

Quick response critical to stem year-long cholera outbreak in South Sudan – UN agency

8 August 2017 – Rapid responses are critical to stemming a cholera outbreak that has afflicted South Sudan for more than a year, exacerbating an already dire humanitarian situation that has left approximately four million people displaced by conflict, according to the UN migration agency.

“In a country with mass displacement and severe levels of food insecurity, the effect of the continued [cholera outbreak](#) on the health of vulnerable populations is acute,” explained Dr. Beldina Gikundi, Migration Health Emergency Officer of the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) in South Sudan.

Since 18 June 2016, over 18,000 cholera cases – including 328 deaths – have been reported in South Sudan. IOM health and water, sanitation and hygiene teams continue to respond to the outbreak through case management and preventive measures across the country.

Disease outbreaks are particularly dangerous for displaced and vulnerable populations, such as children under five years of age, who account for more than one-in-five cholera cases reported in 2017.

IOM pointed out that many locations experiencing outbreaks are in proximity to the Nile River, increasing the rainy season’s impact on the cholera outbreak and threat of spreading further.

“As we saw the outbreak continue, even during the dry season in 2017, we expect to see the trend persist throughout the rainy season, which leaves as much as 60 per cent of the country inaccessible by road,” continued Dr. Gikundi, underscoring that “sustained and flexible responses are crucial to stemming the continued transmission of the disease in this extremely challenging context.”

Saving lives on the ground



Children fetch water from a repaired borehole in Bentiu town. File photo: Ashley McLaughlin / UN Migration Agency (IOM) 2017



IOM conducts WASH activities in Kapoeta, South Sudan. File photo: UN Migration Agency 2017



A woman carries clean water at the Wau protection of civilians site in South Sudan. File photo: Ashley McLaughlin / UN Migration Agency (IOM) 2017

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Since the outbreak began, IOM teams have been deployed to cholera-affected areas across the country. Teams continue to conduct hygiene promotion, core relief item distribution and borehole repairs in Bentiu and Rubkona towns, and Wau town and surrounding areas, as well as in UN protection of civilian sites across the country.

In collaboration with the UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) and the Ministry of Health, IOM health teams are conducting oral cholera vaccination (OCV) campaigns across the country.

In an effort to reduce cholera cases in outbreak areas, IOM has recently reached more than 39,900 people in parts of Jonglei and Unity and is currently on the ground in Warrap, preparing to lead an upcoming OCV campaign targeting more than 189,000 people in Tonj East County.

Since the beginning of the 2016 outbreak, IOM has managed the USAID Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance Rapid Response Fund (RFF) in deploying 14 missions to respond to and promote the prevention of cholera cases. Seven RRF partners are currently on the ground in three states, providing health and water and sanitation assistance to cholera-affected communities.

[Venezuelan crisis requires political solution, says UN, urging Government and opposition to relaunch talks](#)

8 August 2017 – Concerned that recent developments in Venezuela could lead to further escalation of tensions and hamper a peaceful solution to the crisis, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres again today urged the Government and the opposition to relaunch negotiations for the benefit of the Venezuelan people.

A statement from Mr. Guterres' spokesman said the UN chief is [closely following events](#) in the country and is convinced the crisis cannot be solved through the imposition of unilateral measures, but requires a political solution based on dialogue and compromise.

“At this critical time,” the Secretary-General urged the Venezuelan Government and the opposition to relaunch negotiations for the benefit of the

country's people, said the statement, adding that Mr. Guterres is strongly supporting the ongoing efforts of the international facilitators and regional actors who are seeking to contribute to this end.

The Secretary-General and other top UN officials have been calling for calm amid the escalating political and economic crisis in Venezuela when mass street demonstrations began in the country in April.

In the months that followed, clashes erupted between security forces and protestors opposing elections for the so-called Constituent Assembly. According to media reports, President Nicolás Maduro has since declared victory in elections for a Constituent Assembly convened by him. The new body could replace the current legislative body, the National Assembly.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, today warned that since the wave of demonstrations began in April, there has been a clear pattern of excessive force used against protesters.

Several thousand people have been arbitrarily detained, [many reportedly subjected to ill-treatment and even torture](#), while several hundred have been brought before military rather than civilian courts. And these patterns show no signs of abating, said the High Commissioner in a statement from his spokesperson.

Responsibility for violations lies at 'highest levels of Government' UN human rights chief

In the absence of responses from the Venezuelan authorities to requests for access, the High Commissioner deployed a team of human rights officers to conduct remote monitoring of the situation in the country from 6 June to 31 July, including from Panama.

The team conducted some 135 interviews, including with victims and their families, witnesses, first responders and the Attorney-General's Office and also received written information from the Ombudsperson's Office.

Witnesses told of security forces firing tear gas canisters at short range; buckshot marbles and nuts and bolts were also discharged as ammunition at anti-Government protestors without warning; and deadly force was used against demonstrators as well.

These violations have occurred amid the breakdown of the rule of law in Venezuela, with constant attacks by the Government against the National Assembly and the Attorney-General's Office, Mr. Zeid continued. The responsibility for the human rights violations we are recording lies at the highest levels of Government.

The team's findings also indicate patterns of other rights violations, including violent house raids, torture and ill-treatment of detainees in connection with protests.

