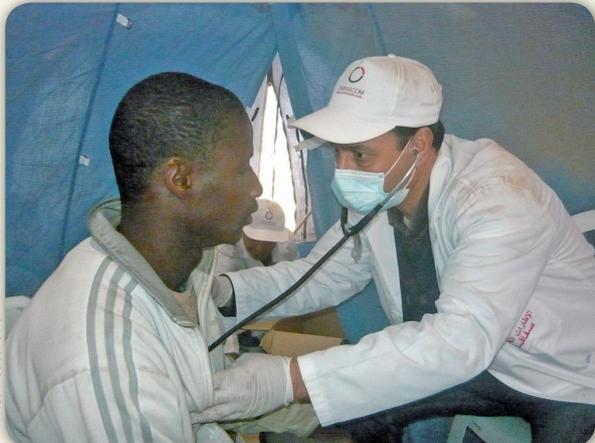


Public health round-up

Urgent supplies on the way



WHO/T. Jasarovic

A doctor from Tunisia's Ministry of Public Health gives this man a health check. He is one of almost 200 000 people who have fled the violence that erupted in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in February. In response to an appeal, the Government of Norway has donated US\$ 1.4 million for medical supplies in the country. "The medical supply chain is interrupted and we know that supplies for medical facilities need to be replenished sooner rather than later. Supplies that WHO had earlier donated to medical facilities in the Benghazi sector have all been used," said Jules Pieters, from WHO's Health Action in Crises team. Basic medical and surgical kits, blood transfusion bags, tents for mobile clinics and water and sanitation equipment have been sent to the Libyan borders with both Egypt and Tunisia where, at the time of going to press, WHO teams were working to get these delivered to critical locations inside the country.

Restoring services

WHO estimates that US\$ 1.9 million is needed to restore essential health services to 2.2 million people in districts in the capital Abidjan and in western parts of Côte d'Ivoire. Violence following the disputed presidential elections in November has led to the closure of three district hospitals and has severely interrupted medical supplies. Many health workers have not received salaries for the past three months. WHO has pledged to provide essential drugs, supplies, logistics and financial support to the worst affected areas at least until September.

Vaccine rollout

On 4 April, the Democratic Republic of the Congo introduced a new vaccine that will help combat one of the country's leading causes of child death, pneumonia. First Lady Olive Lembe Kabila and Minister of Health, Victor Makwenge Kaput, joined parents and health workers in the capital Kinshasa to watch as the first child was immunized marking the introduction of pneumococcal vaccine into the national immunization programme. Globally, pneumococcal disease kills more than half a million children before their fifth birthday. It is the leading cause of pneumonia and accounts for 18% of child deaths in developing countries. "Today's launch is an enormous mo-

ment for my country, where too many children die of this terrible disease," said Kaput. By early April, the pneumococcal vaccine had been introduced into Guyana, Kenya, Mali, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone and Yemen with support from GAVI (formerly the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation). GAVI has pledged to fund the introduction of pneumococcal vaccines in 19 developing countries by 2012 and, if it gets enough funding, to roll out to more than 40 countries by 2015.

First with ugly packaging

The Australian government has announced some of the world's toughest laws on tobacco packaging, banning industry logos, brands and colours and requiring all packages to be the same dark olive colour. Graphic warnings will cover 75% of the front of packs and 90% of the back. "The new packs have been designed to have the lowest appeal to smokers and to make clear the terrible effects that smoking can have on your health," says Minister for Health, Ms Nicola Roxon. The new law is planned to come into effect on 1 January 2012. Australia is the first country to commit to implementing radically plain packaging, following the recommendations of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). On 31 May, World No Tobacco Day will highlight the WHO FCTC and its importance as the world's foremost tobacco control treaty.

Dealing with drug users

The number of drug users has escalated in the past 10 years in Pakistan, with estimates of more than 600 000 opiate users in a population of more than 160 million people. The Pakistani government announced in March that it has joined forces with WHO and the United Nations Office for Drug Control (UNODC) to improve treatment and prevention for drug users. "In many countries, drug dependence treatment can be a low priority on the political agenda, and this needs to change, particularly when we look at how people's health can be impacted by drug dependence," says Vladimir Poznyak, WHO's coordinator of substance abuse disorders. "Drug use is one of the top 20 risk factors to health worldwide and drug use disorders are associated with increased risks of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, tuberculosis, suicide, overdose deaths and cardiovascular diseases." The WHO-UNODC Joint Programme on Drug Dependence Treatment and Care has already been launched in Albania, Haiti and Serbia.

