The current wave of Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD) in Sudan is unprecedented. Since the outbreak unfolded on 17 August 2016, all states have reportedly been affected. As of 26 March 2018, a total of 36,995 cases with 823 associated deaths have been reported by the national authorities.

Although in the past, Sudan experienced localized epidemics of AWD in specific states, this is the first time that such a large scale outbreak took place, and persisted for 2 years in the country. All states, majority of the localities, and all population age groups in the country were affected.

Notwithstanding the fact that the number of reported AWD cases has been on the declines since the last quarter of 2017, as illustrated by the downward trend of epidemic curve above (see graph), there are still considerable gaps in our understanding of the cause of the outbreak in the country; and the nature and adequacy of outbreak prevention and control measures that have been implemented by the local authorities and partners.

There is an urgent need to determine factors that have contributed to the large geographical spread of the outbreak to all states and to most localities in the affected states. The wide geographical spread and sustained transmission over an extended period of time raise questions regarding the risk factors and effectiveness of the multi-sectoral response measures that have been undertaken so far.

At the request of Federal Ministry of Health, WHO is supporting a comprehensive evaluation of the multi-sectoral outbreak response including surveillance and cases management; health promotion and environmental interventions; specifically quality and effectiveness of water and sanitation interventions and overall coordination of the outbreak response. The aim of the evaluation of the outbreak response would be to better understand what worked well (i.e. best practices) and aspects of the outbreak response operations that have not worked well.

The findings of this evaluation is expected to help the Federal Ministry of Health and other partners to identify the gaps, challenges, lessons learned and best practices with regards to timeliness, quality and effectiveness of outbreak response operations that have been implemented in the country to contain and stop the transmission from AWD. The findings will also be useful to shape the long term strategy and plan to prevent and control the threats of outbreaks from any other water-borne diseases and other epidemic-prone diseases that the country is at risk to. The evaluation will also provide valuable insights into the core capacity of the country for IHR (2005) attained and maintained over the years.

Notwithstanding the fact that the number of reported AWD cases with associated deaths have been reported by the national authorities, the wide geographical spread and sustained transmission over an extended period of time raise questions regarding the risk factors and effectiveness of the multi-sectoral response measures that have been implemented by the local authorities and partners.

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