

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Haiti: Cholera outbreak

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This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Haitian Red Cross Society (HRCS), with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), is calling for support with Human Resources from Partner National Societies.

The Haitian Red Cross Society, with the support of Red Cross partners in country, is supporting the government's actions in response to a cholera outbreak in the Artibonite region of Haiti. The latest figures report that 259 people have died, while total cases number 3,342. Five cases of cholera have been detected and isolated in Port-au-Prince, and patients are under treatment.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is mobilizing health, water and sanitation equipment, staff and volunteers to the affected region to support the local hospital, the Ministry of Public Health and the water and sanitation authorities as requested. In addition, the Movement is carrying out a strong health and hygiene promotion campaign with over 300 health promoters currently in the field and daily SMS messages for the people living in the region of Artibonite and Port-au-Prince.

Finally, the National Society, the IFRC team and Partner National Societies are present in coordination meetings with the respective cluster groups and official authorities. The ICRC is currently focused on supporting prisons and will dispatch supplies.



The Saint Nicholas Hospital in Saint-Marc, where hundreds of cases of cholera were recorded in only a few days. Louise Taylor/Canadian Red Cross

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The Situation

Since the past week, the Haitian Ministry of Public Health has reported a high number of deaths and cases of acute diarrhoea in Artibonite region (located two hours from the capital city of Port-au-Prince). Although this

area was not directly affected by the 12 January earthquake, it has become home to thousands of vulnerable people who have been displaced by the quake and who are living in impoverished situations. A team of epidemiologists from the Department of Public Health and Population (MSPP) was mobilized to Artibonite to analyze samples taken from several patients to identify the causative agent of the acute diarrhoea outbreak. As a result of these analyses, the Ministry confirmed that *Vibrio cholerae* is causing the outbreak.

As of Monday, 25 October, the majority of cholera cases have been registered in the Artibonite region. In total, there are 3,342 confirmed cases and 259 deaths as a result of the disease around the country. Spread of the disease can be expected since some people are leaving the affected area and, as the majority of people infected by cholera have no symptoms, they may be unaware of being infected. All these cases relate to people who contracted the illness in Artibonite and subsequently travelled to Port-au-Prince where they developed symptoms. All patients have been isolated and are receiving appropriate treatment. Additionally, there is a suspected case in Les Cayes. Until now, there is no confirmation that the population living in camps in Port-au-Prince is yet affected by the outbreak. Preparedness efforts and coordination are being carried out for an effective, rapid response if the need arises.

The Haitian the National Directorate for Water and Sanitation (Direction Nationale de l'Eau Potable et Assainissement – DINEPA) is leading the Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) response in Artibonite and is requesting support with strengthening the health system structure, delivery of non-food items (water purification tablets and soap), oral rehydration solution, and with a communication campaign of key messages on prevention of and response to cholera.

On Saturday, 23 October, during the WASH Cluster meeting, Artibonite was split into different geographical areas and the Haitian Red Cross Society is working to ensure that it can provide assistance according to the location of its service centres. The Movement is represented in the daily WASH Cluster meetings in Saint-Marc by the Spanish Red Cross, the French Red Cross and an IFRC Disaster Manager delegate.

At the moment, the Cholera treatment protocol for the country is following the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) guidelines and currently there are 12 cholera treatment centres being built to support isolation and treatment of cases: six in Artibonite, one in Central Plateau and five in Port-au-Prince. Three of the CTCs in Artibonite could be managed by the Ministry of Health, while others will be managed by the Cuban Health Brigade and by MSF-Spain and MSF-Belgium. Additional plans are being prepared in case the CTCs are not sufficient which include not only opening more CTCs, but also providing additional training for health personnel and eventual support with management of dead bodies. Furthermore, distribution of water has started for thirteen communities along the Artibonite river.

The situation at the Haitian-Dominican border has changed. Since 08:00 hours on 25 October, the Dominican migration authorities are restricting the official border points at Ouanaminthe (North-East Department), Belladere (Central Department) and Malpasse (West Department). At Anse-à-Pitres (South-East Department), the authorities are allowing the population to pass if they do not carry food or water. The Dominican Republic border staff refers to the cholera outbreak as the reason for the restrictions. The United Nations Stabilization Mission (MINUSTAH) and the United Nations Police (UNPOL) have mobilized units to the sites to monitor and report on the situation.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Since the onset of the outbreak, the Haitian Red Cross Society has been in regular with the Ministry of Public Health, the Department of Civil Protection, DINEPA, PAHO/WHO, OCHA and other agencies in-country in order to obtain up-to-date information and coordinate response actions. The Haitian government has established a crisis centre to manage the emergency and their daily meetings are attended by one representative of the Haitian Red Cross Society and one representative of the IFRC team. In line with its auxiliary role to the government, the National Society is responding to the needs and requests presented by the Ministry of Public Health and the hospital in Saint-Marc. In addition, the National Society and Red Cross partners are participating in meetings with the WASH and Health cluster. Coordination is ongoing with all partners in the field for the scale-up of hygiene promotion activities.



