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DR Congo: Children facing worst cholera outbreak in six years



© UNICEF/Benekire | Amina Bakunda is a doctor at the UNICEF-supported Cholera Treatment Center in Bulengo, a site for displaced persons in North Kivu province, DR Congo.

18 August 2023 | **Health**

A spike in conflict and displacement in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is pushing children into the worst cholera crisis since 2017, warns UNICEF.

Across the country, there have been at least 31,342 suspected or confirmed cholera cases and 230 deaths in the first seven months of 2023 - many of them children.

The worst affected province, North Kivu, has seen more than 21,400 confirmed or suspected cases, including more than 8,000 children under

to 5,120 total cases in all of 2022, with 1,200 of them children under five.

"The size of the cholera outbreak and the devastation it threatens should ring alarm bells," said Shameza Abdulla, UNICEF DRC Senior Emergency Coordinator, based in Goma.

"If urgent action is not taken within the next months, there is a significant risk that the disease will spread to parts of the country that have not been affected for many years."

Urgent aid for displaced

The DRC, which shoulders the worst displacement crisis in Africa, is among **the worst globally**, with more than 6.3 million displaced people across the country. Displacement camps are generally overcrowded and overstretched, making them ripe for cholera transmission.

"There is also the **danger it will continue to spread** in displacement sites where systems are already overwhelmed and the population especially children, is highly vulnerable to illness and, potentially, death. Displaced families have already been through so much", added Ms. Abdulla.

UNICEF is calling for \$62.5 million to scale up its prevention and response activities to the cholera and sanitation crisis over the next five months.

The agency aims to reach 1.8 million people, including one million children, with safe water, hygiene kits, latrines, medical supplies, and child-friendly cholera care. Currently, the appeal is just nine per cent funded.



© UNICEF/Ndebo | Toilets installed by UNICEF and its partners in the Bulengo camp, west of the city of Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo.

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