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Mycetoma Research Center



The Mycetoma Research Center,
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WHO Collaborating Center
on Mycetoma & Skin NTDs

The Mycetoma Field Surveys Guidelines

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Background

Conducting field surveys is a costly and complex endeavour requiring substantial investment in budget, facilities, and human resources. Adequate funding is essential to cover expenses such as equipment, transportation, and personnel. High-quality facilities are needed to support the operations, including medical testing and data collection. Trained staff with specialised skills in medical diagnostics, data management, and community engagement are critical to the success of these surveys. Understanding the cultural and social dynamics of the communities being surveyed is equally important to ensure effective communication and cooperation.

Despite the logistical challenges and high costs, field surveys are invaluable for collecting accurate and detailed information. This data is crucial for the strategic planning and implementation of mycetoma control measures. The insights gained from these surveys help in understanding the disease's prevalence, distribution, and impact on affected communities. This information is essential for designing effective intervention programmes, allocating resources efficiently, and ultimately reducing the burden of mycetoma. Therefore, while field surveys are demanding and resource-intensive, their outcomes significantly contribute to the objective planning and execution of public health strategies aimed at combating mycetoma.



Guidelines Objectives

These guidelines serve as a blueprint for conducting mycetoma field surveys to achieve the overarching goal of combating mycetoma and improving the well-being of affected individuals and communities. The objectives of these guidelines include the following:

Early Detection and Management

The primary aim is to swiftly identify cases of mycetoma to facilitate timely intervention and prevent the progression of the disease, thereby minimising potential complications.

Health Education Conveyance

It is imperative to disseminate information regarding the signs, symptoms, and preventive measures associated with mycetoma. This health educational outreach serves to empower individuals and communities, enabling them to recognise the condition early on and take proactive steps towards its management.

Active Community Engagement

The involvement and cooperation of community members are essential elements in the fight against mycetoma. Fostering collaboration and participation at the grassroots level can enhance awareness, understanding, and support for mycetoma control efforts within local communities.

Effective Coordination

Seamless coordination among team members, medical professionals, and health staff is crucial for the comprehensive management of mycetoma. By ensuring effective communication and collaboration, we can optimise resources, streamline processes, and deliver integrated care to those affected by the disease.



Pre-Survey Preparation

Comprehensive Training

To ensure the proficiency and effectiveness of our field survey teams, we prioritise comprehensive training for all members involved. This training encompasses a thorough understanding of mycetoma identification techniques, data collection methodologies, and the ethical considerations essential for conducting surveys in communities. Through rigorous instruction and hands-on practice sessions, team members develop the necessary skills and knowledge to accurately identify mycetoma cases, collect relevant data, and navigate the complex ethical landscape inherent in health research.

Specialised Training

Recognising the specialised nature of mycetoma diagnosis and management, medical and health staff undergo additional, specialised training tailored to their roles and responsibilities. This training delves deeper into the nuances of mycetoma diagnosis, including the interpretation of clinical signs and symptoms, diagnostic tests, and differential diagnoses. Moreover, medical and health staff receive comprehensive instruction on the various treatment modalities available for mycetoma, as well as the importance of timely referrals to appropriate healthcare facilities for further evaluation and management. By equipping medical and health staff with this specialised training, we aim to enhance the accuracy and efficacy of mycetoma diagnosis and treatment, ultimately improving patient outcomes and minimising the burden of this neglected tropical disease.



Equipment and Supplies

Availability and Functionality

Ensuring that all essential equipment and supplies are readily available and in optimal working condition is paramount to the success of our mycetoma field surveys. We prioritise meticulous planning and preparation to guarantee the seamless operation of our survey activities.

Availability and Functionality

Our first priority is to verify that all necessary equipment for examination, sample collection, and data recording is present and functioning properly. This includes but is not limited to diagnostic tools such as true-cut needles, grains collection, scalpels and culture swabs, and recording devices such as tablets or notebooks. Regular maintenance checks and timely repairs or replacements are conducted to address any issues promptly and minimise disruptions to survey operations.