Children in La Piste camp are taught good hand washing practices to prevent disease. Amanda George/British Red Cross

The IFRC headquarters in Geneva and the Americas Zone Office in Panama are in constant communication with the IFRC team in the field and the Haitian Red Cross Society to reinforce actions as requested. A teleconference took place on 22 October, and a follow-up on 24 October, to outline a strategic approach to the response actions, especially around the distribution of cholera kits and other supplies, the provision of safe water and the need for specialized personnel.

An assessment has been conducted in the presence of Haitian Red Cross Society management and the health department regarding the resources available within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in terms of capacity, including both human and technical resources.

A Cholera Task force composed of representatives from the HRCS, IFRC and Partner National Societies has been created to tackle this emergency, strategically divided in focal points for health, water and sanitation, reporting, communication and media, logistics and relief. Three Emergency Response Teams (ERTs) in Port-au-Prince were put on alert with a request for technical capacity in health, water and sanitation. One 5 member ERT has been deployed to Saint-Marc to support with coordination and technical assistance to Movement partners already in the field.

Clean water distribution is one of the key elements being carried out by the Movement in order to control the epidemic, therefore 2.5

million litres of clean water will continue to be distributed each day. In addition, the Italian Red Cross has delivered 6,000 1-litre sachets to health centres near Arcahaie.

As of today, 25 October, five Red Cross trucks have been deployed from Port-au-Prince to Artibonite, with much of the resources designated for the city of Saint-Marc. Supplies delivered include:

- 6,830 family hygiene kits
- 300,000 water purification tablets
- Two cholera kits containing enough supplies to treat 2,400 people
- 10 tents to bolster the already overstretched capacity of local health facilities
- 9,000 1-litre bags of clean drinking water
- 5,000 masks and gloves
- 500 body bags
- One 10,000 litre water bladder and a further five water treatment plant bladders to support hospitals and cholera treatment centres.

Additional human resources have been deployed, including eight HRCS nurses who are supporting the volunteers working on the hygiene promotion campaign. The Italian Red Cross is also actively supporting the water and sanitation programmes to control the spread of cholera.

In Port-au-Prince, work has begun to prepare for a possible spread of the epidemic to the city. A government cholera treatment centre has already been established by MSF in Carrefour. The Ministry of Public Health has requested support from the HRCS and Red Cross partners in the field to establish another centre in the city. Resources are on stand-by, for example the German Red Cross Basic Health

Care clinic was adapted to function as a CTC with support from the IFRC team and other Partner National Societies, and its is currently it is ready for deployment.

The necessary steps are being taken to give people the information they need to minimize their risk of contracting the illness. Nominated by the Haitian government to take a lead role in spreading preventative messages, the Haitian Red Cross Society, with the support of Red Cross partners in Haiti, has drafted a cholera communication plan. The population in Artibonite and Port-au-Prince will receive hygiene promotion information through the radio, trucks with megaphones and SMS.

In order to scale up hygiene promotion activities volunteers will be trained in cholera preparedness and prevention using the IFRC *Epidemic Control Volunteer Manual and Toolkit*, which is available in French and Creole. Movement partners are currently working on the ground promoting appropriate sanitation and hygiene practices through the work of Haitian Red Cross Society volunteers.

The Dominican Red Cross (DRC) has started health prevention activities in the Elias Piña province and other DRC border branches as a result of the request of the Ministry of Health. The DRC mobilized 100 PHAST trained volunteers and is planning to target 95,000 persons along the border (at Dajabon, Restauracion, Pedro Santana, Comendador, Jimani and Pedernales) with a campaign promoting good hygiene practices. In parallel, the Dominican National Water Authority and the Ministry of Health are analyzing possible deployment sites for Dominican Red Cross water treatment plants in the border area to support health facilities and communities with additional clean water capacity.

The DRC, with support from the IFRC, is analyzing the possibility of requesting financial support to assist the DRC water, sanitation and hygiene promotion activities in the border provinces. The IFRC Regional Representative for the Latin Caribbean is contact with the Vice-Minister of Health and has offered to support the Dominican authorities in their prevention programmes through the National Society. The IFRC Regional Representation is also preparing, jointly with the Country Representative for Haiti, for any kind of logistical support that may be needed in the coming days. The Spanish Red Cross and German Red Cross are part of the coordination set-up and have offered their support to the DRC. Moreover, an inter-agency meeting is scheduled to take place this week in Santo Domingo under the United Nations leadership to further guarantee coordination.

The Emergency Health Coordinator for the Americas arrived in Port-au-Prince on Saturday, 23 October 2010, and is currently assessing the situation and supporting the ongoing efforts of the Red Cross actors in the field. A concrete Plan of Action to respond to the outbreak is being drafted by the HRCS with IFRC support and will be mostly supported by current delegates and volunteers. Financially, this Plan of Action will be supported with existing resources, but the possibility of requesting DREF support has not been discarded.

The communications teams in the field, the secretariat headquarters and the Americas Zone Office ensure constant coordination and are constantly monitoring the situation. The IFRC Health team in Geneva is currently identifying a candidate to fill the role of cholera specialist that will support the implementation of the Plan of Action.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The International Federation's work is guided by [Strategy 2020](#) which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.

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