



Health Action

- *in Kosovo*

NEWSLETTER ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE, DECEMBER 2001

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We care do you?

Twenty years after reporting the first case of AIDS, the disease has become the most destructive ever known to man. More than 60 million people have become infected with the HIV virus, and 21 million people have died from AIDS. One-third of that number is aged 15–24. Many do not know how they have become infected. Millions of others know nothing or very little about HIV/AIDS and how to protect themselves from the virus.

In Kosovo the first HIV/AIDS case was reported in 1986. Since then, the number of cases reported from health institutions has continually increased. Compared to last year, the official number of cases of HIV infection in 2001 doubled to 41. However, due to a lack of thorough reporting, these figures do not portray the reality and in fact they may be much higher. Kosovo has a very young population with over 60% of the Kosovar population under the age of 26 – one reason why it is very important that young people obtain information and education about how to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS.

The Kosovar AIDS Committee, which has national and international members, implemented a Kosovo-wide AIDS campaign, with the aim of increasing the awareness and knowledge of the Kosovar population on HIV/AIDS. A number of activities took place on World AIDS Day (1 December), including: the production of two TV spots; the production of radio messages; 100 000 leaflets and stickers were printed; 20 000 posters were printed; a video documentary on HIV/AIDS was produced; 1 300 T-shirts with the official slogan of the campaign, “We

Care Do You?” in English, Albanian and Serbian with the slogan “Live your life, fight AIDS”, which was also the slogan of the national HIV/AIDS committee were handed out; and 1 000 caps with the official slogan of the campaign and 5 000 red ribbons were distributed. Moreover, the national committee supported the central and regional institutes of public health in the holding of lectures throughout schools in Kosovo during the campaign, and the national committee provided support to local NGOs for specific activities such as HIV/AIDS prevention training for teachers and members of youth centres. On the evening of 1 December, a free concert took place in Pristina with popular bands.



Workshop on HIV/AIDS in Kiev

The UNDP Regional Bureau of Europe and the CIS, in partnership with BDP/Special Initiative on HIV/AIDS, organized a workshop entitled “Leadership for Strategic Planning and Change – Budgetary Implications of HIV/AIDS at the National Level”, following discussions and consultations with a number of countries in eastern Europe, the Baltic States and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The workshop participants met in Kiev, the Ukraine, from 29 November to 1 December 2001. There were representatives from more than 20 countries in eastern Europe and CIS.

The purpose of the workshop was to assist governments in the development of a cadre of qualified planners and persons, including NGOs, in each country/region, who are responsible in one way or another for HIV/AIDS programmes and projects. The workshop was designed to strengthen capacities to plan and design programmes and projects in order to mitigate the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in this region. It also addressed the budgetary implications of HIV/AIDS in a multi-dimensional approach, as all HIV/AIDS programmes and projects affect national budgets in relationship to the overall economic and social development of the country.

From Kosovo, three participants were sent to Kiev: Ms. Feta Huruglica, Chief Nursing Officer; Dr Isme Humolli, Institute of Public Health; and Ms. Kristen Downey, UNDP HIV/AIDS Focal Point. Their participation encouraged further development and discussion on the Kosovar HIV/AIDS Committee's Strategic Action Plan for a Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Prevention Programme.

For further information on the results of and lessons learned from the workshop in Kiev, please contact Ms. Kristen Downey, UNDP Programme Officer and HIV/AIDS Focal Point: e-mail: kristen.downey@undp.org; Tel: (+381.38) 249.066/ 067.

Mental health

The Mental Health unit at the WHO office is continuing to support the implementation of the Kosovo strategic plan on mental health. Two consultants are in Kosovo as a part of the agreed collaboration with the Asturias Collaboration Centre (Spain). Dr Jose Lois is based in Mitrovica and Keith Bailey from the Birmingham Collaboration Centre (UK) is based in Gjilan/Gnjilane and Ferizaj/Uroševac. A second group of nurses and doctors from Gjilan/ Gnjilane and Ferizaj/Uroševac went to Birmingham and a third group of nurses and doctors visited Trieste, Italy, for training.

