

# ***GHANA: CHOLERA OUTBREAK***

*25 November 1998*

## ***Information Bulletin N° 02***

### ***The Disaster***

The Ghana Ministry of Health (MoH) reported an outbreak of cholera and diarrhoea in September, 1998 in the six regions of Upper East, Ashanti, Eastern Volta, Western, Central and Greater Accra. The outbreak was first reported in the Bawku East District of the Upper East Region on September 14. Since then, there have been a total of 1,546 cases and 67 deaths reported. The outbreak is most severe in the Ashanti and Upper East Regions.

According to the MoH, the cause of the outbreak is:

{ The fact that the Upper East Region shares borders with Burkina Faso and Togo in the north and north-east respectively. The disease is assumed to have been 'imported' from these two countries into the Bawku East District, and subsequently spread to other areas.

{ Crowded cities or towns, poor sanitation conditions, and inadequate waste disposal, as well as heavy and erratic rainfall, all contributing to spreading the disease.

### ***Latest events***

**New developments:** The districts of Keta in the Volta Region, Sekyere West and Sekyere East in Ashanti Region, West Gonja in the Northern Region, and Bibiani-Anhiawo-Bekwai in the Western Region had not initially reported cases, but did record occurrences of cholera during the month of October. However, there is a decline of cases as a result of the onset of the dry season.

**Affected population:** The Ministry of Health (MoH) has released its Weekly Epidemiological Bulletin on the incidence of cholera and cerebro-spinal meningitis in the country for the week October 11 - 17, 1998. According to the report, 187 cases and 6 deaths were recorded from cholera from 15 districts in seven regions of the country during the period in question.

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

**Provision of Logistics Support:** Following an appeal made by the Head of the Communicable Disease Hospital (CDH) in Kumasi to augment their supplies, the GRCS national monitoring team provided blankets. The GRCS Headquarters is in the process of procuring the following supplies to assist in health education:

- b 40,000 cholera information leaflets;
- b 650 RC-aprons;
- b 13 megaphones.

**Collaboration:** The GRCS has closely collaborated efforts with the MoH at the national, regional and district levels. District Health Management Teams (DHMT's) headed by the District Directors of Health Services have been coordinating efforts with the GRCS, primarily on health education assistance.

**Recruitment of Volunteers:** The GRCS regional and district committees have held discussions with the various DHMT's to inform them about the recruitment of 650 volunteers to be trained as health educators for the MoH cholera control programme. The one-day training sessions will be held by the end of November.

**Broadcasting of Education Programmes on the Radio:** Some of the GRCS Regional Secretaries and district chairmen were provided free air-time on local FM radio stations to educate the public on the spread of cholera, and measures to control and reduce the number of fatalities.

**Health Education by Red Cross Volunteers:** The 300 health communicators located in the Upper East Region have started health education talks in the 6 affected districts. Other regions are carrying out education initiatives to affected communities related to effective ways to counter cholera outbreaks.

**Clean up Campaigns by Red Cross Youth Links:** The District Youth Organisers (DYO's) of some of the affected districts have mobilised Red Cross-connected students in second cycle schools to assist in cleaning garbage disposal sites around water sources and public toilets.

## *Outstanding Needs*

GRCS Health Volunteers require the following assistance:

- b one-day training seminar with resource persons from the DHMT's;
- b Red Cross visibility aprons;
- b cholera information leaflets;
- b fuel for monitoring in the regions and districts;
- b additional funds to continue these interventions during the month.

The National Society is running the present operation with the financial support from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF - CHF 50,000) and the generous contribution from the British Red Cross Society (CHF 11,353). More support is expected to allow the smooth running of the operation and the refund of the DREF loan.

## *External Relations*

**Action taken by NGOs:** A Kumasi-based NGO, Sanitation and Decongestion Tigers (SADAT), has embarked on a massive clean up exercise in the city of Kumasi, particularly focusing on areas with the highest incidence of cases.

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