Highlights

- The Ministry of Health reported that as of February 2, 2016, 3,670 cases of microcephaly in newborns possibly linked with ZIKV are currently under investigation. Another 404 cases of microcephaly are already confirmed, considering 17 cases linked with ZIKV. 709 cases tested negative for microcephaly.
- Considering 20 concluded death investigations (out of 76 cases), 15 cases of microcephaly and/or disorders of the central nervous system were confirmed and 5 of them infected with ZIKV.
- In a 10 day period from January to February 2016, the number of cases investigated and classified increased 52%, from 723 to 1,113. 156 municipalities have notified cases in 9 federal states. 98% of the cases are in the northeast region.
- UNICEF’s social media have reached 1,9 million people and engaged 83 thousand users in raising awareness of protection and reduction of breeding grounds.
- UNICEF has mobilized directly 174 municipalities classified at high-risk for mosquito infection and potentially reached 2,2 million people.

Date

4,783 microcephaly cases notified

17 cases linked with ZIKV

3,670 cases still under investigation

76 newborns deaths related to microcephaly notified

5 cases linked with ZIKV

56 cases still under investigation

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 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 planned 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 is based mainly in vector control using the existing network with the Brazilian municipalities.

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. Today, UNICEF has signed the Brazilian Education Pact against Zika, a common agreement lead by the MoE to engage key government and civil society stakeholders in the education sector in the national plan combating the infection of the mosquito. BCO is a member of several local crisis and coordination committees. BCO is already part of 5 local government coordination committees for ZIKV-related actions.

Strategy

BCO strategy is based on supporting 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 capillarity 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.

Summary Analysis of Brazilian government response

Brazilian government response is scaling up. Yesterday, President Dilma Rousseff spoke for 6 minutes in all TV channels and radio stations about government priorities and strategies for controlling the infections and reducing breeding grounds. It was announced an upcoming major action to start officially in 13 February, including hundreds of thousands of military staff. A new national communication plan was released last week in order to improve social mobilization results. The federal government is now focusing on a community-centered approach in the fight against breeding grounds. This week, President Dilma received Bolivia’s President, Evo Morales, and they suggested a coordination in all South and Latin American countries in the fight against ZIKV.

The Brazilian Education Pact against Zika signed today among several different representatives of the education sector, including UNICEF, UNESCO, public and private universities, schools, health and education secretariats of 115 municipalities is an important milestone. A major action for reducing breeding grounds for all participants of the Pact is planned for 19 February. Another important aspect of the response is the strong involvement of Brazilian well-known research institutes in ZIKV-related issues, including FIOCRUZ, Instituto Oswaldo Cruz and Instituto Butantan.

Summary Analysis of BCO’s Programme Response

Advocacy

In this moment, our main advocacy target are the municipalities’ local authorities. BCO is working with Mayors participating in UNICEF’s Municipal Seal of Approval initiative and Urban Centres Initiative for immediate action using systems for interagency collaboration that UNICEF has helped strengthen. This will be accomplished through a letter from the Representative to all affected states and municipalities, with support and additional communication from the Platform Chief, relevant programmatic heads, and chiefs of relevant field offices. The letter from the Representative to the
municipalities will also call for the involvement of existing adolescent networks in the development and implementation of appropriate strategies. Similar letters will also be sent to various UNICEF counterparts working in the affected municipalities.

UNICEF Brazil is currently working with 1,134 municipalities as part of the UNICEF Municipal Seal of Approval in the Northeast, over 600 municipalities in the Legal Amazon, and 8 major urban centers. With this coverage, UNICEF is well positioned to advocate, influence action on the part of municipal and state-level counterparts, and engage citizens, including adolescents in the response.

**Communications and C4D**

The first phase of Communication response was supporting Ministry of Health (MoH) Communication counterparts to mobilize municipalities where UNICEF is present to adhere to the MoH campaign principles and implement suggested activities to combat the spread of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito.

Three fronts of action are anticipated (more details available in the Communication Plan Brief):

1) Local mobilization using communication channels related the UNICEF’s initiatives – Municipal Seal of Approval and Urban Centers Platform. This includes messaging and providing messaging content for local use on prevention and control (using official government technical content) through UNICEF’s articulators in participating municipalities across ten states, their corresponding adolescent networks, and also during the next capacity building cycle for the participating municipalities which is scheduled to take place in end February and early March. UNICEF activated all the 174 municipalities enrolled in Municipal Seal of Approval (84% of all the 206 most-vulnerable-to-*Aedes* municipalities according to MoH) encouraging them to adhere the campaign and take actions against breeding sites of the mosquito.

2) Use of UNICEF’s social media outlets to continue to raise awareness of the prevalence and importance of the Zika virus among the general population;

3) Interaction with national and state-level press using UNICEF spokespersons including the Representative, Platform and Zonal Office Chiefs, and other UNICEF technical experts to facilitate the communication of official messages, underscore the rights of infants and pregnant women to an appropriate health response, and communicate UNICEF’s role in providing support.

In February, UNICEF is updating the Municipal Seal of Approval rules to add an extra Strategic Action (SA) to the original 27 SAs. A SA where municipalities have to prove actions against the *Aedes* proliferation was included in order to recognize municipalities’ efforts with an extra point in the Seal (they have to achieve 18 points to get the Seal of Approval). This initiative can reach all the more than 1700 municipalities enrolled in the Seal, (with different levels of engagement depending on the situation of each one in the Seal).

As part of the strategy, UNICEF is planning to conduct formative research through rapid assessment and focus groups with public managers, community health agents and people in specific communities. The idea is to understand better the needs, perceptions, existing/baseline knowledge and issues associated with the adoption of appropriate prevention and control interventions to improve our messaging and materials for specific contexts.

**Media and social media**

UNICEF is also working with the MoH on nation-wide outreach through social media and other channels so that all Brazilians are empowered with the right information. Since there are strong differences from one region to another in Brazil, a tailored approach for each one is been used, stimulating different behavioural changes accordingly to regional context.
By 27 January 2016, 16 posts were published at UNICEF Brazil social media channels (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter), which have reached more than 1.6 million people, generated more than 101,000 engagement actions and engaged more 83 thousand people. UNICEF Brazil’s website was also updated with a special page. All the posts in Facebook are linked to this page, which is already the second most accessed in the site this year.

UNICEF is also working with Facebook, Twitter and Google to develop a specific strategy in each platform to amplify our reach and engage out target. At the present moment, UNICEF is prioritizing to activate the outlets from the most affected regions. UNICEF is also deploying as strategy to mobilize local radios that broadcast to the most affected communities.

Monitoring

BCO 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 response. 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:

- 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;
- Knowledge management.
SITUATION IN BRAZILIAN MUNICIPALITIES
Percentage 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)

Next SitRep: 11/02/2016

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