

Public Health in the News

El Niño Threatens At Least 60 Million People in High-Risk Developing Countries

WHO and its partners predict a major global increase in health consequences of emergencies this year due to El Niño...

"From Ethiopia to Haiti to Papua New Guinea, we are seeing the damage from El Niño, and we believe the impact on public health is likely to continue throughout 2016, even after El Niño winds down," said Dr Richard Brennan, Director of World Health Organization's (WHO) Emergency Risk Management & Humanitarian Response Department. "To prevent unnecessary deaths and illnesses, governments must invest now in strengthening their preparedness and response efforts."

According to a new [report by WHO](#), severe drought, flooding, heavy rains and temperature rises are all known effects of El Niño that can lead to food insecurity and malnutrition, disease outbreaks, acute water shortages, and disruption of health services. The health implications are usually more intense in developing countries with fewer capacities to reduce the health consequences.

The current El Niño from 2015 to 2016 is predicted to be the worst in recent years and comparable to the El Niño in 1997-1998, which had major health consequences worldwide. In Eastern Africa, as a result of the El Niño in 1997-1998, WHO found that rainfall patterns were unusually heavy and led to serious flooding and major outbreaks of malaria, cholera and Rift Valley Fever.

Based on the latest UN figures, the report estimates 60 million people will be impacted by El Niño this year with many suffering health consequences. Thus far, requests for financial support by seven high-risk countries (Ethiopia, Lesotho, Kenya, Papua New Guinea, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda) facing the health costs of El Niño have reached US\$ 76 million.

WHO expects more countries will seek financial support to respond to El Niño effectively. Part of the response will be to provide additional health services to those in need, such as increased surveillance and emergency vaccination. Immediate needs also require funds to provide treatments for severely malnourished children in many countries, such as Ethiopia.

While adverse weather effects of El Niño are expected to peak in January 2016 and wind down by April, the health impacts

will last throughout 2016. "It could take years to recover without an adequate, efficient and timely preparedness and response to El Niño," said Dr Brennan.

...Extreme drought and acute water shortages affecting millions of people in South Western Pacific, Central America and Southern Africa will extend into the first half of 2016 leading to increased malnutrition and diarrheal diseases...

Health effects can be prevented

WHO's report notes that important steps can be taken to prevent and reduce the health effects of El Niño, including: disease surveillance; controlling the transmission of diseases (e.g. vaccinations) and the vectors that spread diseases; mobilizing communities to promote health and hygiene practices; improving water and sanitation services; strengthening logistics and medical supply chains; providing emergency medical care and maintaining access to health services; and effective coordination of preparedness and response measures.

Sources: [AllAfrica.com](#), 25 January 2016

WAMTechnology assists key stakeholders in the health and water sectors in preventing and combating the spread of deadly diseases by means of technological software solutions. We develop, support and maintain custom software products such as electronic health/disease and medication surveillance registers. Chief among these are the ETR.Net and EDR Web systems we have developed which have been rolled out nationally.



ETR.Net has also been introduced, tested or implemented in the following countries: Botswana, Guatemala, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania

CONTACT US:
Tel: +27 (0)21 887 7161

WAMTech are specialists in implementing technology systems for improved governance, focussing on Water and Public Health Information Systems

Visit our websites:

www.wamsys.co.za
www.municipalassistant.co.za
www.ewisa.co.za