

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 لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO: 28 October, 2002

CHOLERA

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DREF Allocated: CHF 10,000

This Information Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. Based on further updates and details from assessments, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation will consider a request for further support to the national societies through an international appeal. Unearmarked funds are needed to replenish the DREF.

The Disaster

An outbreak of cholera which began 19 September in Mbuji-Mayi, province of Kasai-Oriental is now spreading, affecting several hundreds of people in Mbuji-Mayi town and the villages of Bakamba, Bakamaleka, Kambanga and Tshilunde. According to figures from the Ministry of Health covering the period 19 September to October 25, 2002, some 450 people have been hospitalised and 40 deaths reported. Government health officials say the total number of cases and deaths may be unknown due to problems of accessibility, communications and cultural norms. The epidemic may therefore be affecting a greater number of people than recorded. MoH officials see the epidemic continuing.

This epidemic is said to have spread from the mining areas where water and sanitation conditions are extremely poor. Sources revealed that when one of the miners died in the mining area, the corpse was returned to the family. The family was said to perform the ritual of washing the body and then having all family members drink from the same water used for washing the body. Soon after, six family members died while the survivors had to be rushed to the hospital where they received treatment. Since then, the epidemic has been spreading to other settlements in the region.

Government, humanitarian and Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Ministry of Health together with humanitarian agencies such as UNICEF, ICRC, CARITAS, PATS, MSF-B as well as the RC provincial committee have opened temporary treatment centres in the Health centres of Bakamba, Tshilunde and Kamaleka, Dipumba and hospital de la Munya. to cope with the patient overload. A committee called "STOP CHOLERA" has been set up. It provides medical assistance in the form of drugs, materials and staff, covering almost 30 per cent of the current needs.

The Democratic Republic of Congo Red Cross has an active branch and a group of 60 volunteers trained in preventive and community health and in first aid in the capital of Kasai-Oriental province, and has trained health volunteers in some surrounding villages. Red Cross volunteers are assisting in patient care, sanitation efforts deployed in disinfecting and providing ORS, transportation, sensitisation and burials.