimate that thousands have been affected. This is fewer than the epidemics of 1981 and 1989 but there is growing concern that the crisis could escalate. Patterns traced from September 2001 suggest that a major epidemic could emerge this year. Another issue for concern is that of the 44.5 million population aged 2-30 years only 5.8 million have been vaccinated in the past two years: a coverage of only 13%.

As of 3 February 2002, a total of 1,332 cases and 85 deaths have been reported to the Ministry of Health mainly from the Southern Nations Nationalities Peoples (SNNP) region and Oromia region. These areas have the highest population density.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

As a member of a coordination taskforce on the epidemic, the Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) has been working closely with the Ministry of Health and other partners. The team is monitoring the situation and as a result of a recent field assessment has identified a number of areas where immediate intervention is required.

The ERCS is planning to support an intervention in North Omo Zone, SNNP, which is not covered by other organisations. The ERCS and its partners believes that the situation will worsen. The estimated target population to be vaccinated is 1.8 million.

The ERCS, in collaboration with the Federation, played a major role in the control of the epidemic in 2001. As a member of the ad-hoc committee on meningitis in the Ministry of Health, the ERCS helped coordinate efforts of various organizations in the country. A total of 1,870,000 doses of vaccines were imported of which 875,000 were used by the ERCS in collaboration with regional health bureaus and health departments. Treatment for meningitis was also imported.

The ERCS and Federation were also involved in a mass vaccination in three selected zones of Amhara region. In this intervention 744,235 people living in 12 woredas/districts were vaccinated. A coverage of 55 to 91% was achieved.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

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