



SHARP RISE IN MALARIA DEATHS SPARKS EPIDEMIC FEARS

A sharp increase in malaria cases and deaths across Ethiopia is raising fears of a major epidemic in the June to October malaria transmission season. The Federal Ministry of Health has been receiving the most worrying figures from Tigray, Amhara, Oromiya, SNNP, Afar, Somali and Benshangul-Gumuz regions. Tigray has confirmed malaria epidemics in two woredas that started in the third week of June. Data shows over 20,000 cases, with 21 deaths in June 2005, compared to around 5,000 and 2,000 cases in the same month for 2003 and 2004 respectively. A total of 77 kebeles were affected by malaria epidemics in May and June, with 18,911 cases and 42 reported deaths (40 deaths in Farta Woreda). Meanwhile 2,524,150 treatment of CoArtem is procured and imported into the country and the first 889,810 treatment doses have been distributed to the regions. However, the quantities of CoArtem and Insecticide Treated Nets currently in the country will fall short if there is a major epidemic. Meanwhile UNICEF is planning to work with WHO to offer the government logistical support in distributing the treatments that are in the country. WHO in collaboration with the FMOH conducted a rapid assessment in the affected areas which is still ongoing in Amhara and SNNPR. Other areas of assistance will cover efforts to estimate the shortfall in treatments and treated nets, the procurement of quinine and ongoing work to improve epidemic surveillance. For more information contact: igetachew@unicef.org & who-wro@et.afro.who.int

CHILDREN'S NUTRITION DETERIORATES IN SNNPR'S MELEGANO AREA

The nutritional situation of children in SNNPR's Melegano area is deteriorating according to a joint assessment by UNICEF and the regional Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau. Out of 917 children screened by 1 August, 83 were found to be severely and 338 moderately malnourished. One 'phase one' therapeutic feeding unit and two outpatient therapeutic programmes have been set up to deal with the worst cases. Melegano, which is in Hulla woreda, has suffered from erratic rains, an insect infestation of its Enset crop and increased population, among other pressures. Until the *belg* figure is approved, the DPPC has allocated and has begun distribution of 37 tonnes of grain, 1.8 tonnes of oil, 4.0 tonnes of CSB and 5.7 tonnes of high energy biscuits for 2,500 beneficiaries. Hulla is the only woreda in the region to receive food for the July allocation as the regional authority has not submitted their three month utilisation report to the DPPC. For more information contact: igetachew@unicef.org

FLOOD AFFECTS FIVE KEBELES IN DUBTI WOREDA, AFAR REGION

The Awash River flooded five kebeles around Det-Bahri area of Dupti woreda in Afar Region reportedly affecting 800 households. The damage caused by the flood in these kebeles is not known due to poor communications. However it is reported that more than 1,000 hectares of farm land covered with cotton and maize was flooded, of which 300 hectares belongs to small holder agro-pastoralists. People are concentrated in schools in the flooded areas and some have moved to Dupti town to stay with relatives. Meanwhile DPPC has sent a team from its Early Warning Department to make a rapid assessment and it is finalising preparations to supply the victims with food and non-food items. Contact: ocha-eth@un.org

CRITICAL MALNUTRITION IN SHIMELBA CAMP, TIGRAY REGION

A nutritional survey conducted in Shimelba camp (hosting Eritrean refugees) in Tigray Region from 19-22 July indicates critical malnutrition with 16.4 % GAM and 1.1% SAM. WFP reported that even though the rates are lower than the 2004 findings, it is a concern as refugees in this camp receive up to 2,100 kcal per person per day. As a result WFP and partners plan to undertake an in-depth study of the socioeconomic environment and cultural practices of the Eritrean refugees with a particular focus on the Kunama community where the highest malnutrition rates are recorded. Meanwhile the relaxed admission criteria to the supplementary feeding centre will be maintained until the situation improves. Another nutritional survey carried out in Dimma camp (hosting Sudanese refugees) in Gambella Region between 16 and 31 July 2005, indicates 9.8% GAM and 0.3% SAM. Compared to the results from recent nutrition surveys in other refugee camps, these rates are considered to be satisfactory. Last month WFP and UNHCR reported critical malnutrition in the three refugee camps in Gambella and Somali regions. For further information: wfp.addisababa@wfp.org

A TECHNICAL TASK-FORCE ESTABLISHED FOR SAFETY NET WOREDAS

The Natural Resources Sector of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development (MoARD) established a technical task-force, comprising the Food Security Coordination Bureau and international organisations involved in the implementation of natural resources management. The task force will organise training in Community-Based Public Works and Watershed Planning for the Productive Safety Nets Programme (PSNP) from August 22 to end of October 2005. The main objectives of the training will be to assist the PSNP beneficiaries prepare realistic community plans that will contribute towards the achievement of food security and to equip development agents with techniques and approaches in Public Works planning with particular emphasis on watershed management. The training will cover all of the 192 safety net woredas (and involve 576 woreda agricultural experts who will then train development agents in their respective woredas). Preparations are underway in terms of developing training modules and assigning trainers.

CNN CORRESPONDENT VISITS UNICEF SUPPORTED PROJECTS IN SNNPR

Richard Quest, CNN correspondent, spent three days in SNNPR visiting UNICEF supported projects to find out what it means to be a celebrity activist. His itinerary included a visit to the outpatient therapeutic care programme at Derara Health Center in drought-affected Boricha district of Sidama zone, a night with two orphan-headed households and a trip to Turmi, where he witnessed the EOS programme in action. Quest on Celebrity Activism airs on CNN on Saturday 13th, Sunday 14th and Thursday 18th of August. For more information contact: igetachew@unicef.org