**Highlights**

- UNICEF Brazil (BCO) has trained 1,132 people (approximately half of them adolescents) of 345 municipalities in the semi-arid region of Brazil. This initiative is part of the new strategic action to reduce breeding grounds that is planned for municipalities under UNICEF’s Seal platform.

- In total, over 41 million properties were already visited by government staff (62% of the total goal). More than 88% of municipalities (4,901 out of 5,570) have received visits over the past months. Breeding grounds were found in 1.3 million properties, representing 3.3% of total already visited. Government’s goal is to reduce this infestation rate for less than 1%.
Situation Overview

According to the Brazilian Ministry of Health (MoH), 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 in December 2015, President Dilma Rousseff launched a national plan of action to combat this virus. 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 National Plan is currently in its fourth phase until 04 March. UNICEF Brazil, in an effort to provide support and in response to a request for assistance from government, has developed a proposal to support governmental efforts to address the epidemic. The action plan is based mainly on vector control using the existing network with the Brazilian municipalities.

Brazilian government response

Accordingly to the MoH, 41 million properties (62% of the total goal of 67 million) were visited by health and/or military personnel. Over 88% of all target municipalities have already started local cleaning initiatives. From 19 February to 04 March, government has been implementing the fourth phase of the plan whereby military and/or health personnel also visit education facilities instructing students with prevention messages. Brazilian research institutions continue their efforts to develop rapid tests and new strategies to reduce mosquitoes breeding grounds and their proliferation rates. The MoH has started mapping the assistance and services offered for babies with microcephaly. 180 call attendants are working to contact the families of all registered cases in order to follow their routine exams and adequate treatment in the public health facilities.

UNICEF Brazil’s Programme Response

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. UNICEF Brazil and World Bank are in contact to explore possibilities for collaboration as the World Bank develops its plans for supporting the government-led response against the mosquito. UNICEF is also in continuous liaison with LACRO and HQ in coordinating efforts to enhance regional efforts and impacts. PAHO held the first emergency task force technical meeting to discuss a joint action plan on 02 March 2016. Under the instruction of the UN Resident Coordinator in Brazil, UNICEF’s Action Plan matrix is being used as a role model for all local UN system. Google is now a key partner working to leverage the response plan in Brazil with innovative technologies and the support to capacity building and engaging initiatives focused on priority regions in Brazil.

Strategy

UNICEF Brazil’s 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.

Advocacy and Mobilization

Mobilization of municipalities and states of semiarid region is demonstrating its first results. During six days in three different northeast states, 1,062 participants – approximately half of them adolescents – representing 326 municipalities,
received training from UNICEF, local partners and government authorities. These capacity building events are part of UNICEF’s Seal platform. Beneficiaries included local authorities, adolescents representing the Adolescents Citizenship Centers (NUCAs), children’s rights counselors, technical staff from health, education and social assistance secretariats and also high-level authorities as the State Secretaries of Health, Presidents of the State Committees against Aedes aegypti, States Association of Mayors and Council of Municipal Health Secretariats.

Other 70 adolescents from 19 municipalities in the semiarid region (but located in the southeast region) also received specific training on prevention measures against the mosquito at the “Being adolescent and socioenvironmental responsible attitudes” seminar held by UNICEF and the state of Espírito Santo, also under UNICEF’s Seal platform.

Communications and C4D

BCO is advancing on establishing focus groups in order to design 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 20 media channels, including outlets of national and international reach (such as Associated Press, Folha de São Paulo, 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 broadcast by more than 30 radio stations countrywide, some of them of national reach. The distribution strategy is also targeting radio stations which broadcast to the most ZIKV and Dengue affected municipalities. BCO is preparing TV ads with key partners to increase the reach for the most disadvantaged communities and families. Since 12 January, BCO posted 34 contents in social media networks (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). This material has reached 3.2 million people and engaged directly over 150,000 thousand people.

Monitoring

The BCO response strategy includes a M&E pillar, which focuses on four areas: i) situation monitoring (evolving and potentially shifting trends in the epidemic, and in the spread of Aedes aegypti in the country); response monitoring (progress on Brazil’s response to the crisis, including UNICEF’s activities and added value); research (innovative research to generate data and evidence to support prevention and response efforts); and knowledge management (documentation and systematization of real-time information and data, as well as progress and results achieved by the response strategy). So far, this component has produced a series of bi-weekly SitReps, several maps for data visualization, methodological technical notes and sampling strategy proposals for research that will start in March.

Next SitRep: 09/03/2016

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