

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION OF THE  
**SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA**  
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## **INFORMATION NOTE ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-EIGHT**

### **Democratic Republic of Congo**

The Sovereign Order of Malta, in collaboration with the UN World Food Programme (WFP), has launched a comprehensive food distribution program that provides approximately 5,000 internally displaced families from the community of Nindja in Bakavu, South-Kiva Province with 368 tons of food—particularly cereals, vegetables, oils and salt. The food items, as well as the transport capacities, which totaled 40 lorries, had been provided by WFP. Safety for the Order's personnel during the distributions was ensured by local administration and military authorities. Further food distributions are planned for future months.

### **Sudan**

The Order successfully conducted the second round of the 15th National Polio Immunization Days (PNID) in areas in Northern Darfur that are currently controlled by the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA). The campaign was originally planned to be conducted in December 2006, however, due to the unstable security situation at that time in some parts of North Darfur, among them Galab, Tabit, and Shangil Tobayi, the project had to be put on hold. A total of 8,605 children under five in the aforementioned areas received a polio vaccination, which was more than anticipated.

The Order has also supported a United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Fistula Campaign in Darfur aimed at improving the lives of women. Obstetric fistula is a female reproductive complication caused by prolonged labor without prompt medical intervention. It is most likely to occur among impoverished girls and women. A simple surgery can normally repair the injury, after which approximately 90% of cases are a success. The staff in the rural health centers contributed to the campaign by identifying patients and arranging transport to the referral clinic for those in need of surgery, as well as educating mothers on the condition.

## **Afghanistan**

The Order is continuing its work in Afghanistan, and has started a new project in Logar, a province located south of Kabul, which aims at improving rural infrastructure and reducing poverty through income generating projects. The proposals for the small scale projects are submitted by local communities to the Order; such proposals include requests for the construction of irrigation systems, village streets, and flood prevention walls. All projects include a significant work contribution from the local population. The project will last 8 months and is also supported by the German Foreign Ministry, which donated €350,000.

## **Myanmar**

A new project in Myanmar focuses on the treatment and containment of people infected with TB in the provinces of Rakhine State and Yangon Division. It aims at countervailing the spread of the infectious diseases through medication, distribution of food stuffs, and direct and regular supervision of patients by health workers. In Myanmar, Tuberculosis is one of the leading causes of death. The project accompanies an already existing TB program operating in Myanmar since 2003.

## **Angola**

In the beginning of February, the Order organized two training programs for local midwives of eight health centers in the province of Kuando Kubango, one of the most remote provinces of Angola. Midwives attended the week long courses which took place at two different locations. The training included theoretical and practical exercises as well as on-the-job training.

These trainings were part of the basic health care program which the Order has been realizing in Kuando Kubango since mid-2006. It includes, amongst others, the distribution of medical drugs, the treatment of patients, rational drug use trainings for the medical staff, and rehabilitation and supervision of eight health centers.

## **India**

The Order recently established its first HIV/AIDS prevention project in India through a partnership with its local affiliate, the Center for Social Reconstruction (CSR). The comprehensive project is being conducted in 33 tsunami-affected villages in the Kanyakumari district of the Tamil Nadu province. Available reports and projections on HIV/AIDS predict an alarming situation in the region of Tamil Nadu, which ranks second in the prevalence of the disease in India.

The purpose of the project is to enhance the quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS, as well as their families, and to prevent and control further transmission of the disease. Aside from the identification of HIV/AIDS patients, regular counseling, the formation of support groups, and education campaigns for the community are part of the project. Levels of awareness regarding the disease will be increased through different types of media including individual, group public and private meetings, and cultural programs. In addition, the program strives to establish a functional system of referral of patients to state hospitals and linkages with government and non-government organizations.

The Order is also helping men and women of Tamil Nadu construct and develop houses by supplying critical funding to the local NGO, Bharathi Trust, who will then construct houses for the families. Construction of approximately 60 houses began in late January.

Also in India, in the Kanyakumari district, the Order has partnered with the local organization "Health for One Million"(HOM) to begin an inventive project that combines education on the use of traditional herbal medicine with an incentive towards income-generating measures.

## **Thailand**

The Order operates an orthopedic clinic bus tour, bringing relief to thousands of people in Thailand. On peak days, 850 people go to the clinic bus for treatment and medical advice. In addition to orthopedic medical experts, dentists and eye and ear specialists helped provide hearing aids and optical devices to patients in need. In Thailand, a person can only receive special public benefits to manage their illness if they have an official disabled persons document, and the Order helps those in need of certification get it.

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