Stock Management

In addition to equipment, we place equal emphasis on maintaining adequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE), disinfectants, and first aid kits. These essential items are essential for ensuring the safety and well-being of both field staff and survey participants. PPE such as gloves, masks, and goggles are provided to mitigate the risk of exposure to infectious agents, while disinfectants are used to maintain hygiene standards during examinations and sample collection. Furthermore, first aid kits are stocked with essential medical supplies to address any minor injuries or medical emergencies that may arise during field activities.



Survey Implementation

Case Detection

Effective case detection is the cornerstone of our mycetoma field surveys, ensuring that individuals affected by the disease receive timely diagnosis and appropriate management. Through systematic household visits, adherence to standardised criteria, and comprehensive data collection practices, we strive to enhance the effectiveness and reliability of our mycetoma case detection efforts. By identifying cases early and accurately, we can initiate timely interventions, prevent disease progression, and improve outcomes for individuals affected by mycetoma.

Systematic Household Visits

Our field teams conduct systematic household visits in targeted areas identified as high-risk or endemic for mycetoma. By systematically covering each household within the designated survey area, we aim to maximise the likelihood of encountering individuals with suspected mycetoma. This proactive approach enables us to reach remote or underserved communities where access to healthcare services may be limited, ensuring that no potential cases go undetected.

Standardised Criteria

To maintain consistency and accuracy in case detection, we utilise standardised case definition criteria established by reputable medical authorities and organisations. These criteria serve as a guideline for screening and diagnosing mycetoma cases during field surveys, helping field staff identify individuals who meet the clinical and epidemiological characteristics indicative of the disease. By adhering to standardised criteria, we ensure uniformity in case identification across different survey locations and personnel, enhancing the reliability and comparability of survey findings.

Comprehensive Data Collection

In addition to screening for mycetoma, our field teams prioritise comprehensive data collection to gather relevant clinical information essential for accurate diagnosis and management. This includes obtaining detailed patient histories, documenting presenting symptoms, and conducting thorough physical examinations to assess lesion characteristics and associated findings. By systematically documenting clinical information during field surveys, we facilitate the identification of true mycetoma cases and enable healthcare providers to tailor treatment strategies based on individual patient needs.



Samples Collection

Proper Samples Collection

The accuracy of laboratory confirmation for mycetoma heavily relies on the quality and appropriateness of the samples collected during field surveys. Our field teams are trained to obtain appropriate samples, such as blood samples collection, tissue biopsies and aspirates, from suspected mycetoma lesions. Tissue biopsies provide histopathological insights into the nature of the lesion, while aspirates allow for microbiological examination to identify the causative organism. By collecting diverse samples, we increase the likelihood of accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment recommendations.

Labeling and Storage

Maintaining the integrity of collected specimens is critical to the reliability of laboratory results. Therefore, meticulous attention is given to proper labelling, handling, and storage procedures. Each sample is labelled with unique identifiers, including patient information, date, and sample type, to ensure traceability and prevent mix-ups. Samples are handled with care to minimise contamination and preserve their viability for analysis. Additionally, appropriate storage conditions, such as temperature control and protection from light, are maintained to prevent the degradation of samples over time. By adhering to stringent labelling and storage protocols, we safeguard the quality and reliability of collected specimens, facilitating accurate laboratory diagnosis and subsequent patient management.



Health Education

Culturally Sensitive Approach

Recognising the diverse cultural backgrounds and beliefs within communities, our health education initiatives are carefully tailored to resonate with the local context. We adopt a culturally sensitive approach that acknowledges and respects the traditions, norms, and values of the community. By incorporating local languages, customs, and practices into our educational materials and sessions, we strive to establish rapport and trust with community members. Moreover, we adapt our messaging to align with cultural perceptions of health and illness, ensuring that information on mycetoma signs, symptoms, and preventive measures is conveyed in a culturally appropriate manner. This approach not only enhances the relevance and effectiveness of our health education efforts but also fosters greater acceptance and uptake of the recommended preventive behaviours within the community.

Interactive Engagement

Our health education sessions go beyond traditional didactic methods to encourage active participation and engagement from community members. We distribute educational materials, such as brochures, posters, and visual aids, that are accessible and easy to understand. These materials serve as conversation starters, prompting discussions and questions among participants. Through interactive activities, role-plays, and group discussions, we create opportunities to address myths, misconceptions, and concerns related to mycetoma. By involving community members in the learning process, we empower them to take ownership of their health and well-being. Moreover, interactive engagement fosters peer-to-peer learning and social support networks, strengthening community resilience against mycetoma and other health challenges. Overall, our approach to health education emphasises collaboration, dialogue, and empowerment, laying the foundation for sustainable behaviour change and improved health outcomes within the community.



