

# ***CAMBODIA: DENGUE FEVER***

*07 August 1998*

## ***The Disaster***

The number of cases of Dengue Fever registered in Cambodia has risen sharply the past few weeks. Dengue Fever - a viral disease spread by one type of mosquito - is a seasonal occurrence in Cambodia: cases usually increase in June and July, and every three years a more severe outbreak occurs. However, this year's seasonal peak is reported to be much worse than the last big outbreak in 1995.

Just now there are over 7000 cases in hospitals (all children, as adults are not admitted). An example of the recent dramatic increase can be seen in KTH BopHa hospital in Phnom Penh, which today has 2,024 child patients -- up from 1,248 a month ago. All rooms and wards are in use and often three to four children share the same bed, making treatment much more difficult.

As there is no vaccine or effective treatment available against Dengue Fever, preventive measures are the only recourse. These include cleaning mosquito breeding grounds, spraying, and protection through the use of mosquito nets.

The number of cases has already reached an alarming level, and mortality is rising. Medical institutions, lacking both personnel and medication, are reportedly having difficulties coping with the situation.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Response and Anticipated Needs***

The Cambodia Red Cross (CRC) and the Federation Delegation, at the request of the MOH/WHO, recently provided two pick up trucks for spraying, which is done by MOH medical teams. In view of the deteriorating situation, the MOH/WHO have now requested immediate support from the CRC/Federation in the form of medicaments, particularly IV fluids, for medical institutions. Medical personnel may also be required, but this will depend on the further evolution of this crisis.

Because of the seriousness of the situation, the Federation has decided to release immediately CHF 150,000 from DREF for regional purchases of medicaments and IV fluids and their air transport to Phnom Penh. Some National Societies have already been asked to put medical teams on standby, ready to fly to Cambodia on short notice, should the situation warrant.

The Federation Regional Health Delegate based in Kuala Lumpur is flying to Phnom Penh today to assist with a more detailed assessment of the situation and to prepare a plan of action and an Appeal. It is anticipated that in addition to curative measures, the plan of action will include preventive and public health education measures, closely linked to the CBFA programme of the National Society. The Regional Information Delegate is also in Cambodia, providing support with information coverage of this situation.

Donor National Societies are urged to provide cash now to support this initial response to the critical situation in Cambodia and to anticipate supporting the expected Federation international appeal.

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