Witness accounts suggest that the National Guard, National Police and local police forces have systematically used disproportionate force to instil fear,

crush dissent and prevent demonstrators from assembling with rare condemnation from Government authorities.□

Without official data, estimates suggest that more than 5,051 people have been arbitrarily detained between 1 April and 31 July, when mass demonstrations, began with some 1,000 reportedly still detained.

Several cases reviewed by the UN rights office revealed credible reports of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment by security forces of detainees, some amounting to torture. Tactics included electric shocks, long periods of suspending detainees by their wrists, suffocation with gas and threats of killings. There were also sexual violence threats against detainees or their families. □

□ I call on all parties to work towards a solution to the rapidly worsening tensions in the country, to renounce the use of violence and to take steps towards meaningful political dialogue,□ concluded Mr. Zeid.□

[South Sudan: Phased deployment of regional protection force begins](#)

8 August 2017 – The phased deployment in South Sudan of the United Nations-authorized regional protection force has begun, freeing existing peacekeepers to extend their presence to conflict-affected areas beyond the capital, Juba.

□ Having additional troops means we can carry out more tasks related to our mandate, to protect civilians and build durable peace,□ the Secretary General’s Special Representative and the head of UN Mission in South Sudan ([UNMISS](#)), David Shearer, told a news conference today in Juba.

Despite the August 2015 peace agreement, South Sudan slipped back into conflict due to renewed clashes between rival forces □ the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) loyal to President Salva Kiir and the SPLA in Opposition backing former First Vice-President Riek Machar.

The deployment of the 4,000-strong regional protection force was authorized by the UN Security Council in its Resolution 2304 (2016). UNMISS says the force will provide protection to key facilities in the nation’s capital, Juba, and the main routes into and out of the city. It will also strengthen the security of UN protection of civilians’ sites and other UN premises.

Mr. Shearer said the arrival of the first company of Rwandan soldiers, in addition to a Nepalese High Readiness company and more than 100 Bangladeshi engineers already in the mission area, marks the beginning of the phased deployment of the regional protection force.

This will allow the existing UNMISS troops based in Juba, to be reassigned to different locations across the world's youngest country to protect civilians, support humanitarian assistance, and monitor and report on human rights abuses.

“For example, it would enable us to put more patrols along insecure roads where there have been attacks on civilian convoys such as the Juba-Nimule and Juba-Bor roads,” Mr. Shearer said.

He went on to explain that the Juba-based regional protection force comes under the command of UNMISS.

“While it is separate in a sense of its mandate and its delivery here, it remains under one command which is the UNMISS Command, so it will be commanded by a brigadier general, but ultimately it comes under the force commander who ultimately comes under me, so it is part of UNMISS, it is not a separate stand alone,” he said.

[Ahead of elections, UN calls on Kenyan authorities to ensure peaceful polls](#)

7 August 2017 – On the eve of Tuesday's general elections in Kenya to elect the President and other officials, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres called on all national stakeholders to renew their commitment to credible and peaceful elections, as well as their confidence in the institutions constitutionally mandated to conduct the elections.

“The Secretary-General has been closely following developments pertaining to the electoral process in Kenya, and he has remained in regular contact with the relevant political leaders and other key stakeholders,” [said](#) his Spokesman Stephane Dujarric in a statement.

“The Secretary-General underlines the importance of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as professional and impartial conduct of law enforcement officials during the elections,” the Spokesman added.

Meanwhile, three United Nations human rights experts have urged the Government to ensure that all parties maintain the highest standards of behaviour before, during and after Tuesday's general elections to avoid a repeat of the violence that took place in 2007.

“We call on the Kenyan authorities to do their utmost to [ensure peaceful elections](#), as well as a free and fair voting process tomorrow,” [said](#) the Special Rapporteurs on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Annalisa Ciampi, on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst, and on summary executions, Agnes Callamard.

Respect for people's fundamental rights and freedoms including the right to vote, freedom of expression, association and assembly are the key to free and fair elections and public participation, they noted in a joint statement.

Since 2007, when the country plunged into bloodshed over disputed election results, Kenya had made significant progress in strengthening democracy, human rights and the rule of law, they said, noting it had taken important steps towards peacefully resolving tensions in the context of elections.

However, in the light of recent incidents of political violence, the rise of hate speech and prevailing tensions, we emphasize the importance of all those involved in the process to commit themselves to peaceful conduct during and after elections, they said.

We also call on their supporters to remain peaceful and refrain from any incitement to violence, added the experts.

The Special Rapporteurs welcomed the Government's commitment not to shut down the internet, urging the authorities to ensure that media and civil society could report on and scrutinize the poll unhindered.

They also highlighted the responsibility of security forces to facilitate the holding of peaceful demonstrations, and to hold constructive dialogue with protesters in an effort to defuse any tensions.

[UN chief urges Venezuelans to ease tensions and engage in negotiations](#)

7 August 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres is closely following recent developments in Venezuela, his Spokesperson told reporters today.

In this critical moment for the future of the country, he urges all Venezuelans to make all possible efforts to lower tensions and engage in political negotiations, [underscored](#) Stéphane Dujarric, when asked about the latest developments in the South American country.

The Secretary-General and other top UN officials have been calling for calm in Venezuela since late July when, according to media reports, clashes erupted between security forces and protestors opposing the Constituent Assembly elections.

According to media reports, President Nicolás Maduro declared victory in elections for a Constituent Assembly convened by him. The new body could

replace the current legislative body, the National Assembly.