Community Engagement

Establishing Dialogue

At the heart of our community engagement strategy lies the establishment of meaningful dialogue with key stakeholders, including community leaders, local health authorities, and other relevant parties. We recognise the importance of building trust and fostering partnerships to effectively address mycetoma within the community. By initiating open and transparent communication channels, we seek to garner support, share knowledge, and solicit feedback on mycetoma control efforts. Through regular meetings, consultations, and collaborative discussions, we aim to cultivate a shared understanding of the disease and its impact, as well as collective ownership of the solutions needed to combat it. By engaging with community leaders and stakeholders as equal partners, we create a conducive environment for collaboration and mutual support, driving sustainable change and positive health outcomes.

Community Outreach

In addition to dialogue with key stakeholders, we prioritise direct engagement with community members through targeted outreach activities. Community outreach serves as a platform to actively involve residents in mycetoma control efforts, empowering them to play an active role in addressing the disease within their communities. We organise community meetings, focus group discussions, and outreach events to raise awareness about mycetoma, its signs and symptoms, and available prevention and treatment options. These activities provide opportunities for community members to share their experiences, concerns, and perspectives on mycetoma, fostering a sense of ownership and collective responsibility for disease control. Moreover, community outreach initiatives facilitate the dissemination of accurate information, dispelling myths and misconceptions surrounding mycetoma and promoting evidence-based practices for prevention and management. By engaging directly with community members, we harness local knowledge, resources, and networks to drive sustainable change and improve health outcomes for all. Through ongoing dialogue and community outreach, we strive to build resilient, empowered communities capable of effectively addressing mycetoma and other health challenges.



Data Management and Reporting

Our approach to data management and reporting emphasises the importance of accurate documentation, confidentiality, timely submission of reports, and data dissemination to inform decision-making and guide future interventions. By upholding rigorous standards of data management and reporting, we strive to ensure the integrity, transparency, and impact of our survey activities, ultimately contributing to the advancement of mycetoma research and control efforts.

Documentation

Accurate Record-Keeping

Central to our data management strategy is the practice of meticulous record-keeping. We maintain detailed records of all survey activities, encompassing case profiles, sample collection details, and educational interventions. Each aspect of the survey process is carefully documented to ensure transparency, traceability, and accountability. By maintaining accurate records, we not only facilitate the analysis and interpretation of survey data but also enable the replication

of our methods and findings by other researchers and organisations. Moreover, comprehensive documentation serves as a valuable resource for quality assurance, enabling us to monitor the integrity and consistency of our survey activities over time.

Confidentiality

Respecting the privacy and confidentiality of patient information is paramount in all aspects of our data management practices. We adhere to stringent protocols to safeguard the confidentiality of personal health information in compliance with relevant regulations and ethical standards. Patient data collected during surveys are stored securely and accessed only by authorised personnel with a legitimate need-to-know. Additionally, measures are in place to ensure that data dissemination is conducted in a manner that protects patient privacy and minimises the risk of unauthorised disclosure. By prioritising confidentiality, we uphold the trust and confidence of survey participants, fostering a supportive environment conducive to open and honest communication.

Reporting

Timely Submission

Timely reporting is essential for ensuring that survey findings are promptly communicated to relevant stakeholders and decision-makers. We commit to submitting comprehensive reports in a timely manner to designated authorities, outlining key survey findings, challenges encountered, and recommendations for action. By providing timely insights into the prevalence, distribution, and impact of mycetoma within surveyed communities, our reports enable stakeholders to make informed decisions and allocate resources effectively. Moreover, timely reporting facilitates proactive responses to emerging challenges, allowing for timely interventions and preventive measures to be implemented.