Moreover, an exchange programme is progressing between Tirana, Albania, and Pristina. One nurse and one social worker with experience in mental health activities are in Kosovo to participate in one of the seminars organized for mental health nurses. At the same time, three members of MenKos (local NGO) are to exchange experience with the mental health sector in Tirana. New workers are going to be part of the mental health services in every region as a result of the collaboration with the Department of Health, Environment and Spatial Planning (DHESP), the Mental Health unit at the WHO office in Pristina and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The WHO Mental Health Project in Kosovo now has its own website in collaboration with the Trieste WHO collaborating centre. The address is: <http://whokosovo.exclusion.net/>

PHC, family medicine and community health care

The third module, "Reproductive health", for 200 doctors currently on the WHO training programme on family medicine has been successfully completed. Participants from eight family medicine training centres throughout Kosovo have had a unique opportunity to see patients into the hospital and outpatients with the hospital specialists during this month. WHO partners Cordaid, Health Net International, UNDP, Swiss Red Cross, Belgium Red Cross and North West Medical Team are providing the clinical supervision in the field and supporting the modules.

The 200 family doctors welcomed this particular module as it will enable them to better fulfil the needs for antenatal and postnatal care with their patients in the community as they have lacked the opportunity to practice this in the field in the past as general practitioners. Reproductive health has yet to be properly presented in primary health care (PHC) in terms of providing a comprehensive package of care by general practitioners in their practice.

The local trainers who have already completed the family medicine fast track specialisation taught the module. By cascading this training of trainers (ToT) model under international supervision, the family doctors are obtaining quality experience. The next module is "Mental health" and WHO has made a similar agreement with the previous local and international trainers and clinical experts in terms of providing consistency and a better view of "Mental health" for the participants who attend this first year of family medicine fast track specialisation.

Talks are progressing with EU EAR (the programme donor) to agree on the continued funding to enable WHO with DHESP, NGOs and the medical faculty to complete the training of these 200 doctors by August 2002. This will provide the Kosovo health system with over 300 Kosovar family doctors trained in modern methods.

Nursing

On 18 December 2001, the first cohort, consisting of 155 PHC nurses, celebrated their graduation from the family nursing upgrading training course, a part of the project "Finnish Support to the Development of Nursing in Kosovo".

During the five-month upgrading course, the students completed 800 hours of studies, of which 480 were theoretical studies and 320 practical studies. The process of recruiting nurses for the second round of upgrading training is almost completed. The plan is to slightly increase the number of upgrading course participants in the second round as compared to the first round. The second round of training is scheduled to take place between 5 February 2002 and 14 June 2002.

The project is currently in the process of revising its upgrading training, taking into consideration the experience of the first round of upgrading training as well as the feedback from the mid-term review team. The project also hopes to benefit from the feedback of the health house management, the trainers as well as from its co-operation

partners including WHO, CordAid and Swiss Red Cross.

Interagency health coordination meeting

Dr Tahire Maloku, from the National Institute of Public Health (IPH), presented the activities and structure of the IPH departments. She also thanked DHESP and WHO for the continued support that they have provided to IPH.

Ms. Marta Schaaf from Doctors of the World spoke about the institutionalisation disability project, stating that in 1999 Kosovo patients were locked in rooms, chained to beds, suffered from severe malnutrition and a lack of basic hygiene and communicable diseases. The obstacles in this project are politically and culturally sensitive, requiring many changes to reduce stigma and lack of support as well as structural and resource development.

Dr Istvan Iszilard from IOM presented the two-year activities of the Swedish medical team project. It may be possible for the team to assist medical evacuations abroad as well as provide training possibilities for local physicians in Sweden, with participation in treatment and follow-up care of their patients. There were 30 patients evacuated for medical treatment abroad: three to Bosnia and Herzegovina and 27 to Sweden.

IOM plans for the year 2002 are the continuation of the ongoing activities in medical evacuation, continuing medical education, on-the-job training, short-term training abroad and new fields of co-operation in histopathology and chemotherapy.

Mr. Brad Tibbetts from Task Force Medical Falcon V US KFOR updated on their activities, including the support that they provide to UNMIK, WHO and other NGOs. The goals and objectives are to open a hospital for the Kosovo Serb population, promote Kosovo Albanian, Kosovo Serb and KFOR co-operation and improve patient care for all patients at hospitals. They have also

provided MEDCAPs (medical civilian assistance programme).

Dr Xhevat Jakupi reviewed the activities that were organized on World AIDS Day in December and UNICEF briefed the participants of the meeting on the micronutrient status survey project that is to start in Kosovo.

