Highlights

- Government agents and military staff have visited 20.7 million properties looking for breeding grounds. 772,900 thousand (nearly 4% of the total) properties were identified containing breeding sites. The objective is to reduce this rate to ≤ 1%.

- Brazilian government is working closely with national and international research institutes in order to:
  1) Investigate the relation between ZIKV and Guillain-Barré syndrome;
  2) Investigate the relation between ZIKV and microcephaly;
  3) Develop a vaccine against ZIKV.

Situation Overview

According to the Brazilian Ministry of Health, there has been a sharp increase in the number of cases of microcephaly, related to the ZIKV among newborns in Brazil starting in October 2015 mainly in the northeast region. The Federal Government of Brazil has identified this issue as a priority, and President Dilma Rousseff launched a national plan of action to combat this virus in December 2015. Various ministries and governmental organizations including the police, army, firefighters and others, have been mobilized under the leadership of the Ministry of Health to support various activities related to prevention, communication, monitoring, capacity building, among others. The release of a detailed National Plan is anticipated for 13 February. UNICEF Brazil, in an effort to provide support and in response to a request for assistance, has developed a proposal to support governmental efforts to address the epidemic. The action plan focuses mainly on vector control using the existing network with the Brazilian municipalities.

Brazilian government response

Brazilian government response is progressing. Over 20.7 million properties (more than 30% out of a total of 60.7 million estimated visits) were visited by health agents and/or military staff in order to reduce breeding grounds and engage communities. A major action day is planned to start officially on 13 February, involving 220,000 military staff and 300,000 public agents. The Federal Government is focusing on a community-centered approach in the fight against breeding grounds. Federal Government is also leading intensive discussions with national and international research institutes. Cooperation initiatives with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH), Fiocruz, Instituto Evandro Chagas (IEC) and Instituto Butantan are moving forward. The three main research focus so far are: investigating the relation between ZIKV and Guillain-Barré syndrome; investigating the relation between ZIKV and microcephaly and; developing a vaccine against ZIKV.

BCO’s Programme Response

Data

5,079 microcephaly cases notified (cumulative 2015/2016)

41 cases linked with ZIKV Representing 8.9% of total cases with concluded investigation

3,852 cases still under investigation

91 deaths (neonatal, stillborn and abortion) related to microcephaly notified

59 cases still under investigation

(Ministry of Health, 12 February 2016)
Coordination

A key focus of UNICEF’s action in Brazil is on vector control, by joining forces with communities across the country to eliminate breeding grounds of the Aedes aegypti. UNICEF is conducting activities in close collaboration with the Ministries of Health (MoH) and of Education (MoE) as well as with PAHO, state and municipal governments to reach affected communities with the knowledge on how to reduce mosquito infection. UNCT’s second coordination meeting took place on 11 February and UNICEF Brazil (BCO) is actively engaged in harmonizing joint priorities for supporting the government-led plan.

Strategy

BCO strategy is to support government-led national plans and inter-agency priorities on reducing the number of breeding grounds. BCO is using three main strategies in the ZIKV response plan: Advocacy, Communications for Development and Monitoring. BCO’s priorities are to reach the most vulnerable communities and strengthen prevention and protection initiatives. BCO’s unique strong presence at community level in Brazilian municipalities is a key component for our strategy. UNICEF is present in 84% of the municipalities classified at high-risk of mosquito infection so far. Therefore, BCO’s role is centered in articulating among different government levels and engaging Brazilian civil society towards the reduction of breeding grounds.

Advocacy

So far, UNICEF Brazil main advocacy targets are the municipal local authorities. BCO is providing material with key information for prevention and protection through the platforms where BCO and municipalities have been interacting for the past 4 years. BCO is also engaging local articulators and key stakeholders in order to strengthen local response. Considering UNICEF’s presence in approximately 60% of all municipalities in the Amazon and Semiarid, UNICEF is reaching priority areas for reducing breeding grounds.

Communications and C4D

UNICEF Brazil is advancing on structuring focus groups in charge of the design of specific messages for target audiences. BCO is also in contact with social media companies – in coordination with NY HQ and UNICEF USA – aiming to boost social media platforms in the fight against the mosquito infection. To date, UNICEF spokespeople were interviewed by more than 10 media channels, including outlets of national and international reach (such as Reuters). UNICEF produced and is currently distributing three radio spots with the National Ambassador Renato Aragão aiming to disseminate messages on Aedes aegypti prevention. These materials are being broadcasted by more than 20 radio stations countrywide, some of them of national reach. The distribution strategy is also targeting radio stations which broadcast to the municipalities most affected by ZIKV and Dengue. BCO is preparing TV ads with key partners to increase the reach to the most disadvantaged communities and families. Since 12 January, BCO has posted 22 contents in social media networks (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). This material has reached 2.7 million people and engaged directly 118,000 thousand people.

Monitoring

UNICEF Brazil is also actively monitoring the situation using existing well-developed data sources from MoH, to understand evolving and potentially shifting trends in the epidemic, as well as current efforts by government and other partners in their responses. As the MoH issues a new weekly epidemiological report by every Tuesday or Wednesday, BCO has planned its efforts following this schedule. BCO is using four key lines of action in order to follow-up monitoring activities and producing evidence-based information to guide our response plan. The frequency and method might vary from daily to monthly depending on the product/activity: situation monitoring of Aedes Aegypti presence in the country and spread of related diseases; monitoring and evaluation of Brazilian response to Aedes Aegypti; innovative research to facilitate preventive measures against Aedes Aegypti and related diseases and; knowledge management.
UNICEF already works in the highlighted territories

SITUATION IN SEMIARID MUNICIPALITIES
Vulnerability - % of sites visited that had Aedes Aegypti mosquito larvae – Oct./Nov 2015

Risk assessment in relation to aedes aegypti
- Satisfactory (less than 1%)
- Alert (from 1% to 4%)
- Risk (4% or more)

SITUATION IN AMAZON MUNICIPALITIES
Vulnerability - % of sites visited that had Aedes Aegypti mosquito larvae – Oct./Nov 2015

Risk assessment in relation to aedes aegypti
- Satisfactory (less than 1%)
- Alert (from 1% to 4%)
- Risk (4% or more)

UNICEF already works in the highlighted territories

Next SitRep: 17/02/2016

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