



Rumors of respiratory tract infection outbreak among the drought-affected population in Waambati village, Dinsor district in Bay region 8 February

Background: Waambati village in Dinsor district is situated 93 km south-east of Dinsor town and known for the gathering of pastoralists especially during the dry season in search of water. It is estimated that some 2000 people live in this overcrowded village.

Following reports of an increase in respiratory tract infection (RTI) cases and deaths since January, health agencies visited the Waambati. Assessments indicate that there is no fixed health facility in this village. RTI starts as a simple influenza like illness (ILI) that progress to severe acute respiratory tract infection (SARI) resulting to death of some cases. Retrospective data gathered by visiting teams suggested that over 90 deaths including over 50% children under the age of five occurred during the period of 1 to 4 January 2011. However data of all possible cases were not collected hence difficult to estimate the case fatality rates. During the implementation of the child health days, WHO teams reported 22 cases of which five were under the age of five, including three deaths yet to be verified.

Due to the ongoing drought, the in-migrating pastoral communities in search of water and pasture have settled in the village resulting to population increase. It is observed that the Waambati shallow well is the only viable water source in the area. As many as 24 people enter the well at a time to draw water for both livestock and domestic consumption rendering it highly contaminated.

Response: WHO is sending an investigation team with universal transport medium kits (UTM) to collect samples from selected cases of SARI, two health post kits and, additional erythromycin syrup and tablets. Health partner GTZ have reported that they will send a health post kit to their staff in Dinsor. UNICEF and partners are also sending medical supplies to the area.



Residents collect water from a main well in the village

Challenges: Health authorities restricted staff movement which could hamper the timely response and delivery of needed health interventions. Also the lack of a fixed health facility that would serve the residents of Waambati village,

Recommendations: There is need to establish a health post at the village to make available essential health services to the population and monitor their health status, while acting as an avenue to administer other critical interventions including nutrition.