

# INFORMATION BULLETIN



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 لجمعية الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## GUINEA-BISSAU: CHOLERA

6 December 2004

*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

This Information Bulletin (no. 1/2004) is being issued for information and based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation may consider international support through an Emergency Appeal.

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct and is committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

### The Situation

Cholera was first reported in Guinea-Bissau during the second week of October 2004; the government officially declared an epidemic on 30 October. As of 19 November, there were 199 reported cases of cholera and three deaths (1.5% mortality).<sup>1</sup> The most heavily-affected region is the Bijagos archipelago, where the first cases were reported. (Bijagos is located off the coastline of the capital Bissau, four hours journey by sea. The Bijagos archipelago is composed of 40 islands with more than 25,000 inhabitants whose principal economic activity is fishing. A large community of fisherman from neighbouring Guinea and Senegal – both also recently affected by cholera - live there as well.)

The history of cholera epidemic in Guinea-Bissau dates back to 1996. In 1996 and 1997, Guinea-Bissau registered a cumulative total of 51,040 cases. All 11 regions in the country were affected at varied degrees. In 2002, another epidemic reported 66 cases in four regions with three deaths (4.5% mortality).

In 2004, contamination is suspected as the major cause of this outbreak due to the lack of access to clean water, adequate sanitation and impurities caused mainly by the fishing activity. The first case was observed at Wite in a village of Bijagos archipelago on 10 October. All reported cases to date have come solely from the Bijagos region.

<sup>1</sup> Guinea-Bissau Ministry of Health report, November 2004

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As of 19 November, the islands were affected as follows:

- Wite (106 cases, 1 death);
- Wassa (14 cases, 1 death);
- Ancanho (26 cases, 1 death);
- Bubaque (36 cases, no deaths); and
- Canhabaque (17 cases, no deaths).

### Red Cross and Red Crescent Action

The Red Cross Society of Guinea-Bissau<sup>2</sup> has been involved from the onset of this epidemic, particularly through its regional committee on the Bijagos archipelago. Despite limited resources, the committee put some 15 litres of clean water at the disposal of three (3) elementary schools. Red Cross volunteers have been going around Bijagos villages sensitising the population of preventive measures. The MoH has requested for Red Cross assistance in supplying HTH (calcium hypochlorite) for clean-up campaign in the affected areas as well as in well water purification. The Red Cross of Guinea-Bissau wants to intensify its sensitisation and clean-up activities to prevent the spread of the cholera within Bijagos islands and the neighboring regions particularly Biombo, Bissau, Bolama, Quinara and Tombali.

The Federation health coordinator from the Mano River sub-regional office (Abidjan) visited the islands and evaluated the situation (18-24 November 2004); the full evaluation report is available at the sub-regional office. The volunteers carried out sanitation exercises in these areas to curb the spread of the epidemic:

	Hospitals	Markets	Fishing Port
Orangozinho	X		
Canhabaque	X	X	X
Wite		X	X
Ancanho		X	X
Bubaque	X	X	X
Soga		X	X
Wassa		X	X

### Coordination

The regional health department of Bijagos has established cholera treatment centres in Bubaque, Orangozinho and Canhabaque. The MoH also has dispatched a medical team of twenty (20) technicians and some materials to the area to support the regional health department of the region. In addition, a management committee of the cholera epidemic headed by the epidemiologist and hygienic department has been set up; the Red Cross of Guinea-Bissau is a member of this committee.

In the fight against cholera the MoH has a dual objective:

- Treatment of cases
- Prevention through sensitisation and sanitation activities

Due to its limited resources, the MoH has sought financial and material aid from development partners for the following needs:

Items	Cost in CFA	Equivalent EUR
Medicines	43,022,000	65,682
Medical materials	2,000,000	3,053
Epidemiologist et laboratory	10,480,000	16,000
Cleaning up	6,550,000	10,000
Social mobilisation	10,450,000	15,954
Logistic	2,700,000	4,122
<b>Total</b>	<b>75,202,000</b>	<b>114,811</b>

<sup>2</sup> Red Cross Society of Guinea-Bissau – <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/check.asp?countryid=183>

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As of 19 November, MoH raised EUR 18,500. MoH also received material support from the Portuguese Embassy and USAID through donations of antibiotics and solution. Other organisations - French Cooperation and WFP – have made pledges of medicines, cleaning materials and logistic support.

### Plan of Action

**Goal:** By the end of March 2005, the Red Cross of Guinea-Bissau contributes to the eradication of the cholera spread.

**Objective:** By March 2005, the populations of the Bijagos Region in Guinea-Bissau are sensitized on the adoption of hygienic procedures to control the spread of the cholera epidemic.

#### Expected Result 1:

The households in Bijagos have been sensitized on adopting behaviours favourable to the eradication of the cholera epidemic.

#### Expected Result 2:

Principal and strategic public places are sanitized or rehabilitated. These include:

- 24 public water points
- 40 public latrines
- 12 public places( churches and mosques)
- 8 markets
- 3 hospitals

Cholera is caused by the *Vibrio cholerae* bacteria, of which human beings are the major carriers. It is a diarrhoeal disease characterised by violent and repetitive liquid stools accompanied often by vomiting, which can cause a severe dehydration leading to death in a few hours. Transmission is made orally or through faecal means or through contact with a sick person, a carrier or a corpse. It can be indirectly transmitted through taking unclean water and food infected by stools. Flies and insects are the main vectors.

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal: Guinea-Bissau 2005 Annual Appeal no. 05AA020 – [http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf\\_appeals.pl?annual05/05AA020.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual05/05AA020.pdf)

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