



Public Health
England



SIMEX

Exercise Scenario

3 May 2016





Background

According to the EuroMeteo, *'2015 was the warmest year on record, with mean temperatures above the long-term average'*. The El Nino was also particularly active in late 2015 early 2016. The winter of 2015/6 was very mild and the summer of 2016 starts early with a particularly hot but wet April. A particularly intense period of warm wet weather is predicted for the coming months around the Mediterranean and Black Sea countries.

Whilst the limited mosquito data collected in some Mediterranean and Black Sea countries during early spring 2016 has not indicated the distribution of *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* increasing significantly beyond known areas of colonisation, there appear to be significantly greater numbers than is usual for this time of year.

Each country to nominate a loggist and chair person....

Supporting information on tables–

WHO Fact sheet: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs117/en/>

- Vector control: http://www.who.int/denguecontrol/control_strategies/en/
- ECDC Dengue fact sheet, for health professionals
- Suitability maps...PR



Scenario

Inject 1 - Outbreak in a neighbour country

Date 19 May

A suspected outbreak of dengue fever has been reported in one of your neighbour countries in an area with known presence of competent vector. The outbreak was first reported in the local media and then was quickly followed up by a statement from the Health Ministry containing the following information:

“Today we can confirm we are following up an alert of a suspected outbreak of dengue in a small town 100km from the border. There are a total of 5 probable cases with a further 100 suspected cases. Patients are showing symptoms of acute febrile illness, such as headache, fever, abdominal pain, body aches, diarrhea and vomiting; some with a rash. The 5 probable cases have been identified based on symptoms and serology only and further confirmation is awaited”.

Each participant country to consider the questions below and discuss key issues within their tables. After 45 minutes there will be a feedback session per table on 3 key points.

- What are the key issues/actions for your country at this stage?
 - *More information from who, how?*
 - *What other key related sectors would collaborate?*
 - *Risk assessment?*
 - *Measures?*
 - *Is there an alerting mechanism?*
 - *Communication: what and to who?*
- If you wanted more information on the outbreak how would you get it?
 - *Bilaterals*
 - *Role of international agencies?*

Supporting information:

Clear definitions: confirmed, probable, suspected – Laurence to send



Inject 2 - Confirmed outbreak in neighbour country

Date 23 May

Four days later

The outbreak of dengue fever in your neighbour country has now been confirmed. As of today there are a total of 57 confirmed cases with a further 490 suspected cases. The confirmation is based on further serological analysis, and/or molecular assays (RT-PCR). According to reports in the media, the outbreak has spread to neighbor towns with cases confirmed in areas just 10km from your border.

You are also hearing reports that there may be cases of dengue fever on your side of the border in the area close to the neighbour country with the Dengue outbreak. As yet these are unconfirmed but require further investigation.

Each participant country to consider the questions below and discuss key issues within their tables. After 45 minutes there will be a feedback session per table on 3 key points.

- What are the key issues/actions for your country at this stage?
 - *More information from who, how?*
 - *Confirmation of cases?*
 - *Update risk assessment including monitoring the presence of vector in your country*
 - *Additional measures?*
 - *Communication: what, how and to who?*
 - *Coordination with*
 - *neighbor country – to do what?*
 - *international agencies – how could they help?*
 - *alerting*



Inject 3 - Dengue in your country

Date 28 May 2016

Five days later

You have deployed resources to the border area and as a result of their investigation they have identified 5 confirmed cases (by serology) and 100s of suspected cases of dengue, in a remote area of your country close to the border. The five confirmed cases have been hospitalised due to the severity of their illness and it is expected that some of the suspected cases will also need to be hospitalised. In addition, this morning you learn of three suspected cases identified in a hospital in a suburb of the capital city. This is based on symptomology only (sudden high fever, severe headaches, pain behind the eyes, severe joint and muscle pain). One of the cases has recently returned from the border region where the outbreak is becoming established.

Each participant country to consider the questions below and discuss key issues within their tables. After 45 minutes there will be a feedback session per table on 3 key points.

- What are the key issues/actions for your country at this stage?
(The points below should be considered as a guide but there might be further issues you want to consider)
 - *More information from who, how?*
 - *Do you have any national action plans and how and when would they be activated?*
 - *How would health and key related sectors collaborate*
 - *Update risk assessment*
 - *Additional Measures?*
 - *Communication, public information: when, what, how and to who?*
 - *How would you monitor public concerns?*
 - *How have you prepared for increased media attention?*
 - *Coordination with*



- *international agencies – how could they help?*
- What would you expect from WHO (IHR), ECDC, the European Commission or other partners at this stage?
 - *How would you share and agree your strategy with other countries?*

Day 2

Inject 4.1 here

Inject 4 - Regional dimension

Date 7 June 2016

Ten days later

Confirmed outbreaks of dengue have now appeared in several countries in all Regions: Member States (MS), Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy countries (ENP) and European enlargement countries. For the purpose of this exercise your country is affected.

Each participant country to answer the questions below and discuss key issues within their tables. After 30 minutes there will be a feedback session per country.

- Who will you liaise with and communicate with including international authorities?
- How would you work collaboratively to address, mitigate and resolve the international emergency? What tools would you need/use?
 - *What would you expect from WHO (IHR), ECDC, the European Commission or other partners at this stage?*



Media stories (ideas)

- Why are we not using the dengue vaccine? Newspaper story asking why the Dengue vaccine approved in Mexico/Brazil/Philippines not being used in this outbreak?
- Use of insecticides – capability/availability/shortages/environmental concerns
- Slow response – criticism of
- Others? Ideas welcome

+ supported by fake Tweets (listed) to remind participants of the increasing power/influence of social media

Some ideas from ECDC:

- **Conflicting advice from different authorities**
- **Why was this not prevented earlier?**
- **Fears expressed by travellers/visitors (cancel travel?)**

Other ideas:

- **authorities from neighbouring countries are acting faster or have a plan in place – we don't –**
- MoH has not taken the situation seriously, Minister is out of the country**



Other injects ideas

Put on day 2 before inject 4 Inject 4.1. Situation report – ask each country to prepare a sitrep

Please include:

A brief overview of your current situation

What relevant measures are in place

What communication messages have been issued and what tools have you used to communicate internally within your country and across country

What advice has been issued

What problems your country has identified

Who is coordinating the situation internationally?

Put in inject 3 Inject 3.1. Please consider key factors when communicating during an outbreak

Key objectives of your communication

When do you start to communicate?

Main target groups

Key messages

Channels to reach your target groups (and who can support in spreading the messages)

Monitoring public sentiment, debates and misinformation

Ensuring consistency of messages with other organisations

We are also proposing to prompt WHO, ECDC and European Commission in each session by asking:

What would you be doing? And how would you disseminate information?

Who would coordinate at this stage?

How would you support vector monitoring and control?