

Health Cluster



Globally, WHO is charged with coordinating the Health Cluster in major emergencies. In the Americas, PAHO assumes this role as the Regional WHO Office for the Americas.

The tremendous influx of human resources and supplies during an emergency, creates an enormous need for coordination. The Health Cluster began operating four days after the earthquake and a Health Cluster Coordinator was designated to support Haitian health authorities coordinate the international health relief effort, carry out initial evaluation of needs and map out the capacities and activities of NGOs and other actors, such as faith based groups.

OCHA (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) had established a joint website (www.oneresponse.info), and health partners populated the site with useful data, including background information on the health situation in the country before the earthquake; location of hospitals and health centers; announcements from the Ministry of Health and Population (MSPP as per its acronym in French); bulletins on activities carried out by health partners; information on epidemiological surveillance and health guidelines for best practices.

The Health Cluster, at the request of the MSPP is urging all health partners to ensure continuity of care. Organizations arriving in Haiti are being asked to stay between 6 months to one year in order to meet existing needs.

Over 400 health partners have registered with the Health Cluster, including NGOs and bilateral partners.

Activities carried out:

To ensure effectiveness, within the Health Cluster, several subgroups -along technical subjects- have been created in order to best meet the needs of the population: mobile clinics; hospitals; disability and rehabilitation; disease surveillance; reproductive health; mental health and psychological support. There are two sub-clusters in Jacmel and Leogane, covering the South East Department and the affected area outside of Port au Prince (Petit Goave, Grand Goave and Gressier) respectively.

The cluster continues to collect information on who, what, where, the humanitarian action is being carried out; and this information will be used to detail the gaps in health services coverage.

PAHO/WHO participates in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Cluster (WASH) to ensure water quality and proper health care waste management. Other Clusters which are being supported by PAHO/WHO are Nutrition, Gender based violence working group under the Protection Cluster, Information Management and Logistics ones.

PAHO/WHO also participates in the Inter-Cluster meetings designed to share information on progress achieved by each cluster and to address particular issues that are strategic in nature.

Current priorities of health cluster partners are:

- Delivery of primary health care through established premises and mobile clinics;
- Provision of treatment services for mental and other chronic diseases
- Supporting the MSPP in the 18 months interim plan
- Disease surveillance and health information systems
- Identification of gaps in health care provision

The Health Cluster in coordination with other clusters has been coordinating preparedness planning for the upcoming rainy and hurricane seasons, which are expected to increase health risks, especially for people living in temporary shelters. This is also being coordi-

Next steps:

Continue to support the national authorities in the context of the activities mentioned above and in the following areas: water and sanitation; nutrition; health services provision; contingency planning; mobile clinics; disabilities/rehabilitation; reproductive health; health facility mapping and reconstruction.

Strengthen national sentinel disease surveillance through the Internally Displaced People Surveillance System (IDPSS) which has been set up by the Department of Epidemiology with partners such as PAHO/WHO, CDC, and major NGOs.

Participation in the Mid Year Review of the UN Flash Appeal in May 2010. The UN Flash Appeal was first launched four days after the earthquake in January 2010.