WHO mission to Grozny

On 28 October, WHO in a joint mission with ECHO, OCHA and UNSECOORD visited selected health facilities in Grozny. Among those visited were the Republican paediatric clinical hospital, the Republican infectious clinical hospital, the Republican TB dispensary and the psychosocial rehabilitation centre “Save the Generation”, a temporary accommodation centre and the Administration of the President of the Republic of Chechnya.

The Republican children clinical hospital, the central facility in the Republic, is still undergoing major reconstruction. Gas and electricity are available with a back-up generator, while central water and sewage systems are not operational. Water is available through a water-bladder which is regularly re-filled by a water truck. The hospital registers the following departments: cardiology, neurology, surgery, anaesthesiology and intensive care unit, newborn and a general department with a 150-bed capacity, as well as a children’s outpatient policlinic. Forty doctors and sixty nurses out of 185 staff are employed in the hospital. WHO did not see any laboratory equipment during its mission. The main morbidity cases reported are respiratory diseases, blood disorders and various traumas. ICRC and MDM are providing drugs and medical consumables monthly for the surgical department and the intensive care unit (ICU) of the hospital.

Hospital administration prioritises the needs for specialised and basic medical equipment followed by the supplies of laboratory items as well as finalising the physical rehabilitation of the hospital.

The Republican infectious clinical hospital complex consists of six mostly destroyed buildings. The functioning part of the hospital occupies the ground floor of a two-storied building with the second floor almost non-existent and without a proper roof. The hospital administration requests nearly eight million USD for full rehabilitation. Some humanitarian assistance has been provided and is available in the stock room of the hospital; however the names of the donor organisations could not be identified by the hospital’s administration. The hospital is staffed with 7 doctors out of the total staff of 37.
The Republican TB dispensary in Grozny has completed its rehabilitation by summer 2003: the main building is fully rehabilitated and furnished and ready to provide outpatient services to TB patients. Two hundred beds for inpatient care are planned till end of 2003. The dispensary’s administration expresses strong need of basic and specialised medical equipment. Two additional x-ray machines were requested in addition to the one available.

The TB Dispensary provides outpatient services to 50-60 patients on a daily basis despite the on-going building rehabilitation activities. It is not clear how the current TB diagnosis takes place considering the absence of specific diagnostic means in the laboratory.

The temporary accommodation centre (TAC) at Kirov street in Grozny has a planned capacity for hosting 1 350 IDPs. The residents of the TAC receive necessary health assistance in the nearest state polyclinic N7. In the TAC itself is a round-the-clock operating health point with a nurse and a general physician assigned from the local polyclinic. The local polyclinic and All-Russian Centre for Disaster Medicine provide basic drugs to the health point. The local Sanitary Epidemiological Service (SES) is responsible for controlling the overall epidemiological situation. It conducts monthly sanitation surveys in TACs as well as in other locations in Grozny and the Republic. TAC drinking water and food analysis is carried out on a regular basis in bacteriological and chemical laboratories. The disinfection unit controls treatment of drinking water containers. Nonetheless, hygiene conditions are unsatisfactory. Showers and laundry rooms are not functioning due to the absence of a central water supply system. A sewage system is absent. Trash, though is regularly removed from the outdoor containers by the City utility service.

Psychosocial rehabilitation centre run by the local NGO “Save the Generation” and supported by WHO provides psycho-social assistance to young people who suffered from the military activities. Two psychologists and one counsellor are available for counselling at the centre on a daily basis. They provide various therapeutic sessions and individual consultations. Once a week a trauma specialist and a physiotherapist are also available and consult on physical exercises.

One of the main problems faced by the Centre is absence of regular electricity.

The mission also met with the representatives of the local government, including the Prime Minister of the Republic, to discuss issues of humanitarian aid, safety and accessibility to beneficiaries and voluntary return of IDPs from Ingushetia. A continuous close cooperation on all these matters was stressed.
Assessment of outpatient health care facilities in Chechnya

In-patient care facilities' survey, conducted by WHO in Chechnya through its implementing partner “Association of women-physicians of the Chechen Republic” in October-November 2002, was followed by the survey of out-patient health care facilities in January-February 2003. One hundred and two outpatient health departments (OPDs) in Achkhoi-Martan, Grozny-Selsky, Gudermes, Kurchaloi, Nadterechny, Naur, Nozhai-Yurt, Sunzha, Urus-Martan, Shali and Shelkovskoi districts and in two cities (Grozny and Argun) in Chechnya were assessed. Four districts (Shatoi; Vedeno; Sharoi and Itum-Kali) were excluded from the survey due to their remote mountainous location and on-going military activities.

