

## Community Awareness Campaign on Gulran disease

Purpose of campaign:	Community awareness on prevention of Gulran disease
Campaign designed by:	PHCC Herat
Duration of campaign:	15 days
Starting date:	6 Nov 08
Ending date:	20 Nov 08
Implementing partners:	MOVE Welfare Organization, IEC department of PPHO, DEWS department of PPHO
Supporting Agencies:	Italian Cooperation, UNICEF
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### General Information:

Gulran district is located in north-western part of Herat province. Its population is estimated 107000 inhabitants. There are around 300 small and big villages in this district. There are 5 health facilities in Gulran, one district hospital in center of the district, and four Basic Health centers in different directions of the district center.

The outbreak of veno-occlusive disease has erupted in 2007 which affected 271 people and killed 44 patients (Data source from DEWS department of PPHO in Nov 2008). The disease is erupted due to consumption of bread made from wheat contaminated with seeds of Heliotropium plants (locally called Charmak), which were shown to contain pyrolizidine alkaloids.

Veno-Occlusive Disease of the liver is well recognized form of toxic liver injury produced by pyrolizidine group of alkaloids.

## Interventions:

Following the latest eruption of the disease and initial field assessment and reports, Herat provincial public health committee prioritized the necessary action and interventions to take place in Gulran district:

- Community awareness and educating of the people for prevention of the disease
- Case control survey in Gulran district
- Treatment and hospitalization of the patients

A case control study was performed in Gulran district by the financial support of Italian Cooperation and NAMRU3 organizations and with contribution of MOVE Welfare Organization under the leadership of DEWS department and Provincial Public Health Office. The patients were hospitalized in Herat hospital and some patients were sent to Kabul for more investigation on applying the best treatment protocol which showed some recovery and better health status by financial support of Italian Cooperation.

A team under direction of PHCC developed messages for prevention of Gulran disease and UNICEF printed out the pictorial messages to be distributed to the community.

MOVE Welfare Organization proposed an action plan on community awareness campaign which was approved by PHCC and MOVE implemented the awareness campaign with the support of Italian Cooperation in Gulran district.

According to the action plan, the following interventions took place during the awareness campaign:

- Coordination with local governor, district authorities, education department and other stakeholders at the provincial and district level
- Training Community Health Supervisors (CHS) and CHW's
- Training male and female teachers of all schools in Gulran district
- Training of health facility and health post shura members
- Training of all mullahs and religious leaders
- House to house visit and educating the community on preventive actions and early intervention
- Distribution of IEC materials and educative messages to all the affected community



## Community Mobilization:

Prior to conducting community awareness campaign on Gulran disease, coordination was made with Provincial Public Health Committee (PHCC), district governor, village elders and staff of health facilities on advocating the campaign. MOVE Welfare Organization mobilized the community through conducting health facility and health post shura meetings. The contents of the awareness campaign were shared with shuras and the itinerary was given to village elders in order to support the teams in the field. Mullahs and religious leaders were trained on key messages and broadcasted the messages through mosques. Before conducting the campaign, the district government team, all the village elders, community health supervisors and community health workers, shura members and teachers were oriented on awareness campaign and supported the supervisors and team members for reaching to every villager in the field.

## Trainings:

MOVE training department developed a training curriculum with the coordination of provincial public health directorate, IEC department of PPHO, DEWS Department and other stakeholders and one-day trainings were conducted in the field for the following audience:

- Training of all teachers in all schools of Gulran district
- Training of Mullahs
- Training of health shura members
- Training of volunteers in conducting house to house awareness campaign



Training Mullahs in Gulran great mosque



Training female teachers in Gulran high school

## House to house campaign:

After the necessary coordination at the provincial, district and village level and community mobilization, 24 couples (male and female volunteers) conducted the awareness campaign within 8 clusters of Gulran district in 47 villages from Nov 6, 08 up to Nov 20, 08. 8 campaign supervisors supervised the campaign, supported the team and gave them the necessary instructions. The campaign lasted for two weeks and during this awareness campaign, 5580 families contenting 35984 populations received the messages on Gulran disease.



Family visit by a female volunteer



Post-campaign monitoring in (Qarabagh) village

The main messages which were scattered during the awareness campaign were as below:

- Signs and symptoms of Gulran disease
- Gulran disease is not contagious and people can protect themselves and their families from it.
- Clean the wheat grains very well and remove Charmac seeds before milling the wheat (to make flour).
- Message for millers: Clean the mill stone before milling the wheat
- Include beans, chic peas, fruits and vegetables in your diet since they have the protein that our liver needs.
- Report suspected Gulran disease onset as soon as possible to the nearest health facility.

A joint monitoring team of PPHO Herat and MOVE conducted monitoring during and after the awareness campaign. All the houses which were checked by monitoring team had been visited and they had received the key messages and knew it. The people mentioned they did not know most of these messages and were committed in applying the messages for prevention of the disease for themselves and their family members in the future.

## Summary:

During the house to house awareness campaign in Gulran district of Herat province, all teachers, Mullahs, shura members, community health supervisors and community health workers, health facility staff, village elders and all the people of the affected villages were trained, oriented and educative health messages were distributed to them. Separate meetings were held with district governor and local authorities and they advocated the program. In addition to trainings and awareness activity, the campaign volunteers found new cases of Gulran disease which were not reported and recorded in the previous data.

- Training 189 teachers in all schools of Gulran district
- Training of 423 Mullahs and shura members
- Training of 48 volunteers in conducting house to house awareness campaign
- Training 120 CHW's and 5 CHS's
- House to house visit of 5580 families including 35984 inhabitants in 47 affected villages

## Recommendations:

- Following community awareness and educating people on regular basis
- Active surveillance of the disease in Gulran district (Active case finding and follow up of the patients)
- Continuing food supply to the vulnerable population
- Improving nutrition through cultivation promotion and introducing protein plants
- Removal of Charmac from pasturelands (using herbicide, sieve, etc)