Data Dissemination

In addition to reporting to designated authorities, we recognise the importance of data dissemination to a broader audience of stakeholders, including policymakers, healthcare professionals, and community members. We facilitate the sharing and dissemination of survey data through various channels, such as conferences, workshops, and online platforms. By making survey findings accessible and comprehensible to a wide range of stakeholders, we empower them to actively engage in mycetoma control efforts and contribute to evidence-based decision-making. Moreover, data dissemination fosters collaboration and knowledge exchange, facilitating the development of innovative solutions and best practices for addressing mycetoma and related public health challenges.

Post-Survey Follow-Up

Case Management

Comprehensive Care

Our commitment to addressing mycetoma extends beyond the survey phase to encompass comprehensive case management for confirmed cases. Upon identification and confirmation of mycetoma cases during surveys, we prioritise providing timely and appropriate treatment interventions tailored to the individual needs of each patient. This may involve a multidisciplinary approach, collaborating closely with healthcare facilities and specialists to ensure access to specialised care and expertise. Treatment plans are designed based on the type and severity of the mycetoma, taking into account factors such as lesion location, size, and associated symptoms. Moreover, we recognise the importance of addressing psychosocial and economic aspects of care offering support services and resources to enhance the overall well-being of patients and their families. By adopting a holistic approach to case management, we aim to optimise treatment outcomes, alleviate suffering, and improve the quality of life for individuals affected by mycetoma.

Monitoring and Evaluation

In addition to providing treatment, we prioritise ongoing monitoring and evaluation of patients progress to assess treatment adherence and clinical outcomes. Regular follow-up visits and assessments are conducted to track the response to treatment, monitor any changes in lesion size or characteristics, and address any emerging complications or concerns. This proactive approach enables us to identify and address potential barriers to treatment adherence, such as medication side effects or logistical challenges, and provide appropriate support and guidance to patients and their caregivers. Moreover, monitoring and evaluation activities contribute valuable data to our overall surveillance efforts, enabling us to assess the effectiveness of treatment interventions and refine our strategies for mycetoma control. By continuously evaluating and optimising patient care practices, we strive to achieve optimal management and outcomes for individuals affected by mycetoma, ultimately advancing our collective efforts to combat this neglected tropical disease.



Continuous Improvement

Post-Survey Evaluations

Conducting post-survey evaluations is integral to our commitment to continuous improvement in mycetoma control efforts. These evaluations serve as a critical feedback mechanism for assessing the effectiveness of our interventions and identifying areas for enhancement in survey strategies and implementation. Through rigorous analysis of survey data and outcomes, we evaluate the impact of our interventions on key indicators such as case detection rates, treatment adherence, and patient outcomes. By comparing actual outcomes against predefined targets and benchmarks, we gain insights into the strengths and weaknesses of our survey methodologies and intervention strategies. This allows us to identify successful practices that can be scaled up and replicated in future surveys, as well as areas requiring improvement or modification to enhance effectiveness and efficiency. Post-survey evaluations also provide an opportunity to capture lessons learned and best practices, facilitating knowledge sharing and capacity building within our organisation and among partner institutions.

Stakeholder Feedback

Incorporating feedback from stakeholders and field staff is essential for ensuring that our mycetoma control efforts are responsive to the needs and priorities of the communities we serve. We actively solicit feedback from a diverse range of stakeholders, including community leaders, healthcare providers, policymakers, and field staff, through surveys, focus group discussions, and structured interviews. This feedback is systematically collected, analysed, and incorporated into decision-making processes to inform the refinement of survey methodologies and the development of tailored interventions. By actively engaging stakeholders in the evaluation and planning process, we foster a sense of ownership and collaboration, ensuring that our interventions are contextually relevant, culturally appropriate, and sustainable in the long term. Moreover, involving field staff in the feedback loop empowers them to contribute their expertise and insights, strengthening their commitment and motivation to deliver high-quality services. Ultimately, by integrating stakeholder feedback into our continuous improvement processes, we enhance the impact and effectiveness of our mycetoma control efforts, driving progress towards our shared goal of eliminating this disease.

Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent

Obtaining informed consent is foundational to our ethical framework for conducting mycetoma surveys. Before initiating any survey activities, we prioritise obtaining explicit and voluntary consent from all participants involved. This process involves ensuring that participants fully understand the purpose, procedures, and potential risks associated with their participation in the survey. We provide clear and comprehensive information in a language and format that is accessible and understandable to participants, taking into account factors such as literacy levels and cultural preferences. Moreover, we actively encourage participants to ask questions and seek clarification about any aspects of the survey that they may not fully comprehend. By obtaining informed consent, we uphold the principles of respect for individual autonomy, dignity, and self-determination, empowering participants to make autonomous decisions about their involvement in the survey process.

