

# ***GHANA: CHOLERA OUTBREAK***

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## ***Information Bulletin N° 1***

### ***The Disaster***

An outbreak of cholera in seven of Ghana's ten regions has been confirmed by the Ministry of Health (MOH). A total of 1,546 cases and 67 deaths have resulted from the outbreak of cholera and diarrhoeal diseases.

The cholera outbreak was first reported in the Bawku east district of the Ghana's Upper East Region on 14 September 1998. Reports from some of the districts in the Southern part of Ghana indicate that the first confirmed cases were reported on 5 September 1998. To date, the outbreak has engulfed seven (7) of the country's ten (10) regions - Upper East, Ashanti, Eastern, Volta, Western, Central and Greater Accra - and 30 of its 110 districts. The outbreak is, however, most severe in the Ashanti and Upper East regions.

The Upper East region shares borders with Burkina Faso and Togo in the north and north-east, respectively, and the disease was reported to have spread from the two countries into the Bawku east district within this region. Poor sanitation and waste disposal coupled with heavy and erratic rainfall has been the main cause contributing towards the spread of the epidemic, especially in overcrowded and slum areas of cities and towns.

### ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

As requested by the Ministry of Health, responsible for co-ordination of the cholera outbreak control programme, Red Cross assistance is needed for:

- { community education on sanitation, personal hygiene and early referral to health facilities;
- { provision of disinfectants for disinfecting households of identified cases;
- { provision of additional wooden beds and blankets to select health facilities.

The Disease Control Unit of the MOH through the district health management teams (DHMT) has stepped up its health education programmes in the districts. The MOH and DHMTs have welcomed the idea of using RC health educators to target communities for education and early referral to health facilities. The Health education unit of the MOH has also released an education leaflet for distribution to the targeted population.

The MOH, through the DHMTs, has also requested the local authorities and all community-based NGOs in the regions to assist in identifying cases and providing referrals to health facilities.

In order to prevent the spread of cholera, especially to family members, the homes of all patients admitted to hospitals as well as public toilets will be disinfected. Vehicles used to transport patients to health facilities will also be disinfected to prevent infection of new passengers.

The MOH has indicated that it has enough logistics and drugs for management of all cholera cases throughout the country. However, the disease control hospital in Kumasi which handles all cholera patients in the Kumasi metropolitan area and surrounding districts has requested additional beds.

The International Federation has released CHF 50,000 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) in order to allow the Ghana Red Cross to begin implementing a plan of action which includes:

- { holding a simultaneous one-day retraining of 50 RC Community Health educators in each of the 6 districts in the Upper East region on the control and management of cholera and diarrhoeal diseases; resource persons will be selected from the MOH disease control and health education units;
- { a one-day training for 1200 new RC volunteers on health education for the control and management of cholera and diarrhoeal diseases;
- { reproduction of the MOH information leaflet on control of cholera (1,500 copies) for distribution to the communities by RC health educators; community health education talks on control of cholera will be held in targeted communities in the affected districts for three months;
- { providing volunteers with disinfectants for disinfecting public toilets in the affected communities.

## *Needs*

The International Federation, on behalf of the Ghana Red Cross Society, has sought support for this operation from ECHO, including CHF 164,000 for Supplies (oral rehydration salt, disinfectants, soap, etc.) and Transport, and CHF 122,000 for Personnel and Training. Donors are asked for donations to replenish the DREF. For further information, please contact Richard Hunléde in the Africa department at + 41 22 730 4314 or by e-mail: [hunlede@ifrc.org](mailto:hunlede@ifrc.org).

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