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Emergencies preparedness, response

Cholera outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Republic of Congo

22 JULY 2011 - Cholera outbreaks are being reported along the Congo River, affecting the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Republic of Congo.

In DRC, the outbreak was reported in March 2011 and has intensified in the last 3 to 4 weeks, affecting four provinces (Bandundu, Equateur, Kinshasa and P Orientale). As of 20 July 2011, a total of 3 896 cases, including 265 deaths have been reported, with an overall case fatality of 7%.

In the Republic of Congo, between 14 June and 20 July 2011, a total of 181 suspected cases including 6 deaths have been reported from four provinces (Brazzaville, Cuvette, Likouala and Plateaux) with a case fatality of 3%. Four cases from Brazzaville and Likouala have been laboratory confirmed with cholera.

There is high risk of the epidemic further spreading along the Congo River. The outbreak has been reported to have spread to new locations, particularly in Kinshasa, where there are large population groups with inadequate safe water.

In response to the outbreaks, the governments of DRC and the Republic of Congo, international organizations and non-government organizations have intensified surveillance, case management and health promotion activities in the affected areas, in addition to setting up cholera treatment centres at selected sites.

In DRC, WHO is conducting a rapid risk assessment to identify urgent needs for the coming weeks. Two epidemiologists, a health promotion officer and a logistician have been deployed to Kinshasa to support the response operations.

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