Health Working Group
Integrated Rapid Response to Health Crises in West Africa

Terms of Reference
Dakar, 29 April 2008

Context

Every year again the sub region faces socio-political crises, armed conflicts or natural disasters such as the recurring floods. These phenomena are having a chronic tendency and cause numerous population displacements inside and outside of countries. As a result, they generate health, food, nutritional and protection crises. In this context, humanitarian response requires a sectoral approach in order to address the many needs. In September 2007, OCHA facilitated a regional workshop on the Consolidated Appeal Process for West Africa in 2008, during which it was decided to maintain the thematic groups that were established for the CAP 2007 process, in view of working towards appropriate response to the multidimensional crises. The Health Group is one of the 5 working groups resulting from the 2008 process, among Food Security and Nutrition, Protection and Population Movements, WASH and Natural Disaster preparedness.

The West African health profile is distinguished by the persistence of epidemic like diseases (measles, cholera, meningitis, yellow fever, hepatitis E) and the worsening of current as well as emerging and re-emerging diseases (malaria, parasitic and diarrheic diseases, acute respiratory infections, malnutrition, STD/HIV-AIDS). In addition, particular health concerns remain among women and girls, such as hygiene needs in life threatening pregnancy and child birth complications, sexual violence, exploitation and domestic abuse. The successive crises seriously weaken existing health structures leading to dysfunction at all levels: Medical and edible materials supplying, coordination of interventions, surveillance systems etc… The Health Working Group is called upon in order to propose an integrated response plan to multidimensional health crises (cf. identified priorities).

1. Composition of the Health Working Group (HWG)

The following agencies and partners are expected to be involved: WHO, UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNHCR, IFRC, ECHO, WV, HKI, French Red Cross and OCHA.

2. Objectives

The main objectives of the working group are as follows:

- Provide a regional analysis of the health situation
- Allow for a joint planning in response to recurring and emerging crises
- Define priorities for advocacy at the regional level

3. HWG Terms of Reference

On 29 April 2008, group participants reviewed and endorsed the Health Working Group principles and objectives:

- Closely monitor and participate in the Consolidated Appeals Process and assist in the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the consolidated response plan through joint evaluation of projects submitted to the CAP and/or any other resource mobilization tool;
- Develop integrated advocacy messages;
- Reinforce the sharing of information or evaluation tools and lessons learned/best practices while reinforcing interaction between the regional and national coordination mechanisms;
- Recommends joint analysis of health risks at the onset of a crisis in West Africa to recommend a common approach and joint response;
- To review and share adopted preparedness and response plans elaborated at the national level;
4. HWG function modalities

- Chair: WHO/EHA (Regional)
- Secretariat: OCHA RO

WHO is the assigned Working Group lead. The WHO Regional Emergency Health Advisor Coordination Unit (WHO/EHA) is currently located in Ouagadougou. While awaiting relocation options, the chairman will assign chairmanship to a regional partner if it can not be represented at a planned meeting in Dakar.

Meeting frequency

The HWG will meet every two months. Depending on emergency situations, additional meetings may be called for.

Meeting location

The meeting location is initially in Dakar, where the majority of Regional Offices are located. However, a meeting can be convened at any time in another location, depending of group member presence.

OCHA will share meeting reports with participants before dissemination to larger contact groups.