KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Sri Lanka’s current dengue outbreak is having an adverse impact on public health. Since January until 17th July 2017, the Epidemiology Unit of the Ministry of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine has reported 90 865 dengue cases and 269 deaths.
- WHO SEARO has deployed one dengue expert from the WHO Collaborating Centre for Case Management of Dengue/Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever, Queen Sirikit National Institute of Child Health (QSNICH) Thailand for training on dengue case management as well as Senior Expert on vector control from Ministry of Public Health, Thailand.
- An epidemiologist and an entomologist have also been deployed by SEARO.
- The team of dengue experts visited affected regions, reviewed the current disease situation and provided expert recommendations to control the outbreak.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

Situation update

- Approximately 43% of cases were reported from the Western Province. The most affected areas are the Colombo district, 20 010 cases, followed by Gampaha 13 401 cases, Kurunegala 5543 cases, Ratnapura 5512 cases, Kalutara 5093 cases.

Public health concerns

- The current dengue outbreak follows heavy rains and flooding, which affected 600 000 people across 15 of the 25 districts in Sri Lanka.
- Large amounts of standing water combined with a delay / failure in clearing of waste has resulted in an increase in the number of potential breeding grounds for mosquito larvae.
- The numbers of dengue cases are higher in urban and suburban areas.
Health needs, priorities and gaps

- Vector control activities are needed to reduce the number of potential mosquito breeding sites in the affected areas.
- Health care facilities are increasingly overwhelmed as a large number of patients are being admitted to hospitals. There is a need to strengthen capacity in hospitals to diagnose and manage dengue patients.

Ministry of Health response and WHO action

Ministry of Health response

- The MoH has launched an emergency response to address the dengue outbreak.
- The MoH has increased the number of beds, and completed 3 temporary wards in Negombo hospital.
- A new High Dependency Unit (HDU) consisting of 40-50 beds for more severe dengue patients has been set up at the National Hospital to improve case management.
- A community based dengue control drive aimed at eliminating mosquito breeding sites was launched by the MoH. The programme commenced in Beruwela in the Kalutara district on 16 July.
The Sri Lanka army, navy and air force together with the police and civil defense have been mobilized to do house-to-house visits in the high-risk areas with health staff to clear breeding sites and educate the community on vector control.

The triage protocol, the process of screening dengue patients according to severity, was updated in June to cope with the outbreak.

The Ministry of Health is mobilizing nearly 100 entomologists from low risk areas to high-risk areas to conduct an entomological survey.

**WHO action**

- The WHO consultant on dengue case management visited 6 hospitals in 3 highly affected districts (Colombo, Gampaha and Kandy) to conduct hands on training sessions with consultants and junior doctors on case management.
- Additionally, recommendations to improve case management in hospitals were presented to the MoH. Improving OPD triaging by having more screening parameters to reduce unnecessary admissions will be critical to improve crowd management at hospitals.
- WHO vector control experts visited infectious disease hospitals in affected districts, and conducted field visits in the Kalutara district and the Colombo Muncipal Council area to identify potential mosquito breeding sites.
- Recommendations have been made to the Government around Integrated Vector Management to control breeding sites and vectors. This is a strategic approach for the optimal use of resources for vector control. Community mobilization and stopping the transmission at the household level will be key to controlling the current outbreak.
- Prevention and control practices are imperative to contain the spread of dengue. Individuals can prevent mosquito bites by wearing full-sleeved clothing, using mosquito nets while sleeping and using mosquito repellents. Draining out stored water once a week prevents mosquitoes from breeding. Vector control by fogging is key to controlling mosquito populations during an outbreak.
- WHO has presented a strategic plan to the Government to address the dengue outbreak following the expert review of the situation.
- WHO has purchased 50 fogging machines to strengthen vector control in affected districts.

**Resource mobilization**

- Government of Sri Lanka
- WHO Country Office, SEARO, HQ

**Contacts**

**WHO Country Office**
Dr Razia Pendse
WHO Representative to Sri Lanka
Email: pendsera@who.int

**WHO South-East Asia Regional Office**
Dr Nilesh Buddha
Emergency Operations
Email: buddhan@who.int