

Red Cross steps in to curb cholera and typhoid in Zim

The Red Cross has stepped in and deployed 1,000 volunteers through the suburbs of Zimbabwe's capital in a bid to contain a deadly cholera outbreak.



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The outbreak, which started on 5 September, has killed 25 people in the Harare suburbs of Budiro and Glenview. About 3,000 cases have been reported, and the Zimbabwe Red Cross is concerned that the outbreak could spread quickly to other parts of the country. Indeed, sporadic cases have already been reported in four other provinces.

"The situation is incredibly complex. Most of the areas affected have already been dealing with an outbreak of typhoid. So, this is a double punch for them, and it shows the weakness of water systems even here in the capital.

"There is also a lot of movement of people between Harare and rural areas, and we're very worried this could drive a very rapid spread of the disease," Maxwell Phiri, secretary general of the Zimbabwe Red Cross, said.



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Red Cross volunteers are providing water treatment, tracking and referral services, and are going door-to-door to provide families in high risk areas with information about cholera prevention. A further 500 volunteers in Midlands, Manicaland, Masvingo and Mashonaland Central provinces have been activated in an effort to halt the spread.

“Cholera remains a major issue across Africa – yet, it is completely preventable,” says Dr Fatoumata Nafo-Traoré, regional director for the International Federation of the Red Cross. “Providing access to clean water, hygiene and sanitation and ensuring communities have the tools and information to prevent its spread will be critical to saving countless more lives.”

This is the second major cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe within a decade. In 2008, one of the worst cholera outbreaks to hit the country infected more than 100,000 people and claimed more than 4,000 lives.

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