Analyzing both surveys, the most serious destruction is reported in Grozny district, with least access to basic utilities. Reconstruction and refurbishment of facilities is the priority, as well as the supply of basic drugs, consumables and medical equipment. There seems to be an equal lack of services such as x-ray, laboratory, physiotherapy, ambulance cars and a lack of qualified staff in hospitals and outpatient departments alike.

Outside Grozny, where there is a lack of medical equipment and consumables, similar problems are reported in OPDs and hospitals; whereas more specialised hospitals and clinics request more specialised equipment.

The health facilities suffer a serious shortage of health professionals; many have left Chechnya due to the conflict. During the last few years the humanitarian aid community has trained a multitude of health professionals with focus on primary health care. Most doctors and nurses work in Grozny.

The most striking difference is the access to humanitarian aid: relatively far more hospitals than OPDs receive aid. As discussed in the previous survey many hospitals offer outpatient services because clinics report lack of equipment and supplies.

The disease spectrum of in- and out-patients is rather similar, though respiratory disease rates second in outpatient care after cardiovascular disease, but first in in-patient care.

Even during the prolonged military conflict in Chechnya the local Ministry of Health together with the aid community has managed to maintain the provision of basic health care services.

While it seems that all those problems should have had a greater influence on morbidity or mortality data, morbidity conditions seem comparable (with the exception of TB incidence and infant mortality rate) to other regions of the Russian Federation. This survey as well as the previous hospital survey does not show a difference in the reported disease spectrum to other regions. It is possible that the strong commitment of the Chechen health professionals and the continuous humanitarian assistance through a variety of health and non-health related activities have been able to contain the burden of disease in the community. (Full report is available from the WHO office in Moscow).
**Demography**

According to the latest DRC data (31 October), 71,685 internally displaced persons from Chechnya were registered in Ingushetia. Of this, 9,000 persons reside in tent camps, nearly 23,000 in temporary settlements and about 39,000 in private accommodation.

**TB**

On 8-12 September an expert from the Central TB Research Institute (Moscow) assessed the current laboratory techniques in the Nazran TB hospital in Ingushetia and briefed the head doctors of all district hospitals of Ingushetia on the improvement of TB laboratory diagnosis.

On-the-job-trainings on improvement of sputum collection were carried out by WHO in Nazran on 16 and 26 October. The trainings were addressed to nurses and medical assistants working at the Republican TB dispensary, Nazran city hospital and medical facilities of Nazran district.

The laboratories of Nazran and Shunza hospitals received from WHO two safety cabinets and five air sterilizers.

**Health assistance**

ICRC finished rehabilitation of Argun hospital no.1, which included repair of the water supply system, rehabilitation of sanitary rooms and construction of the operational centre in the maternity department. Health care facilities in Chechnya received from ICRC laboratory equipment and chemical materials (laboratories of Hospital no.9 in Grozny and regional hospital in Uruš-Martan) and transfusion and test materials (Blood bank in Grozny).

UNICEF provided 300,000 disposable syringes to health care facilities in Ingushetia and Chechnya. Among other beneficiaries, the donation was distributed to five vaccination centres in district hospitals in Ingushetia and 12 centres in Grozny, including the Republican Cold Centre and 11 municipal clinics for children.

Hammer Forum donated special warming beds for newborn to Children’s Policlinics No1, No 3, and No 4 in Grozny.

WHO provided three computers and printers to the Republican SES of Chechnya for further distribution to the reconstructed regional SES centres. DRC children’ rehabilitation centre in Grozny received from WHO a table tennis set.

**Mother and child health**

UNICEF is distributing medical consumables to 5 paediatric and maternity centres in Ingushetia, 14 paediatric, 17 antenatal and 2 maternity centres in Grozny. The agency’s Mother Empowerment Programme (MEP) is on-going: on 30-31 October the first workshop for doctors and nurses of the NGO Hammer Forum (UNICEF’s partner in promoting better child care practices) took place in Nazran. The workshop focused on the dissemination of knowledge on breastfeeding, immunization, hygiene and common childhood illnesses. The specially designed MEP
booklets containing basic information on child care are ready for distribution to IDP families with young children.