Respectful Engagement

Respectful engagement is at the core of our approach to ethical conduct in mycetoma surveys. We recognise the importance of fostering mutual respect, trust, and collaboration with the communities we serve. Our engagement with participants is characterised by openness, transparency, and empathy as we strive to create a supportive and empowering environment for their participation. We take proactive measures to listen to and address participants' concerns, preferences and needs throughout the survey process. This includes respecting cultural norms, values, and beliefs and adapting our approach to align with the cultural context of the community. By demonstrating sensitivity and responsiveness to the cultural diversity and preferences of participants, we foster a sense of trust and partnership that underpins ethical conduct and ensures the integrity of our survey activities.

Cultural Sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity guides our interactions and decision-making processes in mycetoma surveys, ensuring that we uphold the dignity, rights, and values of participants. We recognise that cultural beliefs and practices may influence individuals' perceptions of health, illness, and healthcare-seeking behaviours. Therefore, we strive to respect and accommodate cultural diversity in our survey methodologies and communication strategies. This may involve engaging with local community leaders, elders, and traditional healers to gain insights into cultural norms and preferences regarding health-related activities. We adapt our approach to informed consent and communication to align with cultural expectations, ensuring that participants feel respected and valued throughout the survey process. By embracing cultural sensitivity, we foster a climate of inclusivity, trust, and mutual respect that enhances the ethical conduct and effectiveness of our mycetoma surveys.



Roles and Responsibilities

Clear Allocation

Clear delineation of roles and responsibilities is essential for ensuring effective coordination and collaboration among team members in mycetoma survey operations. We establish clear guidelines and expectations for each team member, including field staff, medical personnel, community volunteers, and support staff, outlining their specific duties and responsibilities. This clarity helps to minimise confusion, duplication of efforts, and potential gaps in coverage, ensuring that all aspects of the survey process are addressed in a systematic and efficient manner. Moreover, clear role allocation promotes accountability and ownership among team members, fostering a sense of purpose and commitment to achieving survey objectives.

Teamwork and Communication

Fostering a culture of teamwork, open communication, and mutual respect is integral to optimising survey outcomes and ensuring sustainability. We emphasise the importance of collaboration and cooperation among team members, encouraging active participation, idea-sharing, and problem-solving. Regular team meetings, briefings, and debriefings provide opportunities for team members to exchange information, share insights, and address any challenges or concerns that may arise during survey activities. Moreover, we promote a supportive and inclusive work environment where diverse perspectives are valued and respected, fostering creativity, innovation, and resilience among team members. By prioritising teamwork and communication, we enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of our survey operations, ultimately contributing to the success of our mycetoma control efforts.

Safety and Security

Risk Management

Prioritising the safety and security of field survey teams is paramount in our mycetoma survey operations. We conduct thorough risk assessments to identify potential hazards and vulnerabilities associated with survey activities, such as travel, fieldwork, and interaction with community members. Based on these assessments, we develop and implement comprehensive risk management plans and emergency protocols to mitigate risks and ensure the safety of team members. This may include measures such as providing personal protective equipment (PPE), establishing communication protocols, and conducting safety briefings and training sessions prior to field deployment. By proactively managing risks and implementing appropriate safety measures, we minimise the likelihood of accidents, injuries, or security incidents occurring during survey operations.

Training and Preparedness

Providing training on personal safety, conflict resolution, and crisis management is essential to equipping staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to mitigate potential hazards encountered during field surveys. We offer comprehensive training programmes that cover a range of safety-related topics, including situational awareness, emergency response procedures, and self-defense techniques. Qualified instructors conduct training sessions and include practical exercises and simulations to enhance skill development and preparedness. Additionally, we provide ongoing support and guidance to staff throughout the survey process, reinforcing safety protocols and promoting a culture of vigilance and responsibility. By investing in training and preparedness, we empower staff to effectively manage risks and respond to emergencies, ensuring their safety and well-being during survey operations.



