This Situation Report is issued by the World Health Organization-Solomon Islands Country Office and highlights the health update related to the flash floods in Solomon Islands on 3-5 April 2014. This covers the period 16-19 April 2014. Data provided is based on the information gathered within the reporting period. The next Health Situation Report will be issued on 22 April 2014.

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**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Humanitarian Action Plan (HAP) has been developed by the Government of the Solomon Islands and humanitarian and development partners in response to the flash floods in the country. The HAP covers a three-month time period and aims to facilitate coordination of the humanitarian response and early recovery by identifying gaps and requirements and outlining roles and responsibilities of the different clusters/sectors.

- The World Health Organization (WHO) supported the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) in developing the health and nutrition component of HAP, along with the health cluster partners.

- WHO continues to support the MHMS strengthen their response system and to provide leadership to the health and nutrition cluster. WHO technical specialists work closely with MHMS in the areas of preventive and curative services, public health, vector control, food safety and nutrition, water and sanitation, strengthening surveillance system and in risk communication.

- Almost two weeks after the flash floods in Honiara City and Guadalcanal Province, the principal health issues on-the-ground include insufficient supply of safe food and water; sanitation and hygiene; malnutrition, especially of infants and young children; respiratory infections associated with overcrowding; mental health and psychosocial conditions; leptospirosis; and vector-borne diseases, especially malaria and dengue.

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**HEALTH and NUTRITION CLUSTER**

**Government of Solomon Islands**

Cluster Lead Agency for Health & Nutrition: Ministry of Health and Medical Services

**Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT)**

Cluster Lead Agency for Health & Nutrition: World Health Organization

**Health & Nutrition Cluster Partners:**

**Health Impacts**

(Source: Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Solomon Islands)

Population Data: Solomon Islands – 515,870; Honiara – 64,609; Guadalcanal Province – 93,613

**Honiara City Council (HCC)**

- In Honiara City, except for the three clinics that were affected by the typhoon (White River, Mataniko and Pikinini Clinics), all the clinics are fully functional. Three mobile clinics continue to provide services to evacuation centres.

- The National Referral Hospital (capacity: 303 beds) provides secondary health services to the Honiara population, as well as outreach general clinical care services to other areas. However, the hospital is facing issues with its drainage system.

**Guadalcanal Province (GP)**

- The Guadalcanal Health Department assessed 125 communities in the most affected areas in the Northern Guadalcanal Province, and highlighted these findings.
  - 10% of assessed communities reported adequate clean water
  - 28% reported a functional toilet
  - 66% of communities reported that more than 50% of the population defecated in the open
  - 4% of the communities reported adequate food and 27% have received food assistance
  - 29% of births have been attended by a skilled personnel
  - 21% of the communities have received health promotion messages

- Although all areas assessed require enhanced attention, the available data indicates Health Zone 6, covering the floodplains of central-northern Guadalcanal, and with the largest population of the Province, is the most seriously affected with the most concerning health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) issues.

**Flood Impact in Honiara and Guadalcanal**

- The capital city of Honiara has 12,000 people affected by the flooding. More than 2,000 people are staying in Panatina Pavilion evacuation center in Honiara City and around 1,000 at both the Festival of the Pacific Arts Centre and King George VI School.

- In Guadalcanal Province, an estimated 40,000 people were affected. River systems across the northwest, central and north of the island were flooded, destroying homes, damaging bridges and displacing families. There are also reports of landslides and loss of food gardens.

- There are 10 health facilities reportedly damaged from the flooding: 3 out of 9 in Honiara and 7 out of 37 in Guadalcanal Province.

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![Guadalcanal Province and Assessment by Health Zone](image)

Source: S. Dutta (WHO) and J. Denty (Guadalcanal Province Team Leader)
Disease surveillance

- Based on the data from the national syndromic surveillance system collected from eight sentinel sites in Solomon Islands, four of which in Honiara City (including the National Referral Hospital), the number of diarrhoea cases has dramatically increased one week after the flood (epidemiological week 14).

- There were 370 cases reported, with 87% in Honiara City. (Note: The evolution of this spike has to be followed carefully over the next few weeks).

- The number of cases of dysentery is also increasing and some samples have been collected to identify the bacteria or parasite and provide adequate treatment.

- As of 18 April 2014, 754 cases of dengue have been reported since January 2014 (138 additional cases reported this week). A post disaster epidemic surveillance system was set up in Honiara and Guadalcanal Province. Rapid reference laboratory testing of samples by the Institut Louis Malardé, French Polynesia, this week, confirmed the dengue serotype as type 3. As this is the same type that caused the large dengue outbreak in 2013, and because infection with one serotype results in life-long immunity to that specific serotype, the likelihood of an explosive and widespread outbreak is lower than if another serotype was identified.
GOVERNMENT RESPONSE (HEALTH)

- Since the health emergency operation centre was activated on 5 April 2014, the MHMS has continuously supported the Honiara Heath Division and the Guadalcanal Health Division with the necessary public health and curative assessments and interventions.

