Summary

Haiti is facing one of the most severe cholera outbreaks that has been seen in decades. The population’s living conditions, especially the 1.5 million people who lost their homes in the January earthquake and are living in camps, and the major structural problems in terms of water and sanitation and health services delivery have made the country extremely vulnerable to the spread of cholera.

The epidemic, which started in Artibonite in October, has spread to all 10 departments. On 10 December, the Ministry of Public Health and Population (MSPP) reported that as of 5 December, the cumulative numbers of hospital visits and deaths due to cholera were 96,092 and 2,167 respectively. Some 45,680 people have been hospitalized due to cholera. Nationwide the in-hospital case fatality rate is 3.2%, while the case fatality rate at health services level is 1.6%. In Port-au-Prince, the cumulative numbers of hospital visits and deaths are 13,952 and 191 respectively, and 4,902 people have been hospitalized. The in-hospital case fatality rate for Port-au-Prince is 3.8% and the case fatality rate at health services level is 1.4%.

Current Health Response

The national cholera response plan is based on the following three components:

i. Protecting families at community level;

ii. Strengthening primary health care facilities already operating across the nation;

iii. Establishing a network of special cholera treatment centres and strengthening designated hospitals for the treatment of severe cases.

As of the beginning of December, 56 cholera treatment centres (CTCs) and 102 cholera treatment units (CTUs) had been set-up and were fully operational.

Between 19 and 22 November, WHO/PAHO, in coordination with the MSPP and the World Food Programme (WFP), distributed 87 tons of essential medicines and supplies. This operation, which covered all nine departments outside Ouest, replenished medicine stocks in areas already affected and prepositioned supplies for the treatment of roughly 30% of the potential caseload over the coming months. This week, partners are distributing medical supplies to 23 hospitals and health centres in metropolitan Port-au-Prince.

Health Sector Strategy

A Cholera Inter-Sector Response Strategy for Haiti developed by the clusters for Health, Water and Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Agriculture, Camp Coordination and Management, Education, Logistics and Protection, was launched on 10 November with the overall objective of limiting the impact of the cholera outbreak.

The main objective of the Health Cluster response is to reduce mortality and morbidity related to the evolution of the cholera outbreak.
WHO/PAHO, as Health Cluster lead agency and in support to the MSPP Cholera Response Plan, has developed a health sector wide operational strategy focusing on three key priorities:

1. **Saving lives**, by focusing on:
   - strengthening the establishment of an event-based alert and response system for identifying hotspots and triggering deployment of rapid response teams for assessment and initial response in all departments/communes.
   - Scaling up CTCs and CTUs, targeting particularly oral rehydration points within the community for case detection, oral rehydration salts (ORS) treatment, and referral of severe cases to CTCs and CTUs.

2. **Conducting a mass environmental, sanitation, hygiene and safe water campaign**, by scaling up quick-win efficient interventions focusing on:
   - the delivery of soap for hand washing;
   - the delivery of chlorine and other products/devices for household water treatment;
   - improved hygiene in public places such as markets, schools, health care facilities or prisons;
   - the safe management of dead bodies.

3. **Protecting communities through social mobilization**, by:
   - mobilizing community partners at all levels, including community leaders;
   - implementing health education campaigns to promote cholera prevention behaviours (hand washing, water treatment and waste management);
   - Informing/training communities on safe household water treatment and storage;
   - Educating families on the early detection and treatment of cholera, including appropriate health-seeking behaviour for severe cases.


**Health Cluster Funding Needs**

The total funds required to implement the Haiti Cholera Response amount to US$ 164 million.

The health sector requires US$ 42.5 million out of which WHO/PAHO is requesting US$ 20.7 million.

So far the health sector has received only 21% of the funds requested and WHO/PAHO only 55%.

**Donors:** Andorra, Brazil, Canada, Finland, Italy, Spain, the Autonomous Community of Andalusia, United Kingdom and the United States of America have already pledged or contributed funds to WHO/PAHO.

For more information:

Haiti
Dr Lea Guido, PAHO/WHO Representative
Tel: +409 22 45 45 53 | guidole@hai.ops-oms.org

Washington, DC
Jean-Luc Poncelet
Tel: +1 202 974 3434 | poncelej@paho.org or eoc@paho.org

Geneva
Elizabeth Hoff, External Relations
Health Action in Crises
Tel: +41 22 791 2128 | Fax: +41 22 791 4844 | hoffe@who.int
http://www.who.int/disasters