Monitoring and Evaluation

Ongoing Evaluation

Establishing mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of survey activities is essential for tracking progress, identifying areas for improvement, and measuring the impact of our interventions. We utilise a range of performance indicators and feedback mechanisms to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of survey operations, including case detection rates, treatment outcomes, participant satisfaction, and adherence to ethical standards. Regular data collection and analysis enable us to identify trends, patterns, and emerging issues in real time, allowing for timely adjustments and interventions as needed. Moreover, we actively solicit feedback from stakeholders, including survey participants, community leaders, and healthcare providers, to gain insights into their experiences, perceptions, and suggestions for improvement. By integrating ongoing evaluation into our survey processes, we promote accountability, transparency, and continuous learning, ultimately enhancing the quality and effectiveness of our mycetoma control efforts.

Review and Adaptation

Review progress against objectives and targets, adapting strategies as needed to address emerging challenges and achieve desired outcomes.

Review and Revision

Periodic Review

Conducting periodic reviews of policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs) is essential for ensuring alignment with emerging evidence, changing contexts, and stakeholder feedback. We regularly review and revise our policies and SOPs to reflect the latest scientific advancements, best practices, and regulatory requirements in mycetoma control and public health. This may involve convening expert panels, consulting with relevant stakeholders, and conducting literature reviews to inform the revision process. Additionally, we utilise lessons learned from previous surveys and evaluations to identify areas for improvement and innovation in our survey methodologies and interventions. By staying abreast of current trends and evidence-based practices, we ensure that our survey operations remain relevant, effective, and compliant with established standards.

Compliance and Quality Assurance

Ensuring compliance with relevant regulations, guidelines, and best practices is essential for maintaining high standards of quality and effectiveness in mycetoma survey operations. We conduct regular audits and quality assurance checks to verify compliance with regulatory requirements, ethical standards, and internal policies and procedures. This includes ensuring that all survey activities are conducted in accordance with applicable laws and regulations governing research ethics, data protection, and patient confidentiality. Additionally, we implement quality control measures to monitor the accuracy, reliability, and validity of data collected during surveys, ensuring that findings are credible and actionable. By prioritising compliance and quality assurance, we uphold the integrity and credibility of our survey operations, instilling confidence in stakeholders and contributing to the success of our mycetoma control efforts.

The necessary equipment, consumables, vehicles, and staff for conducting a mycetoma field survey:

Equipment	Item	Purpose
	Portable Ultrasound Machine	For early detection and diagnosis of mycetoma cases.
	Digital Camera	To document cases and lesions for medical records and further analysis.
	GPS Devices	For accurate mapping of affected areas and planning revisits.
	Laptops/Tablets	For data entry, storage, and communication.
	Mobile Phones	For coordination and communication among team members.
	Generators/Portable Power Banks	To ensure uninterrupted power supply for electronic devices in remote areas.
	Sterilisation Equipment	For maintaining hygiene and preventing infection during examinations and minor procedures.
	Medical Kits	Basic examination tools and first aid supplies for immediate care.

Staff		
	Medical Doctors	To diagnose and manage mycetoma cases.
	Nurses	To assist with patient care and management.
	Laboratory Technicians	To conduct tests and assist in diagnosis.
	Health Educators	To provide information and education to the community.
	Community Health Workers	To engage with the community and assist in identifying cases.
	Data Entry Clerks	To manage and organise data collected during the survey.
	Drivers	To operate vehicles and ensure safe transportation.
	Coordinators	To oversee the survey, ensuring seamless coordination and communication.

Consumables		
Diagnostic Kits for on-site testing of mycetoma	Antiseptics and Disinfectants	For cleaning wounds and equipment.
	Medical Gloves	Ensure hygiene and safety during examinations.
	Bandages and Dressings	For wound care and treatment of affected individuals.
	Educational Materials (brochures, flyers)	To distribute information on mycetoma prevention and symptoms to the community.
	Stationery (notebooks, pens)	For recording data and observations during the survey.
	Water and Food Supplies	To sustain the team during fieldwork.

Vehicles		
	4x4 Vehicles	For transportation to and within remote areas.
	Motorbikes	For reaching areas inaccessible by larger vehicles.
	Mobile Clinic Vans	For providing on-site medical care and consultations.



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