- A Humanitarian Action Plan (HAP) was developed by the Government of the Solomon Islands and humanitarian and development partners to outline response strategy to address acute needs and identify roles and responsibilities of the different cluster/sector. It covers a three-month time period and aims to facilitate coordination of the humanitarian response and early recovery.

- The government, in partnership with WHO, has implemented the Early Warning and Response System (EWARS) in Honiara and Guadalcanal for early detection of possible outbreak of diseases.

- Risk communication and health promotion activities on key health issues have been intensified, especially on water sanitation, prevention of infectious diseases, basic hygiene, food safety and nutrition.

**Honiara City Council (HCC)**

- A dengue and diarrhoea desk was activated and functional at the National Referral Hospital Outpatient Department Waiting Area where severe cases are sent to the referral clinic for further assessment. A clinical guideline for the diarrhoea treatment protocol had been drafted.

- Distribution of long-lasting insecticide-treated nets (LLIN) had been completed at all major evacuation centres. Precautionary preventive interior and exterior treatments have also been done.

- A rapid nutritional survey was done in two evacuation centres in east Honiara and found children to be malnourished. Micronutrient supplements, deworming and Vitamin A are being given to the children and a food basket is being put forward. As an immediate measure, women’s groups from churches were organised to provide one hot meal per day for the evacuees.

- The HCC works with MSF in providing psychosocial services at the evacuation camps. An assessment report identified a significant number if internally-displaced people have psychosocial needs and would need mental health support.

- As of 17 April 2014, the National Referral Hospital is supported by medical practitioners deployed by the Australia-New Zealand Medical Assistance Team.

**Guadalcanal Province (GP)**

- The Guadalcanal Provincial Health Department prioritised field-level health assessments and the provision of curative care to the affected communities. The urgent interventions were on environmental health and public health.
• Based on the assessment results, the Guadalcanal Provincial Health Department reorganised its teams into five, covering health issues focusing on clinical care; medical and child health; water, sanitation and hygiene; vector-borne diseases; and health promotion.

• To enhance public awareness, health talks on water and sanitation as well as hygiene practices were organised in 22 villages in Tandal Ward, west Guadalcanal and in 35 villages in the Guadalcanal Plains.

• Vector control measures, including distribution of long-lasting insecticide-treated nets is ongoing, both in evacuation centres and in affected communities.

• The health surveillance team has set up the enhanced surveillance system, as well as training of the healthcare workers in Guadalcanal on the use of the assessment forms and surveillance sheets.

WHO RESPONSE

• The World Health Organization supports the MHMS at the central and provincial levels in coordinating the health response to this emergency.

• WHO collaborates closely with development partners and the donor community in supporting the MHMS in both the initial response as well as health system recovery stages.

• An emergency fund of US$10,000 was provided by WHO to the MHMS to support the emergency health response operations.

• WHO technical specialists have been working closely with the various departments of the MHMS in the areas of preventive and curative services, health cluster coordination, public health, vector control, food safety and nutrition, strengthening surveillance system, water and sanitation, conducting risk assessments, and risk communication. Some of these actions include:
  - Regular participation in the MHMS emergency operations meeting for updating and decision-making
  - Coordination of the activities of the health cluster partners and facilitating the regular meetings
  - Initiation of the event-based surveillance system and outbreak response planning with MHMS
  - Rolling out the indicator-based surveillance system and early warning disease surveillance
  - Development of diarrhoea management guidelines for Solomon Islands

WHO technical officers travel by land and sea to reach the people affected by the floods in Solomon Islands and to make sure that systems are in place to detect outbreak-prone diseases. Photos: WHO/A. Ronsse
- Development of a proposal for the improvement of the nutritional quality of food provided to the affected population with particular emphasis on vulnerable populations.
- Preparation for nutrition assessment in the affected areas and food safety training for women’s groups tasked to prepare and distribute food evacuation centres
- Distribution of bed nets and conduct of vector control activities
- Assessment of water quality and waste management in affected areas
- Risk communication planning and conduct of health promotion and communication activities with the MHMS

- One of the priorities of WHO at this stage is the strengthening of the surveillance system to effectively detect post-disaster risk and potential impact of an epidemic of a number of diseases. This is being done in close collaboration with MHMS.

**Health Priorities**

- The health priorities, to date, are on the provision of safe and nutritious food, safe drinking water, appropriate sanitation, shelter, and other essential non-food items including fuel for cooking; provision of medicines and medical supplies; implementing post-disaster early warning disease surveillance and outbreak response; prevention of vector-borne diseases; and risk communication.

- Water quality is an ongoing issue as several water sources in Honiara and Guadalcanal have been contaminated or destroyed. Addressing this issue is an urgent need.

- The need for mental health and psycho-social support (MHSSS), including emergency mental health services at the evacuation centres and the flood affected communities, is increasingly becoming an issue.

- Health promotion is critical across the different health concerns, with the immediate need for water and sanitation messages, as well as on basic hygiene and food safety practices.

**Contact**

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