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WHO: Topic #2 - Restoring Health to Flood-Hit Libya

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The eastern city of Derna, Libya has been devastated by Storm Daniel, the deadliest Mediterranean tropical-like cyclone in recorded history. Specifically, the collapse of two dams in the city triggered a catastrophic flood. Dr. Ahmed Zouiten, the WHO representative for Libya, describes this flood as a “disaster of epic proportions.”¹ The confirmed death toll has reached an astronomical 4,000, with 25 percent of the city drowned, and thousands still missing. Long after the flood recedes, there will be an urgent need for medical assistance.²

Floods pose significant health hazards. “It increases the risk of diseases such as cholera and malaria, damages sanitation systems and disrupts the delivery of health services.”³ Agricultural damage from floods results in significantly reduced food supply and malnutrition. Furthermore, floods contaminate water, which is a basic necessity to health and sustenance. Contamination leads to waterborne diseases, such as Typhoid Fever and Hepatitis A. Additionally, displaced individuals are forced into crowded and temporary structures that aren’t suited to housing a large number of people. As a result, those shelters are a breeding ground for infections and diseases.⁴

The mental health of flood victims can also frequently be overlooked. Those who have lost their homes, potentially family or friends, and are now highly exposed to many diseases, can easily fall into a depression. Even as time passes, survivors can experience guilt, post-traumatic stress disorder, insomnia, anxiety, and a range of other emotional challenges.

In response to the disastrous floods in Libya, WHO has launched a fundraising campaign to support their efforts in aiding Libya. WHO has also delivered enough supplies for over 250,000 people with the goal of providing additional medical equipment and medicines. Additionally, they have reached out to the survivors of the Libya floods to assess their current needs and emotional wellbeing. WHO is actively engaged in deploying capable medical professionals across countries that are in desperate need for help and assistance.⁵

¹ <https://who.foundation/latest-updates/who-helps-to-restore-health-services-in-flood-hit-libya/>

² <https://who.foundation/latest-updates/who-helps-to-restore-health-services-in-flood-hit-libya/>

³ <https://who.foundation/latest-updates/who-helps-to-restore-health-services-in-flood-hit-libya/>

⁴ <https://wellcome.org/news/how-flooding-can-impact-our-health>

⁵ <https://who.foundation/latest-updates/who-helps-to-restore-health-services-in-flood-hit-libya/>

As you research this topic, consider the following:

- How do floods and other natural disasters impact your country?
- What measures other countries implemented to prevent spread of disease in the aftermath of extreme weather disasters? If nothing has been done, should countries be planning for these situations with the aim of reducing deaths and health issues later on?
- Is there a greater need for education on the short-term and long-term effects of mental health following these types of situations? How can WHO become more actively involved to ensure the physical and mental well-being of affected people?
- Do the neighboring countries of Libya have a responsibility to take in people who have lost everything? Why or why not?

Use these questions as a guideline to begin your research, but make sure not to limit yourself. You should be well researched on this topic and prepared for debate. Please remember that YUNMUN has a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism and that all papers will be checked through Turn-It-In. Please also remember to represent the views of your country, not your own. I look forward to reading your position papers and meeting you soon! Counting down the days to an epic conference. As always, feel free to reach out to me sratner1@mail.yu.edu with any questions or concerns.

All the Best,
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