

Zimbabwe: Cholera spreads to Limpopo River

The Limpopo River, which delineates the border between Zimbabwe and South Africa before flowing through Mozambique into the Indian Ocean, has tested positive for cholera, according to local media reports.

JOHANNESBURG, 3 December 2008 (IRIN) - According to the UN, Zimbabwe's "unprecedented cholera outbreak" has claimed 565 lives from the 12,546 recorded cases since August, and "is worsening and is becoming difficult to contain as it spreads from cities."

Zimbabwe Doctors for Human Rights, a non-governmental organisation, said the death toll could be in excess of 1,000 people.

The UN children's agency, UNICEF, said in a statement: "The onset of the rainy season threatens to make the waterborne disease endemic, as the spread of cholera becomes increasingly unpredictable and the response is outpaced by the outbreaks. Harare [the capital], where the highest numbers of cholera cases have been reported, continues to experience serious water outages."

The provincial health department spokesperson for South Africa's Limpopo Province, which borders Zimbabwe, told a local radio station that all the cholera cases detected in South Africa were linked to the Zimbabwe outbreak.

There have been six known deaths from cholera in South Africa: two South Africans and four Zimbabwean

UNICEF said it had provided the Harare authorities with a month's supply of water treatment chemicals for the city and was distributing about 360,000 litres of drinking water daily.

Fuel, also in short supply, was being provided to assist in the cholera emergency, 40,000 litres of intravenous fluids had been distributed, as well as thousands of hygiene kits, water treatment tablets and body bags.

Reticulated water was reportedly restored to Harare on 3 December after all water supplies had been cut for the past few days.

Read the full article here <http://www.IRINnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81800>