EVALUATION OF UNICEF’S RESPONSE TO THE 2017 OUTBREAK OF CHOLERA/ACUTE WATERY DIARRHEA IN YEMEN

This evaluation represents a new approach for UNICEF to humanitarian evaluations, under which the standard evaluation process is accelerated with a view to producing real-time results that can feed directly into programme decision-making. The primary methods used in the evaluation were key informant interviews, documentary review, and focus group discussions with beneficiaries.

Findings & Conclusions

• The overall conclusion on the performance of UNICEF is that, given the failure to anticipate the 2017 epidemic — for which UNICEF must take at least a share of responsibility — it responded relatively quickly once the scale of the epidemic became apparent, within the limits of its capacity and that of its partners.
• UNICEF adopted essentially the right approach, although this took time to emerge, and full operating capacity was not reached until the epidemic was already well advanced.
• In striving for maximum coverage and filling gaps in the response, UNICEF struggled to ensure the quality of its interventions through partners (notably in setting up and running DTCs), though it was not alone in this. The effectiveness of some UNICEF interventions, particularly its community engagement and sensitization work, remains uncertain, partly because monitoring was limited.
• Working relations with WHO were not as strong as they should have been, and it took time to resolve differences over roles and priorities.
• UNICEF worked well with government authorities and the relevant ministries, and did well on leading and mobilizing others around essential cholera-related WASH efforts, although less so on community engagement.
• Given the major gaps in overall response capacity, UNICEF rightly decided to go beyond its anticipated sphere of operation in the scale of its health interventions. The WASH cluster was well led and appeared to coordinate effectively with the health cluster, even at a time when overall coordination of the response was confused.

Recommendations

These recommendations have led to 50 actions, the majority of which have already been undertaken or are well underway.

1. Secure vaccination supply for further vaccination campaigns on a “no regrets” basis.
2. Establish regional specialist capacity for epidemiology/cholera.
4. Establish a cholera Task Force at the regional office level.
6. Clarify coordination processes.
7. Scale up and secure preventive WASH work.
8. Strengthen Yemen national cholera surveillance and reporting.
10. Enhance rapid response capacities.
11. Establish additional response preparedness measures.
12. Strengthen monitoring and quality control.
13. Invest in better understanding of behaviours and transmission contexts.
15. Strengthen UNICEF global epidemiological capacity and cholera preparedness.

For more information please contact Koorosh Raffii (kraffii@unicef.org)

© UNICEF/UN071659/Fuad