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WHO sending in more medical supplies and assisting the arrival of foreign medical team support for earthquake-ravaged Nepal

News release

NEW DELHI | GENEVA | 27 APRIL 2015 - WHO is surging additional medical supplies and health workers into the earthquake-affected region to help the Government of Nepal provide rapid medical assistance to the thousands who have been injured in Saturday's disaster.

"WHO has deployed eight more emergency health kits containing essential medicines, disposables and instruments to cover the health needs of 80 000 people for the next 3 months," said Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region. "An additional 5 emergency health kits are being flown in along with surgical kits and trauma bags to meet the immediate health needs. There is an urgent need to replenish medical stocks to support the emergency response efforts."

In addition, WHO is working in collaboration with Nepal's Ministry of Health to coordinate the arrival and deployment of the medical teams coming from other countries and nongovernmental organizations, commonly called foreign medical teams (FMTs). As of today, at least 20 foreign medical teams have offered support to the country and have registered with WHO. The first teams are expected to arrive in Kathmandu tonight.

"Each team that has registered is committed to ensuring that the Nepalese people impacted by this disaster will get treated by the most appropriate health workers and equipment," says Dr Ian Norton, head of the WHO FMT initiative. "Such support is essential in this early phase of trauma care. Every hour counts with trauma care. The response is time critical."

Some 30 of Nepal's 75 districts have been impacted, with 11 priority districts identified as in greatest need of humanitarian relief. Thousands of affected people require access to health care for emergency needs and for pre-existing conditions.

Injuries caused by this earthquake are similar to what we have seen after earthquakes of this magnitude: many who were trapped in buildings

as they collapsed have lost their lives. Survivors have injuries ranging from broken bones, head trauma, spinal injuries and crush syndrome. These types of injuries require intensive and rapid medical treatment and some will require surgery.

The foreign medical teams deploying to Nepal meet the minimum standards required to be part of this life-saving initiative, which include being able to:

- provide initial emergency care of injuries for outpatients;
- deliver inpatient acute care, general and obstetric surgery for trauma and other major conditions;
- ensure complex inpatient referral surgical care, including intensive care capacity;
- be self-sufficient and capable of providing care upon arrival.

WHO has established an organization-wide coordination mechanism to mobilize experts to support the health sector in Nepal to respond to this crisis, Dr Singh said.

A surge team comprising of an emergency operation commander, 2 epidemiologists and 2 logisticians have been deployed to strengthen WHO support.

Within 24 hours of the earthquake, WHO provided the first tranche of USD 175 000 to the Government of Nepal from the South-East Asia Regional Health Emergency Fund to meet the immediate health needs of the earthquake-affected people in Nepal.

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