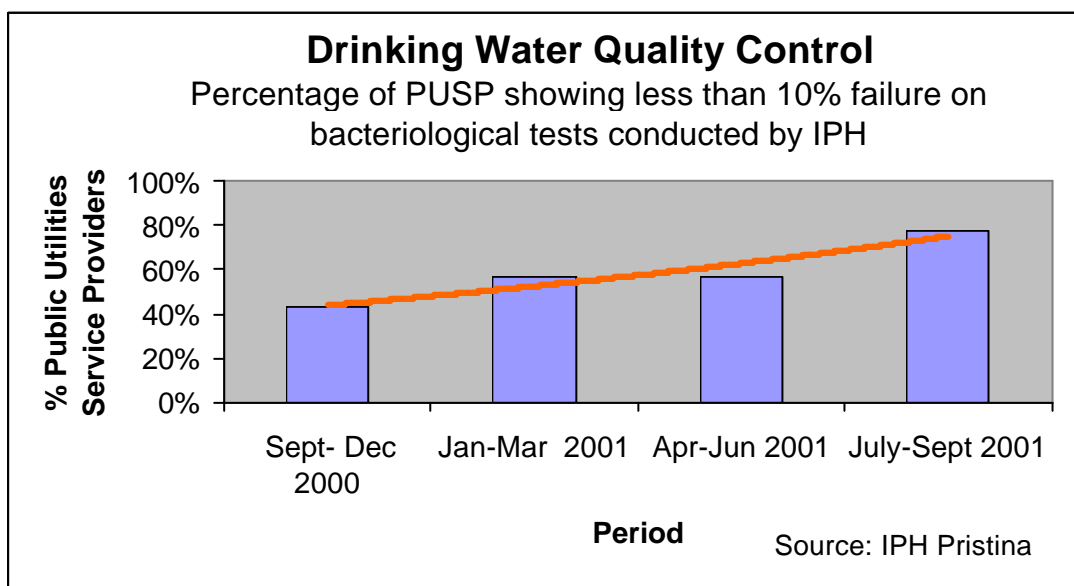
Environmental health

In September 1999, WHO surveyed the environmental health situation in Kosovo. As a result, WHO decided to concentrate its resources and the most important environmental health issues likely to affect health. One of the four issues identified was drinking water quality monitoring and enforcement. WHO focused on highlighting the health implications of poor access to drinking water. The initial approach identified the worst locations of water contamination by recommencing, through the Institute of Public Health, biological and chemical examinations. To fulfil this objective, the first action was to draft a simplified version of the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) regulations on drinking water quality. This has been submitted to the DHSW (now DHESP) and the Joint Consultative Council for health for approval to be issued as a UNMIK administrative instruction (AI). The AI was passed in December 1999 (AI (Health

2/99)) and allows the institutions to work. The second initiative authorised IPH, through the AI (Health) 2/1999 to be the monitoring and inspection body. This institution is well recognised in Kosovo and was able to quickly re-establish routine control with external financial assistance.

The third action by WHO was to set up an IPH Water and Sanitation Commission where professionals from central and regional IPH and professionals from international agencies and NGOs could work together. A series of information notices were prepared by IPH and WHO and approved by the commission. These instructions and guidance on various aspects of the drinking water supply have all become minimum standards to be applied in Kosovo.

The quick re-establishment of the drinking water quality control and the reliable results provided by IPH and recognised by all institutions and international agencies, are used to target the highest priorities for system repair and new investment by bilateral donors and the European Agency for Reconstruction. Now, after almost two years of work and investments, the graph below clearly indicates improvement in the drinking water quality in Kosovo. It shows that the percentage of good quality water samples collected at public tap water supplies doubled in one year in the towns of Kosovo. The



routine water quality control still needs to be strengthened in rural areas. However, a strong basis exists to complete this project quickly. An official tariff of water sampling and testing will be soon issued. It will allow the IPH water quality control to become partly or wholly financially sustainable. In addition, more than 50 municipal sanitary inspectors have been trained to carry out water inspections and are now active in the municipalities.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS



ECHO in Kosovo

This publication [ECHO in Kosovo 1998-2001] provides an overview of ECHO's activities in Kosovo since June 1999, covering the different stages of its intervention, and highlighting some of the most important aspects of its work in different social and economic sectors. ECHO's action in Kosovo is a concrete expression of the solidarity of EU citizens with the victims of this crisis. Today, although the work of ECHO is coming to the end, the people of Kosovo can look forward to continued EU support through the development instruments that have been established to assist the wider region in achieving stability and prosperity.