In training for the Assembly

The main decision-making body for WHO, the World Health Assembly, meets this year on 17-21 May in Geneva. It is attended by delegations from all 193 Member States who determine the policies of the Organization. In December 2010, potential delegates for future Health Assemblies learnt

Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020



WHO/M Peden

Each year about 1.3 million people die and between 20 and 50 million people sustain non-fatal injuries due to road traffic crashes.

This Vietnamese girl is taking part in a road safety programme that encourages children to wear motorcycle helmets. Although children are not exempt from helmet legislation, only an estimated 18% of primary school children currently wear helmets in Viet Nam, where the motorcycle is the main mode of transport for millions of families. In a major global effort to improve road safety, the United Nations is launching a Decade of Action for Road Safety on 11 May. The United Nations Road Safety Collaboration has developed a global plan to guide governments, international agencies, civil society and the private sector on how they can reduce the growing death toll on the roads. http://www.who.int/roadsafety/decade_of_action

about the process at “EuWHO”, the first European simulation of the annual gathering. Held at the Royal Society of Medicine in London, 250 university students worked as mock Member State representatives to discuss and develop a resolution on access to medicines and vaccines. All information was distributed using Twitter and Google Documents during the event which was supported by the Royal Society of Medicine, the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene and the University College London Institute for Global Health. <http://www.rsm.ac.uk/EuWHO/>

Just published

Up to 70% of women experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime, according to United Nations’ estimates. As part of the UN campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women, European citizens are invited to create a print advertisement to build awareness and call for an end to all forms of violence against women and girls. First prize is 5000 Euros and winners will be announced on 25 November 2011, the International Day

to Eliminate Violence Against Women. Deadline for submissions is 31 May 2011. <http://www.create4theun.eu>

Research scan

Going electronic

Electronic medical record systems can improve the quality of patient care in developing countries, according to a study published in the March issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association*. Researchers found a 50% increase in the number of CD4 tests requested when computer-generated reminders were used in one HIV/AIDS clinic in Kenya. The clinic was using OpenMRS, an open-source system that supports health workers with limited training to make better treatment decisions. <http://jamia.bmj.com/content/18/2/150>

Adolescent weight predicts risk

A study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* shows that adolescents who are even slightly overweight face a higher risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease in young adulthood. A large

cohort study followed 37 000 Israeli boys for 17 years. It found that an adolescent with an elevated body mass index (BMI), even one considered in the normal range, faces a higher risk of heart disease in his 30s and 40s even if he becomes a lean adult. “Heart disease appears to have a longer memory for BMI than diabetes, so the history of a person’s BMI should be part of medical risk assessment,” said Professor Iris Shai from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1006992>

Creativity to end violence

For the first time, WHO will publish its third edition of the *World Medicines Situation Report* electronically as chapters are completed. The report contains 24 comprehensive chapters on key topics including drug procurement, rational use, financing, regulation and safety. Six chapters were released in April, with all chapters due online by December 2011. A print version will be published later. http://www.who.int/medicines/areas/policy/world_medicines_situation ■

Looking ahead

11 May: Launch of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020 http://www.who.int/roadsafety/decade_of_action

12 May: International Nurses Day <http://www.icn.ch/publications/international-nurses-day>

17–21 May: World Health Assembly

31 May: World No Tobacco Day <http://www.who.int/tobacco/wntd/2011/announcement>

5 June: World Environment Day <http://www.unep.org/wed>

14 June: World Blood Donor Day <http://wbdd.org>

16 June: Informal interactive hearing on noncommunicable diseases, United Nations Headquarters, New York, USA http://www.who.int/nmh/events/2011/informal_hearing

26 June: International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking <http://www.unodc.org/drugs/june-26>

28 July: World Hepatitis Day <http://www.worldhepatitisalliance.org/WorldHepatitisDay.aspx>