

Overview of Work

Emergency and Humanitarian Action in WHO South-East Asia Region

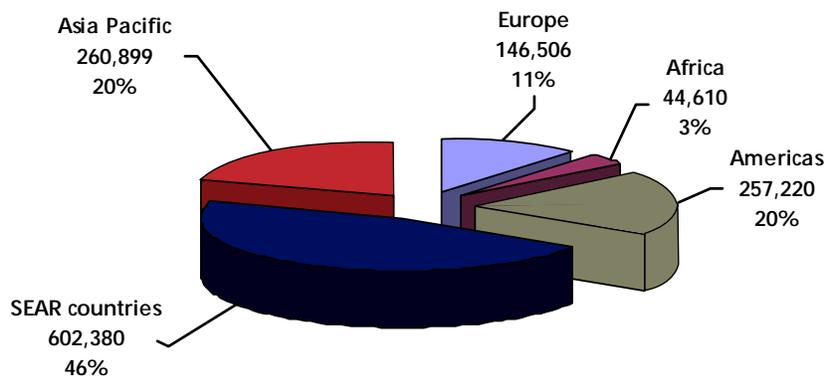
The countries of the South-East Asia Region (SEAR) of WHO are highly vulnerable to natural disasters . The magnitude of disasters and their effects have considerable impact on the morbidity and mortality of the Region where 25% of the world’s population reside. As per disaster statistics, Member countries of the Region accounted for 46% of the global total of deaths from disasters in the decade 2001 to 2010 as seen in the figure below.

As such, health action in emergencies is again a vital area of WHO country support. It is with this background on vulnerability that the EHA programme in WHO South-East Asia Region has been conceptualized. Although the main programme goal

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remains to reduce avoidable morbidity and mortality in emergencies, how this is achieved in countries takes different approaches. Member States in the Region differ widely in terms of issues and challenges in emergency risk management. Although there are some hazards and vulnerabilities that are common

Total number of people reported killed and affected by disasters by country and territory 2001 to 2010



¹ WHO South-East Asia Region comprises Bangladesh, Bhutan, DPR Korea, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Timor-Leste

² World Disasters Report 2011, International Federation of the Red Cross And Red Crescent societies, Geneva Switzerland



to all countries in the Region, there still is a wide disparity regarding the following:

- National capacities for addressing disaster and emergency issues in all phases of the disaster cycle;
- Priority hazards to be addressed within countries and within development priorities vary as well;
- Socio-cultural and political systems which largely influence the occurrence of complex emergencies, and the coping, response and rehabilitation capabilities in any emergency;
- The coverage and quality of basic health services prior, during and after a disaster or an emergency; and
- Preparedness is usually built around response rather than a comprehensive system installed at all levels and encompassing risk reduction initiatives.

The EHA programme has a network of WHO country office staff who act as EHA programme focal points whether full time or partially. The work is a range of activities that scope around the full disaster risk management continuum. For the purposes of a summary and overview, the key areas of work of the

EHA programme in South-East Asia are:

- Risk reduction - a focus on safer health facilities is how the programme is addressing this key area.
- Preparedness and response - WHO institutional preparedness and response capacity in line with national capacities for preparedness and response. This includes elements such as the South-East Asia Regional Health Emergency Fund, the supplies stockpiles in New Delhi and Bangkok, and country office workshops for operational readiness.
- Information management and research- with the SEAR benchmarks for emergency preparedness and response framework, programmes in the countries are guided by information generated from this comprehensive review.
- Capacity development - through various training programmes and systems support initiatives building capacity permeates the work of the programme whether it is risk reduction, preparedness or response.

With these elements, WHO and Member countries in the South-East Asia Region together work towards a more comprehensive disaster risk management mission in the health sector.