

Manual for the health care of children in humanitarian emergencies

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Review of manual

This manual will be reviewed in 3 years i.e. by 2011. The use of the manual during this interim period will be closely monitored through partners and NGO's who will be responsible for directly implementing it. The experience will be used to improve the revised version.

Introduction

These guidelines are to assist in the care of children in emergencies. They are designed to serve as a reference manual for the evaluation and management of children in emergencies, and as the basis for the training of health care workers. The target audience is first level health workers who provide care to children under the age of 5 years. Physicians and health care workers with more advanced training are referred to the WHO Pocket Book of Hospital Care for Children: Guidelines for the Management of Common Illnesses with Limited Resources (2005).

These guidelines focus on care provided during the acute and chronic phases of an emergency. The acute phase of an emergency is defined by crude mortality rate and persists as long as the crude mortality rate is at least double the baseline mortality rate. This means as long as there are twice as many people dying per day compared to the normal rate of death. In sub-Saharan Africa, this threshold is set at one death per 10 000 persons per day.

These guidelines are designed for the care of children where no inpatient hospital facilities are available. It assumes that some injectable (intramuscular) and intravenous medicines can be given. If referral or hospital facilities are available, some of the treatment options in these guidelines may not be applicable and the child with severe illness is best referred to hospital.

These guidelines are designed to reduce child morbidity and mortality by addressing the major causes of child morbidity and mortality in emergencies. These causes are:

- diarrhoeal diseases
- acute respiratory tract infections
- measles
- malaria
- severe bacterial infections
- malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies
- injuries
- burns
- poisoning.

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