

Nigeria: Cholera outbreak in restive Borno state successfully contained, says UN health agency

24 December 2017 – A five-month long cholera outbreak in Nigeria's conflict-affected Borno state has been successfully contained, the United Nations health agency has announced.

According to the UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), the feat is a ["major accomplishment"](#) in the region hit hard by violence perpetrated by the Boko Haram terrorist group that has displaced millions and driven hundreds of thousands to severe food insecurity.

"No single measure would have worked on its own. This was a joint effort employing a range of tools by many partners under the leadership of the state Ministry of Health," Wondimagegnehu Alemu, the head of WHO programmes in the country, said in a news release Saturday.

The end of the outbreak (which began in August) was formally announced by the Nigerian Government on Thursday after no new cases had been reported in two weeks.

A massive oral cholera vaccine campaign – the first of its kind in the country, providing some 1.8 million doses to immunize some 900,000 people between September and December – played a key role in containing the deadly disease.

In addition to the campaign, a WHO-supported early warning and surveillance system provided vital data on suspected cases in different locations, ensuring effective and targeted interventions.

Response efforts also included providing safe chlorinated water, setting up treatment centers and laboratory testing, community outreach on methods to disease prevention, and working with local media to spread awareness on cholera and its symptoms.

However, due to the ongoing conflict, many people across northeastern Nigeria remain cut off from basic healthcare and routine immunization services. Health conditions in many camps for internally displaced persons are sub-standard.

Future risks of disease outbreaks, therefore, cannot be ruled out, warned WHO.

"While the achievements of the cholera programme in Borno state are a significant milestone, cholera is endemic to northeastern Nigeria and future outbreaks remain likely," said Dr. Alemu.

"We must be vigilant to the warning signs that could signal another

outbreak of cholera or other epidemic-prone diseases.”

[UN stands ready to support the Philippines in aftermath of deadly storm – Secretary-General](#)

23 December 2017 – Expressing sadness at the loss of lives and devastation in the Philippines caused by Tropical Storm Tembin, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said Saturday that the Organization stands ready to provide support.

“[Secretary-General Guterres] salutes the efforts of the national rescue and recovery teams as well as volunteers who are operating under difficult conditions,” said a [statement](#) attributable to Mr. Guterres' spokesperson.

“The UN stands ready to support the local and national authorities, in addition to the support already being provided by humanitarian partners,” the statement added.

Tropical Storm Tembin – known locally as “Vinta” – made landfall in Davao Oriental in southern Philippines on 22 December and crossed various provinces across Mindanao causing flash floods and landslides, which rendered several roads impassable.

At least 75 lives have been lost and dozens more are reported missing. The Storm also displaced thousands of people, and damaged homes and infrastructure.

[According](#) to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OHCA), 151 evacuation centres have been set up but the number of displaced persons could rise as information from the field comes in.

In the statement, the UN chief also offered his sympathies to the families of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to those injured.

[UN urges Australia to find humane](#)

solutions for refugees, asylum seekers on Manus Island

22 December 2017 – The United Nations refugee agency warned on Friday that the situation of refugees and asylum seekers on Manus Island continues to remain dangerous, and called on the Australian Government to “live up to its responsibilities” and urgently find humane and appropriate solutions.

According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), since the closure of Australia’s “offshore processing” facility on the island on 31 October, approximately 800 refugees and asylum seekers still remain in highly unsafe conditions.

“Over the past four weeks, [at least five security incidents have been reported](#) by refugees and asylum seekers, security personnel, local police, and members of the local community,” Cécile Pouilly, a spokesperson for UNHCR, told a news briefing in Geneva.

The most serious incident occurred on the night of 10 December, when three people armed with machetes and an axe attempted to force their way into West Lorengau Haus settlement, where 150 refugees and asylum seekers were being accommodated, she said, noting that the group was ultimately stopped from causing serious harm by security staff.

However, the same group then walked to nearby Hillside Haus settlement where two of them, armed with a baton and a knife, entered unobstructed by security staff, and yelled that refugees and asylum seekers should leave.

“The forced removal of refugees and asylum seekers on 22 November from the now decommissioned Australian facility has inflicted further trauma on people who have already suffered greatly – violence and persecution in their own country followed by four years in detention on Manus Island,” added the UNHCR spokesperson.

At the same time, the medical condition of the refugees and asylum seekers is also worrying.

According to a recent medical report commissioned by UNHCR, their physical and mental health is deteriorating and there is growing risk of violence and self-harm due to the cumulative effect of uncertainty about the future, lack of solutions, stopping of vital services, poor living and hygiene conditions and inadequate health care.

The report also noted the obvious strain that is being placed on the host community and local resources, especially on the health system and hospital.