On 1-11 October and 13-24 October WHO conducted two rounds of training on Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) in Chechnya. Trainings in Argun and Shali were attended by 20 local health professionals each. Following this, a five-day training course for facilitators on IMCI Follow-up after Training was held for 15 participants from Chechnya and Ingushetia on 20-24 October in Nazran.

WHO distributed a card on “breastfeeding guidelines” for lactating mothers to selected NGOs working in antenatal clinics in Ingushetia and Chechnya for further distribution with the food parcels given to WFP household beneficiaries.

**Mental health and psychosocial rehabilitation**

From 12 to 14 September in Nazran, WHO conducted a training course for nine doctors specialising in primary health care from polyclinics in Grozny. The course focused on counselling techniques and on improving diagnosis and treatment of early posttraumatic stress disorders.

Training course on “Psychosocial assistance to population in long-term conflicts” was held by WHO in Grozny on 23-25 October. It was attended by 16 general practitioners and paediatricians from local policlinics.

WHO also sponsored participation of a psychiatrist from Chechnya at a Conference "Affective pathologies and HIV" at the Moscow Research Institute of psychiatry on 30 Sept – 5 October.

Several NGOs, working with affected population in the North Caucasus, received from WHO literature on “Mental health in IDPs”.

IRC conducted a training course on psychosocial support to IDP children in Ingushetia. Fifteen teachers learned new methods of working with children affected by stress.

CARE Canada provides psychosocial counselling to two groups of highly traumatized children in the Prosthetic Workshop and in the library of the Blind Society in Grozny. Altogether 20 children are receiving assistance.

**HIV/AIDS**

On 24 October WHO held a coordination meeting on "Prevention of mother to child -transmission of HIV" in Nazran. The meeting addressed the executive authorities of state health institutions and program managers of humanitarian organizations, dealing with HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment in Ingushetia and Chechnya. The participants discussed the current status of HIV in women in Ingushetia and Chechnya and respective UN and NGO programmes, addressing HIV-related issues. They also identified the existing training and logistics needs of state health structures for HIV prevention and treatment.

Most organisations working on HIV in the North Caucasus today focus on prevention, only WHO and Swiss Humanitarian Aid (SHA) additionally provide consumables and testing material to the AIDS Centre and WHO provides training for higher and intermediate personnel in both republics.

WHO distributed 900 condoms to the NGO ARD within the framework of its “Prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV” programme.
MSF-F supplied HIV test systems for pregnant women to a selected number of MSF-supported health facilities in Ingushetia and Chechnya.

The Republican Blood Transfusion Centre in Grozny, operational after recent reconstruction, received test systems and medical consumables from ICRC and six refrigerators from the Ministry of Health of Chechnya.

### Drug abuse

According to the recent report of the Ministry of Health of Chechnya on the drug-abuse situation in the republic, the level of substance abuse in Chechnya (135.2 per 100,000 population) is approaching the average Russian level (219/100,000). The real numbers are expected to be much higher. The number of yearly registered drug addicts (45.2 per 100,000) in Chechnya is higher than in Russia (43.6/100,000). Within this group 10-12% of people are HIV infected. 90% of them use intravenous heroin and 50% of drug users are under 30 years of age; 33% female.

The report estimates that there is a minimum of 10,000 drug addicts in Chechnya today. “Obtaining satisfaction” and “forgetting economic and social hardships”, along with the ongoing and continuous stressful, fearful and dangerous life are named as most regular reasons for taking drugs.

The current level of detection of drug users through the existing medical PHC system is quite low. Medical staff lacks the required information and knowledge. There are many cases when doctors do not refer detected drug addicts to the Republican Narcological Dispensary or other similar services.

### Water and sanitation

Within the framework of UNICEF’s water and sanitation programme, supported by ECHO and implemented by PHO, fifty-five new garbage containers were installed in health and school sites in Grozny, bringing the total number of containers to 166.

UNICEF continues the distribution of hygiene products to the most vulnerable population groups in Chechnya and Ingushetia. Over the latest months assistance was provided to Children Hospital N. 2 and Municipal Hospital N. 9 in Grozny, to kindergartens run by Caritas in Ingushetia and Chechnya and to disabled children in Chechnya.