– Costanza Adinolfi, Director of ECHO

ECHO is the European Union's humanitarian aid office, a service of the European Commission under the direct responsibility of Commissioner Poul Nielson. ECHO focused on supporting the Kosovo population in the worst affected rural areas, satisfying basic needs for food and non-food items, as well as providing emergency rehabilitation of communities. During 2001, ECHO maintained its support for the most needy in Kosovo, while remaining ready to respond to new cases of need, bearing in mind the continuing instability in the region. With the stabilisation of the humanitarian situation in Kosovo, ECHO continued to provide assistance, while working towards the handover of activities to actors specialised in development. ECHO provided support on food assistance,

agriculture, non-food items, firewood, technical and logistical support, support on de-mining, assistance for disabled people, health, basic assistance drugs and materials, rehabilitation of health facilities, shelter, schools, water and sanitation, social support and self reliance.

ECHO provided the emergency aid that Kosovo needed during its most troubled time. Kosovo could not have stabilised in the way that it has without their huge humanitarian effort. ECHO has now played their part. They have done a marvellous job.

– Andy Bearpark, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, Head of UNMIK's EU Pillar)

Health

From summer 1999, ECHO responded to needs in the health sector through the rehabilitation of primary health facilities, the supply of drugs and equipment, and the training and strengthening of local capacity, being one of the first donors to the successful WHO family medicine programme. Almost € 23.2 million was allocated to operations in these areas.

ECHO's support for the health care system in Kosovo began with emergency actions and then followed up with operations designed to create the foundations for further development. The total ECHO contribution for drug distribution throughout Kosovo was € 6.4 million. ECHO supported the re-establishment of the Handikos network, which was the only organization providing assistance to disabled people in Kosovo, working in all municipalities. ECHO funded the rehabilitation of maternity wards in Pristina, Ferizaj/Uroševac and Rahovec/Orahovac. It also supplied equipment for maternity units in Peja/Pec, Dragash/Dragaš, Suhareka/Suva Reka, Kamenica, Glogoc/Glogovac, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Rahovec/Orahovac, and for gynaecological services in the family health centre in Malishevë/

Mališevo. Sixty-three health facilities were rehabilitated, furnished and equipped, and training was provided to family doctors. In addition, ECHO assisted victims of war crimes and torture by providing support for three centres for mental health protection.

To reduce the risk of epidemics, ECHO supported the rehabilitation of IPH in seven municipalities, involving the equipping of laboratories and training personnel. In addition, ten laboratories throughout Kosovo were rehabilitated and equipped in order to improve the diagnostic performance of PHC centres. ECHO has also assisted in strengthening the family medicine programme, provided emergency support to TB dispensaries in seven regions of Kosovo, and offered continued assistance to disabled people, as well as the Mental Health Centre in Pristina.

Training of physicians in PHC and the provision of drugs are two of ECHO's programmes that were handed over to EAR for long-term support through the local DHSW, now DHESP. Equipment and tools for well cleaning operations (pumps, chemicals and generators) used during the well cleaning programme were handed over to the local actors in order to continue with the same intervention in the most vulnerable communities. ECHO financed the donation of mobile sets of equipment and reagents for chemical analyses, needed for monitoring the quality of the potable water used in the rural areas to all five regional centres of the IPH of Kosovo. A photo exposition was organized on 29 November 2001 at ECHO's office in Pristina to present the brochure of ECHO's work in Kosovo from 1998 till 2001 (parts of

Working with and in the Balkans for several years, we have to say that ECHO in Kosovo has fulfilled its mandate and can leave this province, where the immediate emergency is over, with a good feeling.

– Marc Hiel, Desk Officer for ECHO Pristina and Elisabet Tomasinec, Head of Office ECHO Pristina

this article have been taken from ECHO's brochure "ECHO in Kosovo 1998-2001").

Health Action in Kosovo (formerly *Kosovo Health Talks*) is a newsletter of the Emergency Preparedness and Response programme at the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. The information is compiled by the WHO Office in Pristina based on health information from all agencies, organizations and other sources.

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The newsletters of the Emergency Preparedness and Response (EHA) programme can be found at <http://par.who.dk/>:

- *Health Action in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*
- *Health Action in Kosovo*
- *Health Action in the North Caucasus*
- *Health Action in Tajikistan*
- *Health Action in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*

**THE WHO STAFF IN KOSOVO
WOULD LIKE TO WISH ALL OUR
READERS A HAPPY NEW YEAR**