Security Council further tightens sanctions against DPR Korea

22 December 2017 – The United Nations Security Council today imposed new sanctions on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), increasing the depth of measures imposed on the country in the wake of its continued nuclear and ballistic weapons programme, including the ballistic missile launch on 28 November.

In a unanimously adopted resolution, the 15-member Council also decided that all UN Member States shall “prohibit” the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer to the DPRK of crude oil, refined petroleum products, and various types of equipment and raw materials.

The restrictions also applied with respect to the Member States’ territories, nationals, flagged vessels, aircraft, pipelines, rail lines, or vehicles and whether or not originating in their territories.

The Security Council also decided that Member States shall repatriate all DPRK nationals earning income in that Member State’s jurisdiction and all DPRK government safety oversight attachés monitoring DPRK workers abroad “immediately but no later than 24 months,” unless the Member State determined that the national’s repatriation is prohibited under applicable national and international law, or if that national is a national of that Member State.

Further, in relation to maritime interdiction of cargo vessels, the Council decided that Member States shall seize, inspect, and impound any vessel in their ports if the Member State has reasonable grounds to believe that the vessel was involved in activities, or the transport of items, prohibited by relevant UN resolutions.

On the political side, the Security Council expressed its “deep concern” at the grave hardship that the people in the DPRK are subjected to and condemns the country for pursuing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles instead of the welfare of its people.

Also in the resolution, the Council affirmed that it shall keep the country’s actions under “continuous review” and that it is determined to take further “significant measures” in the event of a further nuclear test or launch.

UN chief welcomes unity in the Security Council

Following the adoption of the resolution, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres welcomed the continued unity of the Security Council and noted that it is essential to achieve the goal of denuclearisation and create the space for diplomatic initiatives aimed at achieving it in a peaceful manner.

In a statement attributable to his spokesperson, Mr. Guterres supported the Council’s desire for a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to the

situation, as well as its urging of further work to reduce tensions.

“The only way forward for a comprehensive peaceful and political solution requires de-escalation and open communication channels, now,” read the statement.

“[The Secretary-General] reaffirms his commitment to working with all parties to this end [and] calls upon all Member States to ensure the full implementation of the relevant resolutions and to redouble efforts to make 2018 a pivotal year for the achievement of sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula,” it added.

[Suspected cholera cases in Yemen surpass one million, reports UN health agency](#)

22 December 2017 – The total number of suspected cholera cases in Yemen has crossed one million, the United Nations World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) reported today, urging greater efforts to tackle the outbreak and deal with the deteriorating health situation in the war-torn nation.

“The epidemic is not yet over and more concerted efforts need to be deployed to ensure that it is controlled in the immediate term and prevented from reoccurring in the near future,” WHO spokesperson Tarik Jašarevic told a press briefing in Geneva.

Responding to the deadly outbreak in late April, WHO set up treatment centres, provided supplies, trained health workers, and worked with local communities on ways to prevent the disease.

These efforts resulted in tens of thousands of lives being saved.

According to WHO, 99.7 per cent of the people who became sick with suspected cholera and who could access health services survived.

The UN agency continues to support dehydration treatment centres across the country as well as collect stool samples for lab testing, transport them to labs, meet operational costs and make available supplies and reagents.

It also continues surveillance, detection and treatment work.

One outbreak after another

With its health and sanitation systems in near ruin, Yemen is also now experiencing a rapidly spreading diphtheria outbreak, which has affected 18 of its 22 governorates. About 333 clinically diagnosed cases (mostly in Ibb

and Hodeida governorates) have been confirmed.

Diphtheria – a highly-infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Corynebacterium diphtheria* that infects the throat and upper airways, and produces a toxin affecting other organs – can be prevented with vaccines and treated with antitoxins and antibiotics.

But lack of medicines in the country mean the number of cases could rise.

UN response amid ongoing challenges

Responding to this latest outbreak, the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) [airlifted](#) some 6 million doses of essential vaccines for children, include inoculations for diphtheria.

WHO has also delivered antibiotics and 1,000 vials of life-saving diphtheria antitoxins to affected governorates.

Similarly, the UN International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) has also upped its response, providing more than 20,000 medical consultations to internally displaced people and other conflict-affected Yemenis via 22 mobile health teams and two permanent health facilities.

If [we] cannot bring in medicines and medical supplies, we cannot save lives
WHO spokesperson

But the fact that the outbreak is occurring amid a complex emergency setting with violent clashes and restrictions of transport of supplies, including medical supplies, means response efforts are extremely difficult.

Underscoring the need for unhindered and sustained access to all areas of Yemen to save lives, the WHO spokesperson asked the Yemeni authorities and all parties to the conflict to facilitate the importation and distribution of medicines and medical supplies, as well as clearances for health partners to reach and treat affected communities.

“If [we] cannot bring in medicines and medical supplies, we cannot save lives,” he stressed.