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Emergencies preparedness, response

Cholera outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

23 JULY 2012 - The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has reported a sharp increase in the number of cholera cases in the armed conflict area of North Kivu. According to the report, 368 new cases were reported from epidemiological week 24 (11-17 June) to epidemiological week 26 (25 June-1 July). The most affected areas include Birambizo, Goma, Karisimbi, Kirosho, Mutwanga, Mweso and Rwanguba.

There is concern that the security situation may increase difficulty in accessing the health-care facilities and could increase the number of severe and fatal cases. The current armed conflict in North Kivu also poses a risk of international spread of the disease to neighbouring countries such as Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda.

North Kivu is one of the five provinces of eastern DRC where cholera is endemic. *Vibrio cholerae* was confirmed in the AMI-Kivu laboratory since 2011.

Response

Epidemiological investigation conducted by national authorities and other partners, including Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Merlin, and International Rescue Committee (IRC) indicated that insufficient access

to safe water supply remains the main cause of the epidemic in North Kivu.

Patients are being treated with infusions and antibiotics as appropriate, at treatment centres. Interventions to control the epidemic that are being carried out include education and communication; management of cases; increased surveillance; hygiene and sanitation; and provision of safe drinking water.

WHO is working to support national authorities in response to the cholera outbreak and the broader humanitarian emergency resulting from conflict and population displacement.

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