

MINOR EMERGENCY



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

GUINEA-BISSAU: CHOLERA

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The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

CHF 20,000 (USD 15,828 OR EUR 12,841) HAS BEEN ALLOCATED FROM THE FEDERATION'S DISASTER RELIEF EMERGENCY FUND (DREF) TO RESPOND TO THIS OPERATION.

UNEARMARKED FUNDS TO REPAY DREF ARE ENCOURAGED.

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For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The situation

The Government of Guinea-Bissau started reporting cases of cholera in mid-June, 2005. While the outbreak was almost under control for some time, the number of cases increased in the last few weeks. By 29 July 2005, a total of 4,066 cases had been reported, with 58 deaths. The outbreak started in the capital Bissau and has now spread to ten out of twelve regions; one of the worst affected areas is that bordering Senegal. Critical support and prevention activities are required to control the epidemic and prevent it from spreading to the neighbouring countries of Senegal and Guinea.

Guinea-Bissau is one of the poorest countries in the world (ranking 172 out of 177 countries in the UN Development Index); two-thirds of Guinea-Bissau's inhabitants live below the poverty line. The socio-political situation in the country continues to be tense due to recent presidential elections. The country was also affected by a locust invasion in 2004 and early 2005. It has a weak national health system and minimal access to safe drinking water and poor sanitation conditions seriously limit the effectiveness of control measures (most houses have no water or latrines and consumption of water is often from small plastic bags sold on the streets). There have been several epidemics in the past (2002 and 2004); the worst was in 1996 with 26,967 cases and 961 deaths.

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In recent weeks, the number of reported cases has continually been on the rise. Official reports made available as of July 29, 2005 reflect the following details:

Region	Number of Cases	Number of Deaths
Bissau	3,318	24
Biombo	504	10
São Domingos	84	12
Quínara	75	4
Oio	48	4
Guinea-Bissau Total	4,066	58

Source: Ministry of Health / statistics for 29 July 2005

The Guinea Bissau government is undertaking a sanitation and sensitization campaign and provides disinfectants at water reservoirs at the entrance/exit points of Bissau. However, the spread of the epidemic continues despite the efforts in place. Emergency stocks are virtually depleted and essential medical stocks are dwindling. The rains have intensified, thus increasing the risk of contamination to others regions and neighbouring countries Senegal and Guinea. The UN OCHA launched an emergency appeal to communicate that the Ministry of Health is seeking international assistance. This is to respond to the Minister of Health appeal for collaboration from all partners, including international organizations, in fighting the epidemic.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action taken so far

From the onset of the announcement of the epidemic in Guinea-Bissau, the Guinea-Bissau Red Cross participated in the meetings of the Ministry of Health disaster response committee. The local Red Cross branches are also participating in meetings and carrying out on-going awareness campaigns and sanitation activities in public places.

The ICRC delegate based in Bissau has continued to monitor the situation and is coordinating response activities with the Federation and UN-agencies. The Federation's Regional Delegation for West & Central Africa has deployed its health officer to Guinea Bissau to support the national society in assessments and develop a plan of action.

Currently the Federation and the ICRC are jointly conducting trainings for 70 volunteers in Bissau. They will be deployed to conduct awareness campaigns in high-risk communities and clean 40 Health Centres and latrines in the three most affected regions. As the volunteers will be disinfecting the shelters for the sick, the Guinea Bissau Red Cross will assist the health ministry with sanitation materials.

Plan of action:

Overall objective: To contribute in preventing the further spread of cholera in Guinea Bissau.

Specific objectives:

- carry out awareness campaigns on hygiene practices among the population to prevent cholera (washing of hands with soap, cleanliness of food, treatment of water with chlorine, environmental sanitation of public places, decontamination of health centres receiving patients).
- carry out door-to-door visits with demonstrations on hygiene practices and medical advice.

These activities will be carried out in Bissau, Biombo and San Domingos through IEC/BCC, advocacy, key message diffusion and mobilization of the communities. Door to door mobilisation campaigns and demonstrations at public places are core components of the awareness campaign. The target population is 600,000 people in Bissau, San Domingos, and Biombo (Guinea-Bissau's total population is 1,500,000). In its plan of action the Guinea-Bissau Red Cross anticipates contributing to the government efforts with the following items, with the support of the Federation.

Basins (20 litres)	Buckets (15 litres)	Jerry cans	Soap	Bleach for chlorination	Jars (1liter)	Brooms	Hail
100	100	100	50 cartons	500 cartons	100	100	50

Coordination

There is effective coordination between the Guinea Bissau Red Cross, the ICRC, the Federation, and the Spanish Red Cross bilateral delegate. The Movement partners are coordinating their activities with UN agencies and the Ministry of Health by being part of the coordination committee directed by the director of health. This committee meets 3 times per week to analyze the situation. The ministry has also opened a reception and treatment centre for patients at the national hospital in Bissau, the only reference of the country. At regional level, the Federation Regional Delegation in Dakar is coordinating with OCHA and participating in inter-agency coordination meetings.

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SITUATION MAP