### Assistance to the disabled

The latest available data on the number of mine- and UXO- casualties recorded in the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA), run by the NGO “Voice of the mountains” amounts to 2,566. The percentage of incidents caused by UXOs equals 36%. The rate of incidents due to antipersonnel mines stands at 28%. 15-29 year old are the most vulnerable age group.

The third annual war surgery seminar took place in Moscow on 21-24 October. Organized and sponsored by the ICRC it was attended by 28 representatives from the Northern and Southern Caucasus.

Throughout September-October ICRC continued distribution of wheelchairs and crutches to beneficiaries in Chechnya and Ingushetia. Production and repair of prosthesis at the Orthopaedic Centre in Grozny was also on-going. Thirty-seven prostheses were produced and thirty repaired during the last two months.

ICRC also supported participation of a traumatologist from Chechnya in a four-week training course on orthopaedics and traumatology in Moscow and participation of another traumatologist in a symposium on optimal technologies in diagnostics and treatment of orthopaedic pathologies in children in Volgograd.
UNSECOORD conducted First-Aid Training for the UN & NGO community in Vladikavkaz on 29-31 October. The course was administered by the local branch of the Russian Red Cross.

Health sector field directory for the Republics of Chechnya and Ingushetia was updated and printed by WHO and distributed to the interested donors, UN agencies, NGOs and other humanitarian actors. The directory contains information on 25 UN agencies and NGOs, engaged in provision of humanitarian health assistance in the North Caucasus, including contact details and information on programme activities and locations where the agencies are operational. Health Sector Field Directory is available on the website: [http://www.euro.who.int/emergencies/Publications/HANCaucuses](http://www.euro.who.int/emergencies/Publications/HANCaucuses).

**News from WHO HQ**

On 22 September, Dr. Jong-wook LEE, the Director-General of WHO declared the failure to deliver AIDS medicines to those who need them a global health emergency. He made this announcement, along with UNAIDS and the Global Fund, in New York, at a press conference and at a roundtable at the UN General Assembly meeting on HIV/AIDS.

This rare measure was taken after evaluating the global situation and finding that only 5% of those in the developing world who require antiretrovirals (ARVs) are getting them. Of 5-6 million people in need, just 300,000 are on ARVs.

To address this global health emergency, WHO will take all necessary measures to achieve the "3 by 5" target - putting three million people on antiretrovirals by the end of 2005. Staff across WHO and UNAIDS are working in several areas. These include providing emergency response teams to countries which request them; developing simple treatment guidelines; building a global AIDS Drugs and Diagnostics Facility; developing rapid training for health workers, developing uniform standards and simplified tools to track the progress and impact of ARV treatment programmes; and assessing the amount of funds needed to deliver the "3 by 5" challenge. The detailed "3 by 5" strategy will be ready by 1 December 2003, World AIDS Day.

**List of abbreviations:**

- APNC: Chechen Association of Psychiatrists and Narcologists
- ARD: Agency for Rehabilitation and Development
- ASF: Danish Peoples Aid
- CPDC: Centre for Peacemaking and Community Development
- DCA: Dan Church Aid
- DDG: Danish De-mining Group
- DRC: Danish Refugee Council
- EMERCOM: the RF civil defence and disaster ministry
- EPI: Expanded Programme on Immunization
- FAP: Feldsher/obstetric post
- GP: General practitioner
- HI: Handicap International
- ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross
- IFRC: International Federation of the Red Cross
- IDPs: Internally displaced persons
- IMC: International Medical Corps
- IMSMA: International Management System for Mine Action
- IR: Islamic Relief
- IRC: International Rescue Committee
- LSG: Let’s Save the Generation
- MDM: Médecins du Monde
- MoE: Ministry of Education
- MoH I: Ministry of Health of Republic of Ingushetia
- MoH RF: Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation
- MoH Ch: Ministry of Health of Chechnya
- MSF–B: Médecins sans Frontières-Belgium
- MSF–F: Médecins sans Frontières-France
- MSF–H: Médecins sans Frontières-Holland
- PHO: Polish Humanitarian Organization
- OCHA: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- RRC: Russian Red Cross
- SARC: Saudi Red Crescent Society
- SES: Sanitary Epidemiological Surveillance
- SHA: Swiss Humanitarian Aid
- TAC: Temporary accommodation centre
- UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- UXO: Unexploded ordnance
- VOM: Voice of the Mountains
- WFP: World Food Programme
- WHO: World Health Organization
- Zaschita: All-Russian Centre for Disaster Medicine "Zaschita"
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